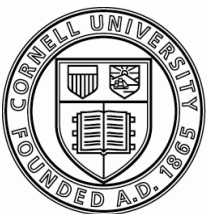


# **FOOD SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FARMERS MARKETS**



Cornell University  
Cooperative Extension  
Jefferson County





## FOOD SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FARMERS MARKETS

Farmers markets provide a direct connection between farmers and consumers. A market is an opportunity for consumers to reconnect to food and agriculture, as well as a way for farmers to develop relationships with consumers that will generate greater sales of their farm products. At farmers markets, consumers have the opportunity to ask questions, learn about food production, get to know the producers and develop a comfort level with the foods they eat and feed to their families. This direct connection and a farmers knowledge of food safety practices becomes increasingly important as reports of foodborne illnesses become more frequent in the news. Foods purchased at farmers markets are perceived to be safer than foods bought through other, more impersonal venues and consumers may want to know what farmers are doing to keep food safe.

Are foods purchased direct from farmers at farmers markets any safer than foods purchased elsewhere? Not necessarily. Farmers should consider food safety not only as a health issue, but also as a marketing tool. By implementing food safety practices, farmers reduce the likelihood of contaminating the food they are producing and sharing this information with their customers demonstrates their commitment to their consumers, which may translate into sales. Practices for ensuring a safe food product begin at the farm, using Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs). In addition, there may be federal, state, or county regulations that must be adhered to during production and/or packaging based on the product and handling procedures. GAPs cover all aspects of fruit and vegetable production, from planting through postharvest handling, as well as transporting foods from the farm to selling foods at the farmers market. Farmers Market Managers need to be involved in ensuring that the farmers market is a safe food environment for all vendors and customers. Setting standards and providing infrastructure to support food safety practices will create an environment that will benefit the market, customers, and the farmers.

Knowing and following food safety practices protects the market and farm from loss and liability associated with foodborne illness. Farmers or markets that are linked to an outbreak of a food-borne illness will find themselves legally liable for damages, and potentially punitive damages as well, not to mention media attention that can impact market attendance. Both the market itself, and the market vendors should carry product liability insurance to help protect against a potential lawsuit. Of course, the best prevention is to follow safe food practices.

What follows is a listing of potential sources of contamination and recommendations for best practices to follow to reduce the potential of unsafe food being sold at the market.



*In order to reduce food safety risks and prevent the likelihood of foodborne illness outbreaks at farmers markets, each farmer needs to understand how to identify risks and implement practices to mitigate these risks. This document is intended to help farmers understand what microbiological, chemical, and physical hazards exist on their farms and at the market they attend, assess the risks associated with these hazards, and adopt outlined recommendations that can reduce these risks. Each farmer must perform their own risks assessment and determine which guidelines are appropriate for their operation. It may be beneficial to work with farmers market managers and other vendors to conduct a farmers market risk assessment and work collaboratively to implement practices at the market to reduce risk.*

**References:**

Food Safety Begins on the Farm: Good Agricultural Practices for Fresh Fruits & Vegetables, [www.gaps.cornell.edu/](http://www.gaps.cornell.edu/)

Farmers Market Federation of NY Checklist for vendor permits/licenses and certificates: [www.nyfarmersmarket.com/pdf\\_files/vendorpermitreqmts.pdf](http://www.nyfarmersmarket.com/pdf_files/vendorpermitreqmts.pdf)

New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets Sanitary Regulations for Direct Marketing: [www.agmkt.state.ny.us/FS/industry/sanitary.html](http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/FS/industry/sanitary.html)

**Attachment:** Farmers Market Food Safety Checklist



## **POTENTIAL SOURCES OF CONTAMINATION**

### **1. POTENTIAL SOURCE OF CONTAMINATION: WATER**

Water is a basic ingredient of life. However, water can also be a source of bacteria that can contaminate foods and cause serious illness and death. Thus, water quality and its intended use are very important in assessing food safety risk. Water at farmers markets may be used for hand-washing or to rinse fresh produce prior to consumption. All water used at farmers markets needs to be potable. During the Washington, NY County Fair in 1999, one well used by vendors in their food preparation and as drinking water for thousands of fairgoers was contaminated with *E coli* O157:H7. A hard rain on drought-parched soil caused significant runoff. That runoff passed through a cattle barn on its way to the underground aquifer. The contamination was enough to cause over 1000 people to become sick, 65 requiring hospitalization. It also resulted in the death of 2 people. What this shows is that water can be a source of harmful bacteria and developing and following food safety practices, including testing of water sources used for food production will protect the health of consumers, and thus, the safety, image and survival of the market itself.

**RECOMMENDATION: All water used at the market should be potable. If not from a municipal source, all water sources should have microbiological testing conducted prior to each market season opening and as often as may be warranted. In addition, all sources of water should have signs indicating its potability.**

Testing of all water sources will ensure consumers that the water is safe for drinking, for hand washing and that any water used in the preparation of foods at the market, is clean and bacteria-free water. While requirements may vary from county to county, generally nonpublic water sources will need to be tested for coliform bacteria on a quarterly basis during the months in operation and a nitrate test annually. Test results should be maintained on file as proof of testing.

**References:** [www.health.state.ny.us/environmental/water/drinking/regulations](http://www.health.state.ny.us/environmental/water/drinking/regulations)



## **2. POTENTIAL SOURCE OF CONTAMINATION: PRODUCTS**

A wide variety of products are sold in farmers markets, from fresh fruits and vegetables, meats, dairy, maple syrup and honey, wines, prepared foods, processed foods, as well as plants, fresh cut flowers and crafts. Each product may have health code regulations that must be followed. See the Farmers Market Federation of NYS checklist, referenced above and attached, for regulatory permits and licenses required, based on product sold. To guarantee that each vendor is complying with such codes, market managers should maintain a copy of each up-to-date license or permit in their files.

Farm producers should produce, harvest and handle food products following Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs). These practices have been developed as a means to minimize microbial contamination and reduce the chances of foodborne illnesses coming from the farm. Farmers should consider the marketing impact of being able to tell their customers that they are concerned about their well-being, and therefore, are GAPs compliant.

It should be noted that a small scale producer is no safer than a large producer, nor do production methods (e.g., organic, biodynamic, etc.) alter the inherent safety of the foods produced. Rather it is important that each producer understand the risks that exist and implement GAPs that address these risks and are scaled to each producer's farm practices so that they are effectively practiced.

**RECOMMENDATION: Understand and implement GAPs to minimize food safety risks that exist in production and post-harvest handling of fruits and vegetables.**

Washing Produce Washing appropriate fruits and vegetables to remove field debris or field heat can be an important step in providing safe foods for consumers; however, it does not ensure the produce is free from contaminants. Therefore, it is important to understand that produce washed at the farm is not a ready-to-eat food. To be a ready-to-eat food requires a food service license from the health department and then washing under food service protocols. Produce coming in from the fields with a high level of organic matter attached should be rinsed in a single pass method; e.g. rinsed under running water. If washing in a sink, dunk tank or other submersible means, a disinfectant should be added to the water to prevent contamination that may be present from spreading. Disinfectants added to water (even single pass water) can improve the shelf life of the produce by helping to control plant pathogens and spoilage organisms.

**RECOMMENDATION: All water used in post-harvest handling should be potable.**

**RECOMMENDATION: All water used in a communal or dunk tank must contain a disinfectant appropriate for the commodity with levels monitored for effectiveness.**

**RECOMMENDATION: Signs should be posted with a message to consumers to thoroughly rinse all produce in cool, running water before consumption.**



**Value Added** A growing trend has been for farmers to find ways to add value to their farm products. This helps them to extend their marketing season and increase farm profits. Many are turning their fruits and vegetables into “value-added” products, such as jams, jellies, sauces, and pickles. Before farmers turn to processing their foods, they must be certain that they are complying with all state and federal regulations with respect to their recipe and process. This is important to assure a flavorful product with long lasting shelf life, as well as a safe food product.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Processed foods must be produced under NYS Department of Health and/or NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets regulations, including the use of Certified Food Handlers, where appropriate.

**Live Animals** In a few markets, live food animals are brought in for sale to consumers. This is a tradition among some ethnic groups, and one that markets wish to respect. However, having live food animals in vendor stalls can be a concern for cross contamination with other foods nearby.

Occasionally, live animals being sold or displayed are provided by farmers who also sell fresh fruits or vegetables. The farmer does not normally have the ability, either through staffing or market design, to sponsor two separate booths to accommodate the separation of food and live animals. In this case, the farmer should use extreme precautions to prevent cross contamination. The person working with the animals should not handle other foods for sale.

**RECOMMENDATION:** All live animals for sale or display should be kept segregated, and be located downwind from foods being sold in the market.

### **References:**

Food Safety Begins on the Farm: Good Agricultural Practices for Fresh Fruits & Vegetables, [www.gaps.cornell.edu/](http://www.gaps.cornell.edu/)

Small Farms Task Force: A Resource Guide to Direct Marketing Livestock and Poultry, [www.nyfarmersmarket.com/publications/ResourceGuideDirectMarketingMeatPoultry.pdf](http://www.nyfarmersmarket.com/publications/ResourceGuideDirectMarketingMeatPoultry.pdf)

Food Handler Certification: [http://www.servsafe.com/RegRequirements/rr\\_state\\_juris\\_summ.aspx?st=New%20York&id=119](http://www.servsafe.com/RegRequirements/rr_state_juris_summ.aspx?st=New%20York&id=119)

**Attachment:** Permits/Licenses/Certificates Required for Farmers Market Vendors



### **3. POTENTIAL SOURCE OF CONTAMINATION: ANIMALS**

Many people are concerned about having animals in a food environment. Dander, saliva, urine and feces can easily contaminate foods, either directly from the animals, or transferred from people touching the animals and then touching food. Some animals in the market may be a danger, for example, pets may become agitated and bite people or customers might trip over leashes. The issue of animals in the marketplace is a serious consideration, especially when in a park setting where dog-lovers come to exercise their dogs while shopping the marketplace.

**RECOMMENDATION: Markets should be animal-free sites, excluding service animals.**

Customers who bring pets While it is recommended to maintain foods free from animal-related contamination, it is recognized that this is not always appropriate or possible. Many markets would lose some of their customer base if dogs were not allowed in the market. In this case, additional care must be taken to guarantee the market is protecting consumers from food contaminated by animals. As role models for consumers, vendor's personal animals should be prohibited. This should be reflected in the market's rules and regulations. If markets allow animals to be in the market, the following would apply.

**SUBSTITUTE RECOMMENDATION 1: The market should maintain a designated area for animal hygiene, providing waste bags, sanitation containers, and a hand washing station. Signage should be displayed in the animal area, "Please wash hands before returning to the market and handling food products."**

**SUBSTITUTE RECOMMENDATION 2: All animals should be on a short leash and under the owner's control at all times.**

Live animal displays for entertainment Live animal displays at farmers markets introduce consumers to farm animals. These displays can be very educational to those unfamiliar with farm animals. However, care needs to be taken to prevent cross contamination with the other foods offered for sale in the market.

Market managers also must be concerned with public safety. All animals on display should be vaccinated. While baby animals are cute and cuddly, if they are too young to have had their vaccinations, they should not be part of the farm animal display. It is also advised to restrict the public from touching the animals. A first aid kit should also be on hand near a farm animal display, as well as a hand-washing station with signs reminding visitors to wash their hands after attending the exhibit or touching the animals.

**RECOMMENDATION: All live animals for display should be kept segregated from the food and vendors and, ideally, located downwind from foods being sold in the market.**

**RECOMMENDATION:** Consumers should be prohibited from eating in the animal display area.

**RECOMMENDATION:** A first aid kit, hand-wash station and signs should be used to remind visitors to wash their hands after visiting the exhibit.

**References:** Food Safety Begins on the Farm: Good Agricultural Practices for Fresh Fruits & Vegetables, [www.gaps.cornell.edu](http://www.gaps.cornell.edu)  
*Small Farms Task Force: A Resource Guide to Direct Marketing Livestock and Poultry*, [www.nyfarmersmarket.com/publications/ResourceGuideDirectMarketingMeatPoultry.pdf](http://www.nyfarmersmarket.com/publications/ResourceGuideDirectMarketingMeatPoultry.pdf)

#### **4. POTENTIAL SOURCE OF CONTAMINATION: VENDOR HYGIENE**

Farmers must take care to present a positive image to their consumers. Good hygiene is as much a marketing tool as it is a food safety precaution. Clean clothes, hair and body minimize the risk of spreading germs and contaminants from person to product.

Whenever a vendor has an open wound, it should be cleaned and covered with a bandage. Gloves should be worn as a secondary barrier to protect food from being contaminated with blood and blood-borne pathogens.

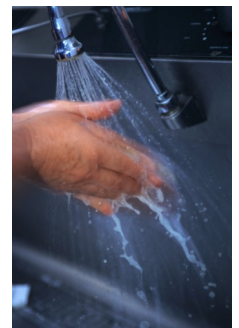
**RECOMMENDATION:** All market vendors should have clean body, hair, and clothes and be free from any signs of illness or open sores.

**RECOMMENDATION:** All vendors must wash hands before beginning work and any time they become dirty, e.g. after using the restroom, handling live animals, or eating and drinking. Note that anti-bacterial gels are not a substitute for hand washing.

Vendors should refrain from smoking and eating while selling food and all breaks should be taken in designated areas away from the vending booth. Vendors should wash their hands after returning from a break.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Smoking should not be allowed while selling and/or handling food. NYS Health Laws prohibit smoking where food is being handled, whether it is preparation or the sale of food.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Designated areas should be available for vendors to take a break, eat and smoke. Hand-washing facilities adjacent to these areas will encourage hand washing prior to returning to farmers market booths.





**References:** Food Safety at Farmers Markets and Agritourism Venues: A Primer for California Operators, [http://sfp.ucdavis.edu/farmers\\_market/food\\_safety.pdf](http://sfp.ucdavis.edu/farmers_market/food_safety.pdf)  
Farmers Market Guidelines: Minimum requirements for food safety, Oregon Dept of Agriculture, [http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/FSD/docs/pdf/guide\\_farmer\\_market.pdf?ga=t](http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/FSD/docs/pdf/guide_farmer_market.pdf?ga=t)  
Food Safety Regulations for Farmers Markets, Purdue Extension, <http://www.ces.purdue.edu/extmedia/EC/EC-740.pdf>  
Safe Food Handling at Open Markets, Kansas State University Extension, <http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/library/fntr2/FOODASYST/8market.pdf>

## **5. POTENTIAL SOURCE OF CONTAMINATION: CONSUMER CONTAMINATION**

Consumers can be the cause of food contamination. Dirty hands, sneezes, even children who take a little taste, can contaminate foods. Farmers should provide supervision over their displays to guard against such possibilities and remove any products that have potentially been contaminated. To reduce risks, consumers should be encouraged to follow proper hygiene and food handling practices. Signs can be posted encouraging consumers to wash their hands before handling fresh produce and rinsing all fresh produce in cool water before it is consumed.

**RECOMMENDATION: Hand washing stations should be available within the market for consumer use, with signs saying, "Food Safety is a Priority at our Market. Please wash your hands before handling produce." Anti-bacterial gels are not a substitute for hand washing.**

**References:** Fight BAC campaign, [www.fightbac.org](http://www.fightbac.org)

## **6. POTENTIAL SOURCE OF CONTAMINATION: PRODUCT DISPLAYS**

Product displays should be designed to limit consumer handling of products and should be supervised to recognize when cross contamination has happened and allow for all contaminated foods to be removed.

Display heights Food displayed off the ground protects consumers by eliminating potential contamination from animals and pests, as well as soil and ground debris. To maximize sales opportunities, a consumer should not have to reach for product below the knees and above the shoulder. This is as much a marketing tool as it is a food safety issue.

**RECOMMENDATION: All foods should be kept off the ground or floor during storage and display.**

Meat displays Meats sold at farmers markets are packaged from the slaughterhouse. While the packaging minimizes the risk of contamination, leaks do occur. Raw meats should be kept separated from other foods to minimize the risk of cross contamination.

**RECOMMENDATION: Vendors should segregate the foods handled at market to ensure there is no cross contamination; particularly raw meat, poultry, or seafood, and eggs.**

Display materials Foods can be contaminated if displayed or packed in contaminated containers/surfaces. To minimize the risk of contamination, containers and display surfaces, such as tables, should be cleaned and sanitized before each use. All containers should be kept covered to minimize the risk of contamination. Display surfaces should be cleaned between uses or covered with clean tablecloths to prevent contamination from residues of past market sales.

**RECOMMENDATION: Storage and display containers should be free from food and plant residue and other debris. They should be cleaned and sanitized (if possible) before each use.**

**RECOMMENDATION: Display surfaces should be cleaned and sanitized before each use.**

Shopping bags Once a disposable bag has been used, it should never be used for the sale of foods. It could be contaminated with soil, spoiled food particles, blood from meat, or other contaminants. In addition, bags that are not food grade may leach harmful chemicals into any food that is placed in it.

**RECOMMENDATION: Bags for foods sold to consumers should be new and free from chemicals that would contaminate food products.**

Egg cartons Reusing egg cartons is a common practice at farmers markets. Environmentally conscious consumers will return egg cartons when they are ready to purchase another. However, used egg cartons can be contaminated with pathogens, such as Salmonella, that can contaminate new eggs placed in the carton. Farmers should consider the risk of contamination when choosing to reuse them.

**RECOMMENDATION: Using only new cartons is the safest action. However, if reusing cartons, all prior markings, including producer identification, grade and size statements should be removed from used egg cartons. The cartons should be clean and free of any residue, and re-labeled with the farmer's identification, according to NYS Labeling Laws.**

**RECOMMENDATION: Shell eggs must be held at 45°F or below.**



Temperatures *\*There are differences in temperature requirements determined by the regulatory agency. These recommendations comply with the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, as well as the NYS Department of Health.*

Outside of the recommended temperature ranges, bacteria will grow. Any foods requiring temperature control and held outside of the recommended temperature ranges for 2 hours or longer should be destroyed.

When using a cooler to maintain cold or frozen foods, a thermometer should be available to test the temperature throughout the market day to guarantee the appropriate temperature range is maintained. In addition, the ice used must be made from potable water. The cooler should have proper drainage for ice melt to prevent food products from sitting in water. Ice melt should be collected and disposed of properly.

**RECOMMENDATION: While on display all hot foods MUST remain hot, 140°F\* or above, cold foods MUST remain cold, 41° or below, with shelled eggs held at 45°F or below, and frozen foods MUST remain frozen, 0°F or below.**

**RECOMMENDATION: All potentially hazardous and prepared/processed foods brought to the market must be prepackaged. Foods prepared on site under New York State Health Department Temporary Food Service Permit should be covered with protective cover, to prevent contamination.**

**RECOMMENDATION: All ready-to-eat foods brought to the market under NYS Agriculture and Markets regulation, such as baked goods, should be pre-packaged. Foods prepared on site as per NYS Department of Health Temporary Food Service Permit regulations must be covered with protective cover or prepackaged, to prevent contamination.**

**RECOMMENDATION: All prepackaged foods must be labeled in accordance with New York State Labeling laws.**

#### **References:**

New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets Meat Regulations:

[www.agmkt.state.ny.us/FS/industry/04circs/Art5BsaleofmeatCIR914.pdf](http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/FS/industry/04circs/Art5BsaleofmeatCIR914.pdf)

[www.agmkt.state.ny.us/FS/industry/04circs/meatforsaleatretailCIR934.pdf](http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/FS/industry/04circs/meatforsaleatretailCIR934.pdf)

*Small Farms Task Force: A Resource Guide to Direct Marketing Livestock and*

*Poultry*, [www.nyfarmersmarket.com/publications/ResourceGuideDirectMarketingMeatPoultry.pdf](http://www.nyfarmersmarket.com/publications/ResourceGuideDirectMarketingMeatPoultry.pdf)

New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets Egg Regulations:

[www.agmkt.state.ny.us/FS/industry/shelleggs.html](http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/FS/industry/shelleggs.html)

New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets Food Labeling Regulations:

[www.agmkt.state.ny.us/FS/pdfs/FSI514.pdf](http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/FS/pdfs/FSI514.pdf)

*Shared Wisdom: Selling Your Best at Farmers Markets* DVD available at Extension Offices throughout NYS

## 7. POTENTIAL SOURCE OF CONTAMINATION: TRANSPORTATION

Transportation can represent a risk to foods due to exposure to dirt, dust, or other things that could lead to contamination of the food. In addition, foods are also at risk if they fall outside the optimum temperature range for safety during transportation. To reduce risks, proper food handling, sanitation and temperature maintenance should be considered. Truck beds, vans or other transportation vehicles should be clean and the load covered during travel to eliminate possible contamination while on the road. If transporting a mixed load, potentially hazardous foods, such as raw meats and eggs, should be segregated from other foods such as fresh produce. Coolers or other insulated containers can be used to maintain the proper temperatures during transportation.

Hot foods must remain hot, cold foods must remain cold and frozen foods must remain frozen throughout the trip from farm to market. A thermometer and a temperature log should be utilized to verify appropriate temperature at departure and arrival, with necessary steps taken en route to maintain such temperatures.

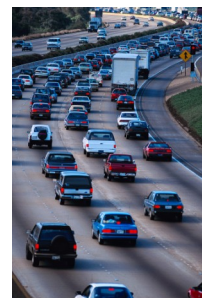
**RECOMMENDATION:** Trucks, vans or other vehicles used to transport products for consumption should be free from dirt, food residue, livestock or domestic animal debris, chemicals, fertilizers and all other potential contaminants. The enclosed space should be brought to the proper temperature for foods being transported before loading. All loads should be covered or enclosed for transporting food products, either with an enclosed body, such as a van, a truck cap or with a tarp covering to minimize exposure to the elements during transportation.

**RECOMMENDATION:** While en route all hot foods **MUST** remain hot, 140°F\* or above, cold foods **MUST** remain cold, 41°F or below, with shelled eggs held at 45°F or below, and frozen foods **MUST** remain frozen, 0°F or below.

**Reference:** NYSDAM Meat and Poultry Safety Flyer: [www.agmkt.state.ny.us/FS/pdfs/meatand.pdf](http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/FS/pdfs/meatand.pdf)

**Attachment:** Temperature log

*\*There are differences in temperature requirements determined by the regulatory agency. The recommendations above comply with the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, as well as the NYS Department of Health.*



## **8. POTENTIAL SOURCE OF CONTAMINATION: AIRBORNE**

Most farmers markets are open-air markets, occurring on a street or in a city park setting. Winds and air currents can blow contaminants over foods being offered for sale in the market. Bird droppings are another consideration. A canopy or tent provides protection against contamination from leaves, bird droppings, etc. In addition, food products can be covered to further reduce exposure risks.

**RECOMMENDATION: Tables of food products for sale in an open air market should be covered by a tent or canopy to prevent direct contamination from overhead risks.**

**RECOMMENDATION: Displayed foods should be covered to reduce risks from airborne contamination.**

## **9. POTENTIAL SOURCE OF CONTAMINATION: ANOMALOUS EVENTS**

Unusual events may occur that require a special look at food safety issues. For example, flooding can contaminate products. When flooding occurs in a market located on a street, floodwater may contain road residues including oil, gas, antifreeze, tire rubber, etc. If the food products are immersed in these flood waters, they are irretrievably contaminated and need to be discarded. This can also occur with flooding at the farm. Fields and produce that are underwater may also be contaminated and should not be harvested for sale.

Other unforeseen situations may occur while at the farmers market. Each event should be looked at in terms of potential for contaminating the foods being offered and whether those foods can be safely sold to consumers or must be discarded.

### **ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FOOD SAFETY AT FARMERS MARKETS:**

#### **BATHROOM FACILITIES**

Every market should have bathroom facilities. It is undesirable to host the public without providing for their needs and comfort. That doesn't mean that the market must build public restrooms, but the market should be able to accommodate this need. Many markets will seek permission from a neighboring business to allow market vendors and patrons to use their bathroom facilities on market days. In the absence of this kind of community partnership, the market should provide port-a-johns for consumer and vendor use. When locating a port-a-john at the market, it should be close enough to be convenient for both customers and vendors, but should be kept at enough distance so that any spill will not come into contact with food being sold.

Along with port-a-john toilets, or any bathroom facilities, is the need for a hand washing station. The hand washing station should be maintained outside of the port-a-john. This will prevent back splash, keep the toilets available for optimum use, and promote hand washing when its practice is visible to all. Hand washing stations require potable water, soap, a catch basin for gray-water, single use towels, and optimally hands-free operation of faucets. There must be signage posted at the hand washing station that "Employees/Vendors must wash hands before returning to work."

## TRACEABILITY

A concern of the FDA in foodborne illness outbreaks is being able to trace tainted food back to the source of contamination. For food processors this may involve batch coding and elaborate electronic tracking systems to follow each batch through the food system. For farmers markets, this is much easier because there is a direct sale from farmer to consumer. However, consumers will shop with multiple farmers during each market visit and remembering who they purchased from is not always possible. Farmers should make every effort to identify their market booth with their farm name, as well as their product, allowing consumers to track where their food comes from. Farm records should be kept to identify the field, harvest date and field worker for each week's product offering. All producer information should be on hand for products purchased for resale. Again, this is also a valuable marketing tool as it makes it easier for consumers to return to their favorite market farmers.

**RECOMMENDATION: All vendors in farmers markets should display farm signage at their booth that identifies the farm name.**

Farmers should also consider other ways they can keep their farm name in front of customers, such as table signage that includes the farm name, farm brochures, business cards and name tags on clothing.

For markets that allow reselling of products, the products should be clearly marked with identification of farm of origin. This allows consumers to choose whether or not to buy products that are not coming directly from the producer, and also allows traceability should there be an issue with the food's safety.

**RECOMMENDATION: All products being sold in the market that are not produced by the vendor, should be marked with the farm of origin.**

Finally, it is important that each farm document harvest information for each lot they harvest, including the field from which it was harvested, date of packing, (if different from harvest date), person(s) involved in harvesting and packing, and any other information specific to the crop. For each market day, a log should be kept to document the type and amount of each commodity that was taken to the market. This information should be linked to harvest logs so that all relevant information is available to help trace the product should an illness occur. Harvest logs are not only important to food safety, but can also help farmers track harvest quantities and sales at markets. This information allows farmers to estimate revenues for each market and plan for upcoming markets by noting what items sell best and how they can modify their marketing strategies to encourage sales of items that may not be selling so well.

**Attachment: Traceability Procedures  
Harvest Logs**





## FOOD DEMONSTRATIONS IN THE MARKETPLACE

Food demonstrations provide excellent opportunities for customers to learn about the products sold at a farmers market. Occasionally customers are unfamiliar with the seasonal foods local farmers grow, cuts of meats not found at the grocery store, or may not recognize foods in their raw state. Customer satisfaction, familiarity, and sales can be improved when customers are shown how to prepare and cook these foods, as well as taste them. Markets that sponsor food demonstrations, whether by a chef, educational organization or other entity, can use this as an opportunity to demonstrate food safety practices.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Food demonstrations must follow the “General Guidelines for Food Demonstrations at Direct Marketing Venues” as outlined in the attached reference.

**Attachment: General Guidelines for Food Demonstrations at Direct Marketing Venues**



## FOOD SAMPLING

Featured Demonstrations: Samples of the featured product/recipe through a food demonstration cannot be provided to customers unless local NYSDOH regulatory agencies allow it and if foods are either: 1) Prepared ahead of time using an approved source and brought to the farmers market in pre-packaged single serving quantities and the demo food products are not used for public distribution; or 2) The demonstrator attains a temporary food service permit through the local NYSDOH office and prepares food on site following NYSDOH protocols for a temporary food service establishments.

Agricultural producers: Raw fruits and vegetables and products produced under a 20C exemption; home processed foods, maple and honey; from the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets may be sampled at the vendor's booth. Samples of potentially hazardous foods; such as meats, poultry, and dairy; and ready-to-eat foods must be prepared in an approved facility\* and brought to the market, prepackaged, unless being sampled under a temporary food service permit. All samples must be made available free of charge, without any further preparation, such as heating or cooking, and the proper sanitary facilities are used. These facilities would include running water maintained at 105°F, equipment cleaning and sanitizing facilities, hand washing facilities (see Guidelines attached) and accessible toilet facilities. Likewise, proper temperatures must be maintained for the products as outlined in the Product Displays section above. If an agricultural producer wishes to prepare their product for sampling, (e.g., cook and serve meats) then a NYSDOH Temporary Food Service Establishment permit must be attained as outlined above for food demonstrations. Any product that has been cut, or otherwise processed on site, must be used for free samples and cannot be sold either in whole or in part.

**RECOMMENDATION: Food sampling must follow the "General Guidelines for Food Sampling at Direct Marketing Venues" as outlined in the attached reference.**

\*An approved facility refers to an Article 20C licensed establishment under NYSDAM, a permitted facility under NYSDAH or a local DOH, or a NYSDAM registered Home Processor.

**Attachment: General Guidelines for Food Sampling at Direct Marketing Venues**

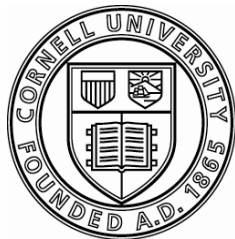


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