



Food Safety

Food Safety for Farmers Market Vendors Series¹

General Food Safety Practices, Providing Samples, Selling Fresh Produce

UVM Extension Fact Sheet- September 2011

Farmers Markets are an important part of Vermont’s culture and economy. To protect this valuable outlet for Vermont’s local products, it is essential that the food sold at Farmers Markets is produced and processed according to the VT Department of Health and the Vermont Agency of Agriculture rules, regulations and guidelines. Not only will this produce products that are as safe as possible, it will also assure your customers that your business, as well as the entire farmers market, has product quality and safety in mind.

*****Note that all practices below which are REQUIRED by state regulations are listed in bold and italics. All other practices listed are strongly recommended for food safety.***

General steps to food safety at farmers markets

- Transport and store foods at proper temperatures to prevent rapid bacterial growth
 - o ***Hot prepared foods must be held at 135 °F or higher***
 - o Foods to be sold at room temperature (whole produce, canned goods, most baked goods) should be kept cooler than 80°F as much as possible
 - o ***Cold perishable foods (such as potato salad or most dairy products) should be held between 32 °F and 40 °F***
 - o ***Frozen foods such as frozen meats must be kept below 15 °F.*** Be sure that the product remains frozen.
 - o Coolers and ice packs or ice surrounding the product can be used to transport and hold cold foods. ***Check the temperature occasionally*** (about once/hour) with a stem food thermometer or a refrigerator thermometer².
- Reduce possible cross-contamination which can transfer bacteria from one food to another.
 - o Ensure that raw meat does not contact ready-to-eat food or fresh produce.
 - o If re-using bags for selling products, make sure they are clean and weren’t previously used for meat.
 - o Wash, rinse, and sanitize food contact surfaces, equipment, and utensils between uses.
- Practice good personal hygiene (clean clothes, clean hands) to prevent transferring bacteria to your food.
 - o Shaking hands, touching money, animals, soiled vegetables or utensils can transfer bacteria to your hands.



¹ Other sheets in this series include: Selling Fresh and Frozen Meat, Eggs and Dairy; Selling Prepared Foods and Baked Goods

² Stem food thermometers and refrigerator thermometers can be purchased for less than \$10 at most grocery stores and hardware stores. Be sure that the stem food thermometer can be calibrated and check its calibration occasionally.

- Wash hands often and wear food-service gloves if appropriate (particularly for prepared foods and baked goods).
- Hand sanitizers can be effective if your hands are not visibly soiled or after you have washed your hands.
- **Ensure that any ingredients or food that you may use to prepare food for market are from safe sources.**
- For example, use inspected meat, milk from a licensed producer, ingredients from reputable suppliers, ensure that produce or other products have not been contaminated with flood waters, etc.
- More specific information on good food safety practices and requirements for various types of food are included in the relevant fact sheet for that type of product³

Offering product samples

- As much as possible, prepare samples ahead of time in a sanitary manner (with clean utensils, clean hands or gloves, clean food contact surfaces).
- Servers should keep a barrier, such as a glove, tongs, tissues or utensils between their hands and the food.
- Samples can be placed in individual serving cups or packages, or they can be displayed under a clear dome, plastic wrap, covered tray, or other method that protects the food from contamination.
- When appropriate, disposable single-use utensils such as toothpicks, deli paper, plastic forks and spoons, and disposable cups should be provided for proper handling of samples by consumers.
- Put out small amounts of a sample, so they will be used quickly. Do not leave perishable samples at room temp for longer than 2 hours. Keep cold perishable products on ice and hot products hot as much as possible.
- If you use cutting utensils at the market, bring clean potable water and dish detergent to wash and rinse the utensils. Use of a sanitizing solution⁴ after rinsing is also recommended.
- For the safety of consumers with food allergens, it is a good practice to post a list of all ingredients and clearly identify any of the common allergens in your products- including milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, soy.
- Any fresh fruits and vegetables offered for sampling should be washed before cutting and distributing.
- Food for sampling should be displayed separately from food that will be sold.



Selling fresh produce

- Fruits and vegetables should be produced using good on-farm food safety practices⁵.
- Offer clean produce. If appropriate, wash produce with potable water before selling. Remove visible dirt from potatoes, onions, and other products where washing would reduce quality or increase spoilage.
- Prevent dogs, rodents, birds, insects, etc. from contacting your produce at the market.
- Ensure that water used to “freshen” produce at market is potable.
- Transport produce to market in clean boxes or containers.
- **No produce where the edible portion (even if it was below ground) has come into contact with flood waters can be sold in any venue, as the product is considered to be adulterated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.**

³ Other sheets in this series include: Selling Fresh and Frozen Meat, Eggs and Dairy; Selling Prepared Foods and Baked Goods

⁴ Add 1 teaspoon of chlorine bleach to 1 gallon of clean water to store clean wiping cloths for sanitizing. An equivalent concentration (50 ppm chlorine) of other sanitizers can also be used.

⁵ UVM Extension provides assistance to produce growers to develop a food safety plan or implement Good Agricultural Practices (GAPS). More information on fresh produce safety is available from: <http://www.uvm.edu/~susagctr/?Page=gapwhy.html>

Other useful resources:

- Complete List of State of Vermont Regulations for Selling at Farmers Markets
<http://nofavt.org/sites/default/files/Regulations%20for%20FM%20Vendors.pdf>
- Food Safety at Farmers Markets and Agritourism Venues (University of California Small Farm Center)
http://sfp.ucdavis.edu/farmers_market/food_safety.pdf
- General Farmers Market information (University of Vermont Extension)
<http://www.uvm.edu/extension/community/?Page=development.html>
- VT Farmers Market Association: <http://www.vtfma.org/>
- NOFA Farmers Market information: <http://nofavt.org/market-organic-food/farmers-markets>

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Prepared by Dr. Londa Nwadike, former UVM Extension Food Safety Specialist, September 2011 - revised August 2013.

Fact sheet reviewed by:

- *Jessie Schmidt, UVM Extension Coordinator for Community & Agriculture Programs*
- *Ginger Nickerson, UVM Extension Center for Sustainable Agriculture GAPS Outreach Coordinator*
- *Elisabeth Wirsing, Food and Lodging Program Chief, Vermont Department of Health*
- *Henry Marckres, Consumer Protection Section Chief, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets*

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