

## Food Catering Requirements

Minnesota Food Code, Chapter 4626

---

### *I would like to open a catering business. What do I need to know?*

**1. Do I need a food establishment license to operate a catering business?**

Yes. The Minnesota Food Code, Chapter 4626, includes “catering” in its definition of food establishment and a license is required.

**2. Do I need any type of food safety certificate to operate a catering business?**

Yes. A caterer must employ at least one full-time certified food manager (full-time would be defined as working during most of the time that the catering business is operating). *Minnesota Rules, parts 4626.2000 – 4626.2025*

**3. How do I become a certified food manager?**

The person who wants to be certified must take a food safety course, pass an exam approved by the state of Minnesota, and submit required materials including a completed application, proof of exam and a \$35 fee. These materials are then submitted to our St. Paul office for processing. For more information, see “Food Manager Certification Fact Sheet,” which is available from our office or from our Web site at [www.health.state.mn.us](http://www.health.state.mn.us) and select “Food Manager Certification.”

**4. Do I need any special facilities or equipment?**

Yes. Catering operations require a commercially equipped kitchen that meets the requirements of Minnesota Food Code (Minnesota Rules, parts 4626.0450 – 4626.0505). Domestic kitchens and equipment cannot be approved. See the “Plan Review Guide” for more specific details.

**5. Am I allowed to cater out of my home?**

Yes, a catering business may be operated out of your home, but only if it complies with specific requirements.

**Zoning:** First you should contact your zoning office to determine if a catering business would be permitted in the location you have selected. Zoning approval is required before the health authority can evaluate your plans. See the Plan Review Guide for specific details.

**Plan Review:** The plan review is conducted to determine if the facility is properly designed and equipped, *and* if food preparation and storage facilities are completely separated from your living quarters per the Minnesota Food Code (Minnesota Rules, parts 4626.0035(A) and 4626.1425). The family kitchen cannot be used for catering, and the catering facility cannot be used as the family kitchen. The two must be separate and distinct.

**Licensed:** In addition, a food establishment license is required to operate a catering business. This license is obtained from the health authority.

**6. What exactly does “separated from my living quarters” mean?**

“Living or sleeping quarters located on the premises of a food establishment . . . shall be separated from rooms and areas used for food establishment operations by complete partitioning and solid self-closing doors.” *Minnesota Rules, part 4626.1430*



Environmental Health Services Section  
625 North Robert Street, P.O. Box 64975  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55164-0975  
651-201-4500  
<http://www.health.state.mn.us>

# Food Catering Requirements – page 2

---

**7. Is it possible to rent or lease a facility that is already equipped for food service?**

Yes. Many caterers have an arrangement with a facility that is already licensed as a food establishment. Check with operators of halls, private organizations, clubs, churches, etc. that may be equipped with food preparation and storage facilities to find out if they are interested in such an arrangement. Before signing any documents, arrange for an evaluation from the health authority in that jurisdiction to determine if the facility is in compliance with the Minnesota Food Code and could be licensed for catering. Any facility used for catering operations must first be licensed.

**8. If a facility is already licensed by the health authority as a foodservice establishment and I want to lease it for my catering operation, do I need to obtain any additional licenses?**

Yes. The catering operation must be licensed separately at that location.

*NOTE:* If you want to operate out of another location, a separate license would be required at the second location.

**9. What are some other items I should consider early in this process?**

You must determine what is available for water and sewer service. If municipal services are not available and there is a well or septic system on the property, they must be evaluated for compliance with applicable codes. If on-site septic services are to be installed, separate plans for the septic system must be submitted for review and approval.

If you are constructing a new facility or remodeling an existing food establishment, plans of the facility and separate plans of the plumbing system must be submitted to the health authority well in advance of any construction or changes. A plan review packet describing the information that must be submitted is available from this office.

**10. Do I need a special vehicle and equipment for transporting food?**

Yes. A vehicle with a cleanable interior must be provided for transporting food. Potentially hazardous food items must be maintained at proper temperatures. Hot food items must be maintained at 140° F or above and cold food items at 40° F or below. In order to maintain proper temperatures, insulated or electrical hot and cold food-holding containers must be used and they must comply with the requirements of the National Sanitation Foundation (NSF).

**Additional attachments or handouts that might be helpful:**

- MDH Foodservice Plan Review Guide
- “Starting a Food Business in Minnesota” (available at <http://www.mda.state.mn.us> )
- Food Manager Certification Fact Sheet and application (also available at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/food/fmc>).

**For Further Information Contact the Following MDH District Offices:**

Bemidji	◆	(218) 308-2100
Duluth	◆	(218) 723-4642
Fergus Falls	◆	(218) 332-5150
Mankato	◆	(507) 344-2700
Marshall	◆	(507) 537-7151
Metro	◆	(651) 201-4500
Rochester	◆	(507) 206-2700
St. Cloud	◆	(320) 223-7300

To request this document in another format, call 651-201-4500 or TTY 651-201-5797.