

FOOD DISTRIBUTION AT BREWERIES & WINERIES

Frequently Asked Questions

Does my brewery or winery need a Health Permit from the Merced County Division of Environmental Health (MCDEH)?

It depends...

- **NO**, if you do not exceed 25 sq. ft. of non-perishable, pre-packaged food items and crackers/pretzels that are served to accompany beer or wine. The California Retail Food Code (CRFC) exempts this small level of food distribution.
- **YES**, if you exceed 25 sq. ft. of pre-packaged food (perishable and non-perishable food allowed) to be sold or served at your winery or brewery. The proposed area must meet all CRFC construction and equipment standards and may need to be approved by MCDEH plan check. Examples of allowable foods include: prepackaged foods like cheese, sandwiches, meat, and salads, as well as bottled beverages. All foods must come from an approved source, such as a permitted food distributor, permitted market, or a cottage food operator.
- **YES**, if you are a Host Facility for Caterers. Your establishment must meet all construction and equipment standards of the CRFC and be approved by MCDEH plan check.
- **YES**, if you are a winery or brewery that has installed a MCDEH plan check-approved commercial kitchen for food preparation.

Can my customers bring in their own food or have food delivered from a permitted restaurant?

YES, with your permission, customers can bring in prepared food for their own consumption or order food and have it delivered to them at your brewery or winery (for example, pizza delivery).

Can I sell Cottage Food at my brewery or winery?

YES, permitted cottage food operators produce pre-packaged, non-perishable foods that can be sold at breweries and wineries. A health permit will be required for the Cottage Food Operator and your facility **and** brewery or winery.

Are Temporary Food Vendors or Caterers allowed to sell food outside of my brewery or winery?

- **Temporary Food Vendors** are only allowed to operate at permitted **community events** in conjunction with a Temporary Event Organizer. A **community event** is defined as an event that is of civic, political, public, or educational nature as approved by the MCDEH.
- **Catering Operations** who meet the requirements of the CRFC for direct sales are permitted to operate at permitted **Host Facilities** serving food directly to tasting room customers for up to 4 hours in a 12-hour period.

Are mobile food facilities (food trucks or food carts) allowed to sell food outside my brewery or winery?

YES, MCDEH-permitted mobile food facilities are allowed to operate outside the winery during tasting room hours. The mobile units must display a current MCDEH permit sticker and permit. Vendors operating the unit must have access to a commercial restroom within 200 feet during the time period they operate at your site.

Who can I call or email with questions?

For more information regarding Host Facilities, please contact our office at 209-381-1100 or email FoodProgram@countyofmerced.com. You can also visit DEH's website at www.countyofmerced.com/eh.