HEALTH CARE AGENCY/PUBLIC HEALTH
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
INFORMATIONAL BULLETIN

TO: ORANGE COUNTY RETAIL TEMPORARY FOOD FACILITY OPERATORS

SUBJECT: SAMPLING AT A TEMPORARY FOOD EVENT

In an effort to promote food sales at a Temporary Food Facility (TFF) operating at a community event, samples are typically offered to potential customers. In response to this increasing and popular trend, Environmental Health is encouraging TFF operators to re-evaluate their methods of sampling and ensure that samples are prepared, stored, handled, and served in a safe and sanitary manner. This informational bulletin may be used as a guideline to help operators offer samples in an approved manner and to provide some examples of methods approved by the Agency. All methods of sampling may not be covered within this bulletin.

For the purpose of this information bulletin, please review the following definitions:

Approved: Acceptable to the enforcement agency based on a determination of conformity with applicable laws, or, in the absence of applicable laws, current public health principles, practices, and generally recognized industry standards that protect public health.

Approved Facility: Any food establishment, mobile food preparation unit, or mobile food facility that has been issued a permit to operate by the enforcement agency.

Food: Any raw or processed substance, ice, beverage, including water, or ingredient intended to be used as food, drink, confection or condiment for human consumption.

Food Compartment: An enclosed space made of smooth, easily cleanable, and durable material that creates a physical barrier from the outside environment and completely encloses food/food contact surfaces for the handling of non-prepackaged food. (e.g. plastic container with lid)

Potentially Hazardous Food: Any food that requires time or temperature control to limit pathogenic micro-organism growth or toxin formation.

Prepackaged Food: Any properly labeled processed food prepackaged to prevent any direct human contact with the food product upon distribution.

General Sampling Guidelines:

1) All samples offered must be individual; they must be individually prepackaged or individually handed to the consumer.
2) Prepackaged samples must be prepared and stored at an approved facility.
3) Bottles with a pour spout, pump dispensers, and approved food compartments may be filled with product at an approved facility and samples may be individually dispensed upon request at the event.
4) Bottles, dispensers, or compartments pre-filled at an approved facility may be individually portioned within an approved food compartment and handed out to individual consumers or pre-portioned into individual samples in an approved food compartment. (See the attached examples/photos)
5) Open food shall be protected by either an enclosure or, in lieu of an enclosure, an approved food compartment.

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6) Approved food compartments shall completely enclose the food and/or contact surfaces.

7) Access openings of approved food compartments must be tight fitting.

8) Approved food compartments must be constructed of non-toxic material, smooth, easily cleanable, durable, and able to minimize exposure.

9) All potentially hazardous samples must be maintained under the required temperature through a method approved by the enforcement agency.

10) Single-use utensils must be used when samples are individually handed out to customers, or with the presence of an approved three-compartment sink for the purpose of washing, rinsing, and sanitizing, multi-use utensils may be used.

11) Approved pre-filled food compartments may not be refilled at the event once the container is empty, unless the facility is permitted for an open food booth.

Appropriate methods to sample at a Temporary Food Facility at an event must be submitted and approved by Orange County Environmental Health prior to the date of the event. For more information regarding approved sampling, contact Orange County Environmental Health at (714) 433-6000.

The following examples are approved methods of sampling:

Samples are pre-cut into individual portions at an approved facility or within an approved compartment and a single-use toothpick is used to hand out samples upon request. The approved compartment has a tight fitting lid.

Samples are pre-portioned into small tightly closed bags at an approved facility. These samples may be handed out to customers or may be placed out for customer self-service.

Samples are individually pre-portioned into small single-use containers at an approved facility. These samples may be handed out to customers or placed out for customer self-service.

Samples are prefilled in approved compartments at an approved facility or within an approved compartment and maintained within an approved food compartment that has a lid. Samples are individually scooped from within the approved food compartment upon request.

An approved food compartment is prefilled at an approved facility. The samples are individually dispensed from the container.

Approved bottles with pour spouts are premade at an approved facility. Single-use tasting spoons are used to pour a sample of the product and then handed to the customer.

The following are examples of unapproved food sampling:

Samples may not be left uncovered for customer self-service. Samples must be in an approved food compartment and must be handed to the customer upon request.

Samples may not be cut without an approved covering or food compartment. All samples must be precut and placed into an approved compartment at an approved facility.

Plastic bags are not approved compartments. Samples must be kept in approved compartment with tight fitting lids.

Styrofoam or single-use containers are not approved compartments. Samples must be kept in an approved compartment with a light fitting lid.

Samples may not be given out to customers without an approved covering. The samples must be within an approved compartment and covered for the duration of the event.

Unpackaged, precut samples may not be placed out for customer self-service. These samples must be within an approved compartment and handed to the customer upon request. Sneeze-guards are not permitted for use.