

Caterer

Minimum Equipment Installation and Construction Requirements

These requirements apply to any facility that supplies, serves or prepares food and beverages to any off-premise private function (contracted food service event), and is the main tenant using that kitchen. Businesses that contract as a secondary tenant of a kitchen permitted for another use should see [Transient Caterer or Food Processor Minimum Construction and Equipment Requirements](#).

Equipment Requirements

All food service equipment, refrigeration, and utensils must conform to NSF Standards or the equivalent. This includes all sinks, preparation tables, shelving units, cutting boards, small appliances, refrigeration units, hot holding equipment, and other equipment used to prepare, store, and/or handle food. Residential equipment is not approved for commercial use. NSF Standards are available for review at the Food Safety Program office.

Transportation Requirements

To protect food from contamination during transport from the food facility to the catering location:

- All potentially hazardous food must be kept at 41° F or below or 135° F or above through the use of adequate and approved equipment.
- All food and food contact items must be kept in covered containers or completely wrapped or packaged.

Refrigeration Requirements

- Commercial refrigeration units used to store foods requiring time and temperature control for safety (TCS Foods) must be rated NSF 7 or equivalent.
- Merchandising refrigerators designed for the storage of bottled beverages may be used only in limited circumstances and may not be used to store TCS foods.
- Specialized refrigeration equipment may be required for the maintenance of food temperatures during transport and/or display to the public.
- If any foods will be cooled, dedicated refrigeration should be provided unless the establishment can demonstrate that they will be able to meet cooling requirements through other means.

Food Storage and Display Requirements

- Dry storage must meet NSF standards or equivalent and store food at least 6 inches off the floor.
- Any food displayed to the public must be packaged or have [adequate sneeze protection](#).
- Any food requiring Time and Temperature Control for Safety must be held in approved equipment designed to maintain an appropriate temperature, unless [Time as a Public Health Control](#) measures have been approved by the Health Department and are being applied.

Food Preparation Equipment and Ventilation Requirements

- Commercial food preparation equipment meeting NSF standards or the equivalent is required. This includes hot holding units, food preparation tables, ovens, fryers, cutting boards, small appliances, and all other equipment used to prepare, cook, or hold food hot for service.



Allegheny County Health Department Food Safety Program

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- Equipment must be appropriate to the needs of the menu.
- Any cooking with grease-laden vapors will require a Type I exhaust system that conforms to the current National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) code, including an approved source of make-up air.
- Cooking with moisture-laden vapors will require a Type II exhaust system for heat and steam, with an approved source of make-up air.

Sink Requirements

- All food facilities must have an approved source of safe, potable water. If your proposed location is not connected to a public water source, please consult the [PA Dept. of Environmental Protection](#) for more information.
- Sinks must be equipped with both hot and cold running water.
- All sinks must be NSF or equivalent.
- A handwashing sink is required in or immediately adjacent to each food preparation area, food handling area, ware washing area, and toilet area.
- Food facilities that will be washing fresh produce, thawing frozen items under running water, chilling foods in an ice bath, and/or that have complex food preparation methods must have at least one designated food preparation sink. All food preparation sinks must have approved indirect waste lines.
- A commercial 3-bowl sink with attached drain boards is required for ware washing, even if a mechanical dishwasher is available.
- A service sink (mop sink/ utility sink) must be located within the facility.

Restroom Requirements

- All establishments shall provide employee restroom(s). If there are publicly available restrooms, these may serve as employee restrooms unless separate employee restrooms are required by [ACHD Article XV – Plumbing Code](#).
- All restrooms are required to have mechanical ventilation and self-closing doors.

Construction Requirements

- **A permitted, commercial kitchen is required.** A kitchen separate from one's home kitchen must be used for any catering business conducted out of one's home.
- **Floors, walls, and ceilings** in all food preparation and ware washing areas must be smooth, durable, non-absorbent, and easily cleanable.
- **Base coving must be installed at the wall/floor junctures** in all areas of the food establishment where food is prepared, stored, handled, and/or packaged.
- **All junctures must be sealed to no more than 1/32"**. This includes door frames, corner junctures, and all equipment that is permanently affixed to the wall or floor.
- **Lighting** must be permanently fixed, shielded from breakage, and provide at least 20 foot-candles of light in most areas of the facility. In areas where employees are working with utensils or equipment such as knives, slicers, saws, or grinders, there must be at least 50 foot-candles of light to provide for adequate safety.

For additional information, see [Allegheny County Article III Food Safety Rules and Regulations](#) and the [FDA Model Food Code](#).



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