



Quality Food Analysis, Consultation & Training Services, LLC

P.O. Box 15906, Beverly Hills, CA 90209

323.823.1764 ? Qualityfacts@aol.com

fax 323.571.1889

February 2008: Food Catering

The Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not regulate catering businesses. In most areas of the United States, food safety inspections of catering businesses are made by the local city or county health department in charge of food safety inspections. If you are a full-time catering business, it is highly recommended that you contact your local health department and inquire about permitting and the need for licensing, as well as whether or not food preparation at home is allowed. In most states, food preparation at home is not allowed for catering purposes. Whether or not you need a license, or require a health inspection, it is important to minimize risks of foodborne illness. Please remember the following tips:

1. Food source: Make sure to purchase all of your food from approved sources. Approved sources are those that are licensed by an enforcement agency and are inspected regularly. Keep an eye out for recalls (e.g., spinach, green leaf) and know your food distributors' recall plan.
2. Food preparation: Remember that one of the main causes of foodborne illness is the preparation of food in advance and not taking proper time and temperature control. Make sure that you and your workers know all of the food preparation requirements for a restaurant and follow them, especially food temperature, food utensils, and hand washing related regulations.
3. Transportation: Check for delivery vehicle cleanliness? Check for evidence of insects; e.g., flies, cockroaches, and rodents. You may need to have fumigation services of your vehicle if you see a problem. Make sure the food temperatures are also maintained during food transportation.
4. Holding temperatures: Are the foods at or above 135°F or above or 41°F or below? Make sure that the hot foods are maintained in warming units and cold foods are stored in refrigeration units that will maintain temperature. If ice is used for holding cold foods, make sure to have enough ice to last the entire event and have thought about the disposal of the liquid discharge. In most states, it is unlawful to discharge melted ice onto the grounds or streets.
5. Food protection: Will the food be protected from guests? Make sure the displayed food is either covered or protected by sneeze guards and have serving utensils readily available for each of the products if the event is buffet.
6. Restroom and dishwashing capabilities: Ask the client if there is an easily accessible restroom for your workers. Hand washing is one of the main ways to prevent foodborne illness. If there is no easily accessible hand washing sink (with soap and towel), be sure to arrange for your own temporary facility. In addition to handwashing well I highly recommend that all food handlers wear gloves and replace them frequently. Remember to wash the hands before wearing a new pair of gloves.

Five minutes a day of staff training would make all the difference. Why don't you try various methods to incorporate training into your work day? If you have any questions regarding sanitation or food safety, or require additional information regarding staff training, please feel free to e-mail us.