

# FACT SHEET

## TASTE TESTING

Taste testing or sampling of foods can be a great way for your potential customers to 'try before they buy'. However, if not done properly and hygienically, samples can be a source of food contamination and could spread diseases. Food that is not protected from contamination can make your customers sick.

### Know the risks

There are many potential risks associated with taste testing - from people, from bacteria and even the surrounding environment. If people contaminate your food samples by breathing, coughing or touching, diseases can be spread. Someone sneezing nearby could easily contaminate samples that are unprotected. Some bacteria and viruses can survive for hours on the surface of food.

Bacteria contamination can occur if samples are not kept at correct temperatures or not separated from other foods that may cause contamination.

Animals, dust, foreign objects and chemicals can also cause contamination. While taste testing can be an effective way to sell your product, it is in your best interest, and the interest of your customers' health, to keep your food samples free from all types of contamination.

### Preparing or manufacturing the food

If you provide taste testing for your customers, you need to ensure that the food has been properly prepared.

You need to demonstrate that the food has been prepared at approved premises. The approval for the premises where the food was made must be available (on request) wherever the sample food is available for public consumption.

If you are cooking, preparing or displaying food samples on site, for example at a market, you will also need to hold an approval to operate a Temporary Food Stall. Even if you are offering samples for taste testing of pre-packaged foods such as corn chips and bottled salsa you will require an approval to operate a Temporary Food Stall.

The Temporary Food Stall will need to meet the minimum requirements of the Food Act 2003 (Food Safety Standards).

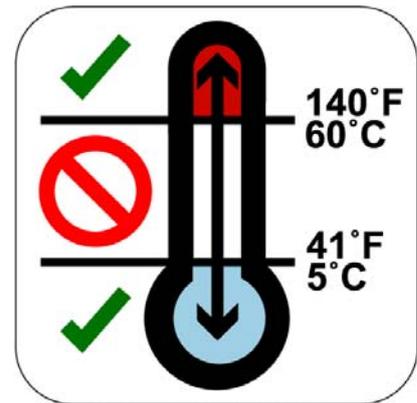
### Transporting of food

All food must be protected from contamination during transport. It should be kept totally sealed and transported in a clean vehicle.



If the food is potentially hazardous (that is, required to be kept hot or cold), careful consideration must be given to how you are going to transport the food and maintain correct temperatures.

- Cold food must be kept at 5°C or less. Use refrigerated vehicles or, for shorter time periods, an esky packed with ice.
- Hot food must be kept at 60°C or higher. Use vehicles that are equipped to keep food hot or, for shorter time periods, insulated hot bags.
- You must have a food thermometer with you to ensure that food is kept at the required temperatures at all times.



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## Serving the food

When serving, it is important to keep the food protected from all the different types of contamination.

### Ways to protect food from contamination:

- Provide single serves of your product. Use disposable cups, spoons, toothpicks or other implements to minimise the amount of handling by the customer.
- Provide a physical barrier (a sneeze barrier), such as perspex between the customer and the food.
- Display small quantities, so that food samples have less time to become contaminated.
- For potentially hazardous food, keep the food samples hot (above 60°C) or cold (below 5°C).
- Signage must be displayed adjacent to the taste testing stating 'No double dipping, single serve only'.
- Supervise the samples to ensure that customers do not contaminate by re-dipping spoons or other items.
- Provide litter containers so that customers can dispose of single use items, leaving the area clean and tidy.
- Use tongs and gloves when you handle samples.
- Best practice taste testing of food is achieved when the proprietor or staff at the stall fully control taste testing by keeping the taste testing products protected behind the counter and serving the product to the customer with a tong or other implement.

**Food samples that are manufactured, prepared, transported and served correctly will have much less risk of contamination and will help you present a quality product for taste testing.**

## The law

National food safety standards have been developed to reduce food-borne illness and to help food businesses produce food that is safe to eat. Copies of the Food Safety Standards can be obtained by contacting the Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) on (02) 6271 222, emailing: [info@foodstandards.gov.au](mailto:info@foodstandards.gov.au) or on the website [www.foodstandards.gov.au](http://www.foodstandards.gov.au).

While Council wishes to assist you in operating a successful Temporary Food Stall it is legally required to enforce these laws. Council can issue a statutory notice if a business does not meet the safety standards, and will collect evidence to prosecute the business if the problem persists.

For further information on this topic, please contact Council on 4232 0444.