

Taste testing

Taste testing or sampling of foods can be a great way for your potential customers to 'try before they buy'. However, if not done properly and hygienically, samples can be a source of food contamination and could spread diseases. Food that is not protected from contamination can make your customers sick.

Know the risks

There are many potential risks associated with taste testing – from people, from bacteria and even the surrounding environment.

If people contaminate your food samples by breathing, coughing or touching, diseases can be spread. Someone sneezing nearby could easily contaminate samples that are unprotected. Some bacteria and viruses can survive for hours on the surface of food.

Bacteria contamination can occur if samples are not kept at correct temperatures or not separated from other foods that may cause contamination.

Animals, dust, foreign objects and chemicals can also cause contamination.

While taste testing can be an effective way to sell your product, it is in your best interest, and in the interest of your customers health, to keep your food samples free from all types of contamination.

Preparing or manufacturing the food

If you provide taste testing for your customers, you need to ensure that the food has been properly prepared.

You need to ensure that the food has been prepared at a premises that complies with the *Food Act 2006* and the Food Safety Standards, and is licensed under the *Food Act* if required.

If you are cooking, preparing or displaying food samples on site, for example at a market, you may need to hold a licence to operate a temporary food stall. Even if you are offering samples for taste testing of certain pre-packaged foods you may still require a licence to operate a temporary food stall. Refer to Council's fact sheet on licensing requirements for temporary food stalls for further details.

All temporary food stalls (regardless of if a licence is needed or not) will need to meet the minimum requirements of the *Food Act* and the Food Safety Standards.

Transporting the food

All food must be protected from contamination during transport. It should be kept totally sealed and transported in a clean vehicle.

- If the food is potentially hazardous (that is, required to be kept hot or cold), careful consideration must be given to how you are going to transport the food and maintain correct temperatures.

- Cold food must be kept at 5°C or less. Use refrigerated vehicles or, for shorter time periods, an esky packed with ice.
- Hot food must be kept at 60°C or higher. Use vehicles that are equipped to keep food hot or, for shorter time periods, insulated hot bags.
- You must have a food thermometer with you to ensure that food is kept at the required temperatures at all times.
- Where potentially hazardous food has not been kept under temperature control for a period exceeding 4 hours, for example during transporting or display, this food must be discarded. It must not be sold, given away or offered for sampling.

Serving the food

When serving, it is important to keep the food protected from all the different types of contamination.

Ways to protect food from contamination

- Provide single serves of your product. Use disposable cups, spoons, toothpicks or other implements to minimise the amount of handling by the customer.
- Provide a physical barrier, such as Perspex between the customer and the food.
- Display small quantities, so that food samples have less time to become contaminated.
- If required, keep the food samples hot (above 60°C) or cold (below 5°C). Some samples may be able to be kept without temperature control, provided that time and temperatures are carefully monitored.
- Signage must be displayed adjacent to the taste testing stating 'No double dipping, single serve only'.
- Supervise the samples to ensure that customers do not contaminate by re-dipping spoons or other items.
- Provide litter containers so that customers can dispose of single use items, leaving the area clean and tidy.
- Use tongs and gloves when you handle samples.

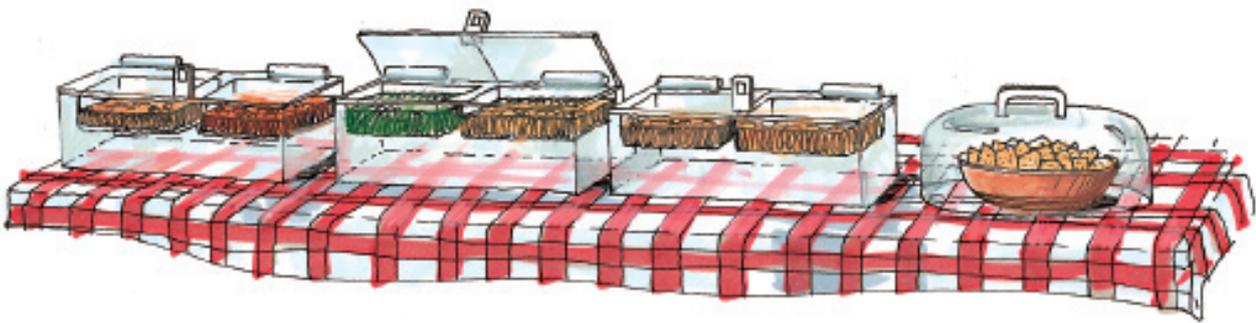
Food samples that are manufactured, prepared, transported and served correctly will have much less risk of contamination and will help you present a quality product for taste testing.

For more information, contact your local Council

The law

National food safety standards have been developed to reduce foodborne illness and to help food businesses produce food that is safe to eat. Copies of the Food Safety Standards can be obtained by contacting the Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) on (02) 6271 2222 or from the FSANZ website on foodstandards.gov.au

Council is legally required to enforce these laws. Council can issue a statutory notice if a business operates outside the safety standards, and will collect evidence to prosecute the business if the problem persists.



Signage must be provided to all taste testing stating 'No double dipping, single serve only'



Provide appropriate sneeze barriers



For further information about this topic, please contact Council.