

Publication FST-310NP

What do I need to know to provide SAMPLES at the farmers market?

Why should I provide samples at the farmers market?

Offering samples at the farmers market allows customers to sample your food before purchasing. This is a great way to promote your business. Even though samples are given away and not sold, vendors should follow safe practices when preparing and offering these food items.

Where should I prepare my samples?

There are two ways to prepare samples:

- ▶ Prepare and package samples in your home kitchen and transport them to the market.
- ▶ Prepare samples while at the market.

Regardless of how you choose to prepare your samples, safe food handling and preparation practices, and regulations associated with your business should be followed. This document will provide best practices for sample preparation.

What are some guidelines to follow for preparing and serving samples at the farmers market?

Apply the same food safety practices for preparing your samples as you do when making your product.

1. Follow good personal hygiene.
 - Pull your hair back, wear a cap, visor or hairnet
 - Wash hands frequently with soap and water. (The use of hand sanitizers does not replace good hand-washing). Be sure to wash hands after doing other tasks, like smoking, eating, drinking, handling money etc.
 - Wear food-safe gloves during food handling and preparation to prevent contamination.

2. Clean and sanitize surfaces and utensils to prevent cross-contamination.
 - A good sanitizer to use that is easy to transport to/from the market is a mild bleach solution (1 tsp of regular strength unscented household bleach per gallon of water) in a spray bottle.
 - Keep samples that require refrigeration in a cooler on ice.
 - Use a calibrated thermometer to confirm that samples are kept cold at a temperature below 41°F (5°C).
3. Hold hot samples at hot-holding temperatures.
 - Use a calibrated thermometer to confirm that your samples are kept above 135°F (57.2°C).
4. Limit exposure of your samples to outside temperatures to four hours or less if they require temperature control.
 - After four hours, discard any uneaten samples.
 - If outside temperatures are greater than 90°F (32.2°C), then samples should not be left without temperature control for more than 1 hour.
5. Protect your samples from the environment, people, and pests.
 - Serve samples with
 - Toothpicks (see fig. 1).
 - Single-serve disposable utensils (e.g., small spoons or forks; fig. 2).
 - Single-use deli paper.
 - Single-use cups with lids (see fig. 3).
 - Keep samples covered (with a dome or plastic covering; see fig. 4).

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6. Protect customers with allergies.

If your sample contains one of the nine major allergens (milk, eggs, crustacean shellfish, finfish, tree nuts, wheat, peanuts, soybeans, and sesame), display a sign or label to inform customers.

7. Cover samples and store them at least 6 inches off the ground.



Figure 1. Samples served using single-use cups and toothpicks. (Photo courtesy of Tim Woods, University of Kentucky.)



Figure 2. Samples served using single-use cups and single-use spoons. (Photo courtesy of Tim Woods, University of Kentucky.)



Figure 3. Samples served using closed single-use cups. (Photo courtesy of Tim Woods, University of Kentucky.)



Figure 4. Samples covered and protected with a dome or plastic covering. (Photo courtesy of Renee Boyer, Virginia Tech.)

What specific practices should I follow if I am preparing and packaging my samples in my home kitchen?

Preparing samples from your home kitchen allows you to better control food safety hazards. You can prepare your samples in packaged single servings to avoid any contamination during transport and at the market. (e.g., use 2-ounce [60 mL] cups with lids; see figs. 1-3). If samples require refrigeration, be sure to transport them in a cooler with ice.

What specific practices should I follow if I am preparing samples at the market?

Even if you are preparing your samples at the market, it is best to divide your samples into single-serving portions for patrons. This minimizes cross-contamination because the customer selects one sample and avoids touching others.

You must follow the same practices at your market booth as you do in your home kitchen during food preparation. To do this, you may want to incorporate an on-site handwashing station (see fig. 5) at your market booth, and/or an on-site warewashing station. A warewashing setup includes three basins: one for washing, one for rinsing, and one for sanitizing (see fig. 6). Some markets require these items.

Reference

Boyer, R. R., and L. L. Yang. 2017. "Establishing a Food Safe Market: Considerations for Vendors at the Farmers Market." In *Food Safety and Farmers Markets: A Guide to Enhancing Safety of Local Foods*, edited by J. Harrison, 145-66. New York: Springer.

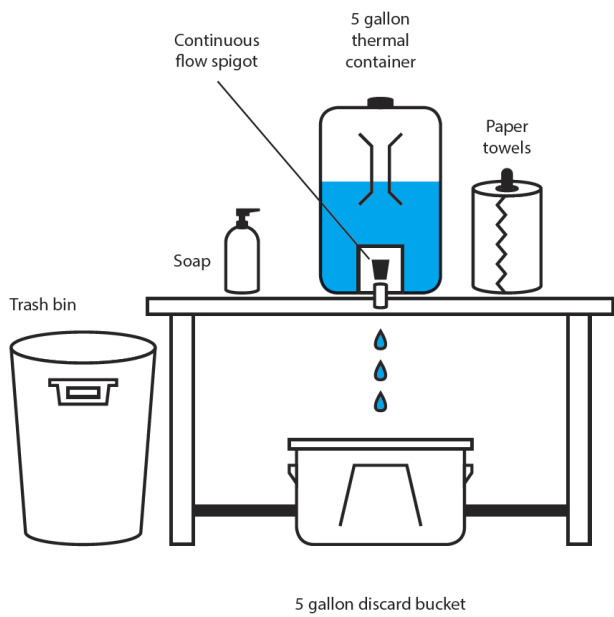


Figure 5. Example of an on-site handwashing station setup. (Photo courtesy of Junyi Wu, <https://junyiwu.com>.)

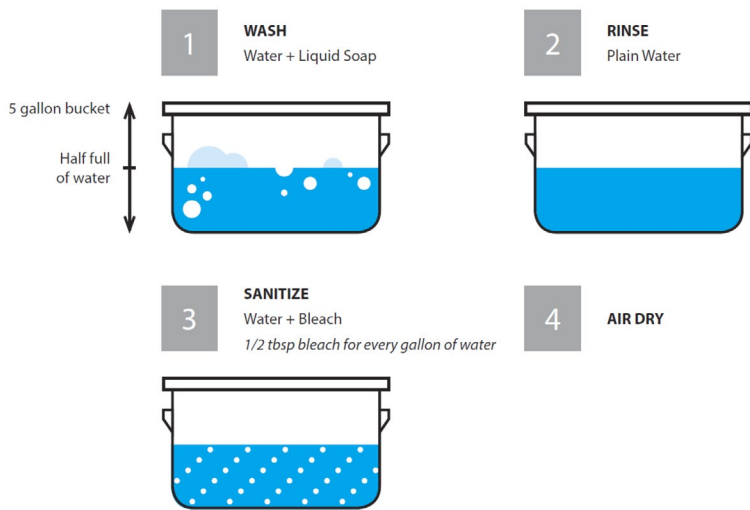


Figure 6. Example of an on-site warewashing station setup. (Photo courtesy of Junyi Wu, <https://junyiwu.com>.)