

POLICY
Sampling of Food Products at Farmers Markets

March 18, 2010

The intent of this policy is to address the desire of food vendors to offer free samples of their product to potential customers at Farmers Markets. Although the Maine Department of Agriculture does not license and regulate mobile food vendors selling ready to eat food this situation is meant to address a non-commercial transaction, while still offering some minimum sanitation practices that need to be followed.

Free samples of food items may be prepared and offered provided samples are prepared in a sanitary manner and the following conditions are adhered to.

1. The vendor must provide potable water, detergent and some sort of sanitizer for washing, rinsing and sanitizing of all utensils and food prep surfaces. (i.e. water and liquid detergent and a mixture of water and bleach at a solution of 50 - 200ppm)
2. The vendor must provide potable water, soap and disposable hand towels for proper hand cleaning.
3. Prepared samples must be displayed under some form of protective cover to prevent contamination. (i.e. glass cake domes or covered trays)
4. Single service disposable items for food handling must be provided to customers for self service of samples. (i.e. tooth picks, deli papers or disposable sample cups)
5. Hot and cold holding of samples must be controlled by time or temperature. Cold foods should be held at 41°F or less and hot foods should be held at 140°F or more if possible. If not possible time of sample prep should be kept in a log and all samples must be discarded after a maximum of 4-hours.

The Maine Department of Agriculture does not have the authority to license vendors for ready to eat food service of any kind, including coffee service. Vendors wishing to dispense coffee should contact DHHS, Health Inspection Program (HIP) at 287-5671 to inquire about licensing.