

A Guide to Opening a Food Premises

The Health Protection and Promotion Act (HPPA) of Ontario requires that every person who intends to operate a food premises give notice of this intention to the Medical Officer of Health for the health unit in which the food premises is to be located. Every person who operates a food premises must meet the requirements of the *Ontario Food Premises Regulation (493/17)*.

The most important part of owning and operating a food service business is the health and safety of your customers. Every year, a total of about 4 million (1 in 8) Canadians are affected by a foodborne illness (*Public Health Agency of Canada, 2016*). Operating a sanitary food premises can prevent your patrons from being exposed to any of these illnesses. The purpose of this guide is to provide potential owners and operators of food service business with information on the operating requirements for food premises.

Your food premises must meet the requirements of *O. Reg 493 – Food Premises* before you begin the operation of your food business. The information in this guide is meant to supplement and clarify some of the requirements of *O. Reg 493 – Food Premises* as you plan and prepare for your business to open. Public health inspectors are available for consultation during this process and will be able to provide specific guidance that may not be included in this document.

This guide discusses the following:

- Planning Considerations
- Menu Considerations
- Water Supply
- Handwashing Stations
- Equipment
- Storage
- Floors, Walls and Ceilings
- Utility Area
- Dishwashing Equipment
- Extra Requirements for Mobile Food Premises
- Sewage Disposal
- Garbage Disposal & Pest Prevention
- Sanitary Facilities
- Safe Food Handler Training and Certification
- Employee Hygiene
- Smoke Free Ontario Act
- Healthy Menu Choices Act

In addition to this guide, please see:

- *Notice of Intent to Operate a Food Premises*
- Food Premises Planning Checklist
- O. Reg 493 – Food Premises
- Poster/Fact sheets regarding handwashing and dishwashing
- Information sheet about our ChooseWise website

When you are ready to begin the process of opening your food premises, complete the “**Notice of Intent to Operate a Food Premises**” form and deliver it to a NWHU office or submit it to envhealth@nwhu.on.ca

A local public health inspector will contact you to discuss your application and review your plans. Once construction is complete, you must contact the public health inspector to schedule a pre-opening inspection.

Note: Approval of plans by a public health inspector is for food safety purposes only and does not mean that building, zoning, fire or other requirements have been met. Ensure you contact all other appropriate agencies.



Northwestern
Health Unit

www.nwhu.on.ca

Planning Considerations

The layout of your establishment is important for good sanitation. This layout should create a smooth and uninterrupted workflow, from receiving, cooking and serving, to the return of soiled items to the dishwashing area. Ensure that you involve the public health inspector in the planning process. They can provide information and assist you in developing a layout that focuses on food safety.

When submitting plans to the public health inspector, they must include:

- The location of all rooms including any used for food preparation, dishwashing, storage, service areas, and washrooms;
- The location of equipment and sinks



Menu Considerations

There are three basic categories of food-related activities that will impact your design plans:

1) Premises selling only low-risk, pre-packaged food items and/or hot beverages, that use only single-use containers or eating utensils and have an eating/drinking area <56m²

2) Premises that:

- **Do not prepare food and that only distribute low-risk or pre-packaged food items; OR**
- **Prepare only low-risk food items and serve only low-risk food items and/or pre-packaged, ready-to-eat food items**

3) All other food premises

Pre-packaged food means food that is packaged at a premise other than the premises where it is offered for sale

Low-risk food means food that is not potentially hazardous food. Some examples of low-risk food items are most breads/buns (no meat, cream filling, etc), most baked goods (no custard, dairy filling), chocolate, hard candies and brittles, granola, coffee beans and tea leaves.

Potentially hazardous food means food in a form or state that is capable of supporting the growth of infectious or toxigenic micro-organisms and which requires time and temperature control to limit such growth. Some examples of potentially hazardous food include dairy products, meat, egg products, etc.

Water Supply

- **Premises that are selling only hot beverages or prepackaged food items that are low-risk, where only single-service articles (single-use disposable) are used, and eating/drinking area is <56m² are required to:**
 - Provide a supply of potable water adequate for the operation of the premises.
- **Premises that do not fall into the category listed above are required to:**
 - Provide a supply of potable water adequate for the operation of the premises.
 - Provide potable hot and cold running water under pressure in areas where food is processed, prepared or manufactured, or where utensils are cleaned.
- If your water supply is from a privately owned system, you may be required to comply with the requirements of Ontario Regulation 319/08- Small Drinking Water Systems. If required, compliance with Regulation 319/08 must be achieved before the business will be permitted to operate.

Handwashing Stations

- **Most food premises** are required to have an adequate number of handwashing stations that are conveniently located for use by food handlers, and that are used only for the hand washing of employees.
 - Ensure hand washing stations consist of a basin with hot and cold running water that is close to a soap dispenser and either a mechanical hand dryer or single-service towel dispenser
 - Maintain hand washing stations and keep them adequately supplied
- **Premises that are either *preparing only low-risk food and serving only low-risk or pre-packaged, ready-to-eat foods* OR that do not prepare food and only distribute low-risk or pre-packaged food items** are not required to have a designated hand washing station; however, there must be potable hot and cold running water under pressure in areas where food is prepared, processed or manufactured.
- **Premises selling only low-risk, prepackaged food items and/or hot beverages that use only single-service articles and have an eating/drinking area <math>< 52\text{m}^2</math>** are simply required to have a supply of potable water adequate for the operation of the premises. Food handlers must still wash their hands as often as necessary in order to prevent contamination of food.



Equipment

- All equipment must be of sound construction and easily cleanable.
- All equipment must be arranged in a manner that permits proper cleaning. Larger equipment should have wheels whenever possible to allow for thorough cleaning of walls and floors nearby the equipment.
- All temperature-holding equipment (i.e. refrigerators, hot holding units) must have an accurate indicating thermometer in an easy-to-see location so that temperatures can be monitored.

Storage

- Shelving in storage areas must be designed to protect food from contamination and must be easy to clean.
- Storage areas must be kept clean and dry.

Floors, Walls and Ceilings

- Floors and floor coverings must be tight, smooth and non-absorbent. Ceilings and walls must be easy to clean. These surfaces must be kept in good repair.

Utility Area

- Every premises should have a utility area where cleaning supplies are kept. This area must be separate from the food preparation and storage areas.
- It is recommended that a janitorial/mop sink is provided in the utility area

Dishwashing Equipment

Requirements for specific dishwashing equipment depend on the category of food being served/sold, as well as the type of utensil/article being washed. **Multi-service articles** are containers or utensils that are intended for repeated use in the service or sale of food, such as forks, cups and plates. **Some examples of utensils that are not considered multi-service articles are those used only for the preparation of food (i.e. pots, pans, spatulas).**



Specific Requirements for:

Premises selling only low-risk, prepackaged food items and/or hot beverages that use only single-service articles (single-use disposable) and have an eating/drinking area <math><52\text{m}^2</math>

Have a supply of potable water adequate for the operation of the premises

Premises who don't prepare food and that only distribute low-risk or pre-packaged food items; OR Premises who prepare only low-risk food items and serve only low-risk food items and/or pre-packaged, ready-to-eat food items:

Utilize either mechanical or manual dishwashing procedures.

If manual dishwashing will be performed:

- Use a three-sink-method for dishwashing for multi-service articles.
- Use a two-sink-method for dishwashing for other utensils, etc., specific equipment (i.e. number of sinks) is not indicated.

Note: Specific dishwashing equipment (i.e. a certain number of sinks) is not prescribed in O.Reg 493/20 for this category of food premises.

All other food premises that use utensils (other than single-use disposable utensils) in the handling, preparing, processing, packaging, displaying, serving, dispensing, storing, containing or consuming of food:

Utilize either mechanical or manual dishwashing procedures.

If manual dishwashing will be performed, equipment for washing by hand consisting of drainage racks and a sink/sinks of sufficient size, made of corrosion-resistant material with the following number of compartments will be required:

- Three-compartment sink/three sinks for premises using multi-service articles:
- Two-compartment sink/two sinks for premises not using multi-service articles

Please Note:

- If mechanical dishwashers will be used, they must meet the requirements for commercial dishwashers outlined in O.Reg 493/17- Food Premises
- A two-sink method of dishwashing consists of washing and rinsing dishes in the first step and sanitizing in the second step in accordance with S.19 of O.Reg 493/17.
- A three-sink method of dishwashing consists of washing dishes in the first step, rinsing by immersion in clean water in the second step, and sanitizing in the third step in accordance with S.19 of O.Reg 493/17.

Extra Requirements for Mobile Food Premises

- All food must be prepared within the premise and served to the public by persons working within the premise.
- Only single-use articles may be used to serve the food.
- Unless the mobile premises is selling only pre-packaged or non-hazardous food items, separate holding tanks that are equipped with an easily readable water level gauge must be provided for potable water and wastewater.



Sewage Disposal

- Where sewage disposal is not supplied by the municipality, an approved sewage system must be installed before construction of the premises. Please contact the chief building official of the Northwestern Health Unit for permits and approvals.
- If there is an existing system already on the property, a performance level review will be required. Any required upgrades to the system must be completed prior to approval of the premises.

Garbage Disposal & Pest Prevention

- Provide sufficient space and enclosed areas for storage of garbage, grease and recyclables.
- Garbage areas should not be near food preparation or storage areas.
- Ensure premises is protected against the entry of pests and kept free of conditions that lead to the harbouring or breeding of pests. This may include installing screens on windows and screen doors and weather stripping in external entryways.
- External doors that may be kept open to provide relief to staff on warm days must have a secure screened door to protect the opening from the entry of pests.

Sanitary Facilities

- Washroom facilities must be kept in a sanitary condition, be properly equipped and in good repair at all times. Washroom facilities must be designed and maintained in accordance with the requirements of the Ontario Building Code. Please speak with a local building inspector for more information.
- **Premises that are selling only hot beverages or prepackaged food items that are low-risk, where only single-service articles (single-use disposable) are used, and the eating/drinking area is <56m² are exempt from specific washroom facility requirements under O. Reg 493/17.**

Safe Food Handler Training and Certification

- Food premises that prepare food items that are not low-risk or serve food items that are not low-risk or pre-packaged and ready-to-eat are required to have at least 1 certified food handler on-site during every hour of operation.
- This certified food handler must have completed a training program that is recognized by the Province of Ontario.
- For more information about safe food handler certification, please visit the clinics and classes page at www.nwhu.on.ca.



Employee Hygiene

- At every food premises there must be an area that is separate from the food preparation area for employees' street clothes and personal items.
- Employees should always wear clean outer garments when starting their shift.
- Employees must confine hair.
- Employees must not smoke or vape in a food premises.
- Employees must wash their hands after performing any task that could contaminate hands and before starting or resuming food related tasks.
- Employees who are suffering from any illness caused by an infectious agent that can be spread through the medium of food should not come into contact with food and should not be allowed to work until symptoms have subsided. Contact your local public health inspector for more information.
- Employees who have open cuts or abrasions on their hands or arms should not handle food. Any time bandages are used to cover wounds on hands, gloves must be worn. Contact your local public health inspector to discuss proper glove use.



Smoke Free Ontario Act

- All enclosed workplaces must have signage indicating that smoking and vaping are not permitted. These signs must be posted at all entrances and exits as well as in each washroom.
- If your food premises has a patio, you will be required to post signage on the patio as well.
- You may be exempt from posting signage if your business is operating in your private home and you do not have customers or employees that come to the premises.
- Signage is provided by Northwestern Health Unit.

Healthy Menu Choices Act

If you are part of a food premises chain that has more than 20 locations in Ontario, you will have to follow the *Health Menu Choices Act, 2015* and will be required to follow menu labelling requirements.