

Can I Do That? Cook-Off Events

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Cook-Offs	1
Hand-Wash Sinks	1
Cooling Violations	1
Time Waivers	2
Foodworker Training	2
Contact Us	2

Chill Out!

In 2019 our most common critical violation was improper cooling of cooked foods. Cooling can be tricky! Foods must be cooled to 70°F in 2 hours, and 45°F or below within an additional 4 hours. If you need help figuring out a cooling method call us! We're happy to help you design a cooling plan that works for you.

More and more restaurants are calling our office asking about hosting cook-off events. Cook-offs are a great way to bring new customers into your business. So the question is... Can I do that? The answer... It depends!

As a regulated food service establishment, you are responsible for making sure the food you serve to the public is safe. Home-cooked food can never be served in your restaurant. So if your cook-off involves participants bringing their own food in for judging, the answer is no, you can't do that!

Home-cooked foods might be cooked with ingredients that aren't allowed in a restaurant kitchen (like wild venison). You have no

way to be sure that participants' home fridges can hold temperature. You don't know if they cooked the food to the required kill temperature, or if they used proper cooling techniques. All these issues create liability for you as a restaurant operator and risk to the public that eats the food.

So what **can** you do? Cook-offs are allowed if participants are using ingredients that you provide from your regular

authorized sources. The participants can cook the food at your facility, following the usual safe handling steps and supervised by your staff.

You and your staff have worked hard to learn safe food handling! When the public eats at your facility they expect the food to be safe. Every event is different, so if you have questions about a specific idea, give us a call first!



Hand-Washing Stations

All kitchens need to have a sink that is used only for hand washing. Many restaurants in our county were built before this regulation was created. Some of these restaurants use their 3-bay sink or their prep sink for hand washing. We don't encourage that practice, and all facilities should work toward meeting the code requirements.

If your restaurant does not have a dedicated hand-wash sink but does have an acceptable alternative like using the 3-bay, you probably won't have to install a hand-wash sink right away. However, you will receive a non-critical (blue) violation at each inspection. So if you're making changes, now is a good time to look into adding a hand-wash sink!



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Temperature Waivers

As a restaurant operator you know how important holding temperatures are for food safety. Cold foods must be held below 45°F and hot foods must be held above 140°F. Sometimes, though, these holding temperatures are difficult or impossible to maintain during times of service. Enter the TPHC waiver!

Time as a Public Health Control (TPHC) is an option that allows you to hold food out of temperature for a limited time. This allows you to serve items that might be ruined by long hot holding, like pizza slices. TPHC waivers can also help if you have a salad bar or service station that can't hold temperature.

A TPHC waiver means that **time** is being used instead of **temperature** to reduce bacterial growth. With the waiver you are required to write down the time when the food is removed from hot or cold holding. You also have to write down when the food will be discarded. At the end of the time listed on your waiver any leftover food must be thrown away.

Once your restaurant has this waiver, you will just have to keep a record of the placement and discard times for all the foods you chose. Some restaurants use dry erase boards or post-it notes for this. When we inspect your restaurant we won't need to take temperatures of these items, but we will be looking for those time records. **If you don't record times for your waived foods, you will get a critical public health hazard violation!**

Applying for a TPHC waiver is easy. Give us a call and we will work with you to figure out what foods need time or temperature control and how the process will work in your facility.



Food Worker Training

Online Food Workers Course

The Livingston County Department of Health is now offering an **online** Food Worker Training Certification! This course may be completed at anytime. For more information, visit our website:

<https://www.livingstoncounty.us/1019/Food-Worker-Training>

Please note that there is \$10 fee for the online course which is paid directly to the third party course provider. The LCDOH will continue to offer in-person trainings free of charge at our regularly scheduled times.

In-Person Food Workers Courses

Wednesday, March 11, 2020

5:30 PM to 8:30 PM

Thursday, March 12, 2020

8:30 AM to 11:30 AM

PRE-REGISTRATION IS A MUST!!

Space is limited and classes fill up quickly. Please register on or before March 6, 2020 by calling the LCDOH at (585) 243-7280 or register online at the link above!

All courses are being held at the Livingston County Highway Department at the Hampton Corners Complex on Gypsy Lane.

At least one employee from each food establishment must have a current certificate from an approved Food Workers Course. Please call the LCDOH for more details regarding approved courses.