



# Opening a Food Facility in Ventura County

*A Step-by-Step Guide for New Food Business Owners*

## What is a Food Facility?

A food facility is any operation that stores, prepares, packages, serves, or sells food for human consumption at the retail level. Examples include restaurants, bars, markets, cafeterias, food trucks, food carts, and temporary food facilities at community events.

## What Counts as Food?

Under the California Retail Food Code (CRFC), 'food' includes any item intended for human consumption — from full meals to candy, soft drinks, coffee, bottled water, packaged snacks, ice and even chewing gum. If you handle or sell any of these, you operate a food facility and need a health permit.

## Who Needs a Health Permit?

If you are planning to start a food business to offer or sell food to the public, you most likely will need a health permit from the Environmental Health Division (EHD). This document will provide information on the various permits available to offer or sell food to the public as well as provide links to the EHD's website to obtain more information. You may also call us at (805) 654-2813 if you have questions.

Note: Permits are not transferable and are valid only for a specific location and operation.

## How to Obtain a Health Permit for a Permanent Food Facility

### 1. New Construction or Taking Over a Closed Facility

If you are building a new facility or taking over one that is currently not in operation, you must submit plans to EHD for review and approval so the EHD can verify that the facility is in compliance with the current requirements in the CRFC. Submit your application and plans online through the Electronic Plan Submittal Portal or in person at 800 S. Victoria Ave, Ventura, CA. Visit <https://rma.venturacounty.gov/divisions/environmental-health/food-facilities-plan-check/> for more information or use links below.

- [Electronic Plan Submittal Portal](#) - Submit applications and plans online
- [Food Plan Check Frequently Asked Questions](#) - PDF
- [Plan Check Guide for Food Establishments](#) - PDF
- [Plan Check Guide for Food Establishments \(Spanish\)](#) - PDF
- [Food Establishment Construction Application](#) - PDF

### 2. Change of Ownership of an Existing & Operating Food Facility

If you're taking over an existing, operating food facility and will not be making any changes to the menu, equipment or to the facility, you may contact EHD at (805) 654-2813 to schedule a change-of-ownership inspection. The facility must pass inspection

before the permit is issued to the new owner. If you will be making any structural changes to the facility or changing the menu or equipment, you will need to submit plans to EHD for review and obtain approval prior to scheduling a permit inspection.

### **3. Remodeling or Menu Changes**

If you are already operating a permanent food facility and are considering remodeling the facility or making changes to the menu or to the equipment, make sure you first consult with your assigned health inspector. Some changes require plan review and approval before construction begins or changes are made. Remember that the permit is specific to a person, location and operation.

## **How to Obtain a Health Permit for a Non-Permanent Food Facility**

### **Mobile Food Facilities (Food Trucks/Trailers & Carts)**

A Mobile Food Facility (MFF) permit is required to sell food from a food truck, food trailer or cart. Most MFFs are subject to plan review prior to issuance of the permit. To obtain a MFF permit, you may need to submit two (2) sets of plans, drawn to scale, showing all four (4) sides and a top view with a plumbing diagram. For more information on the plan review process and to learn more about the requirements for MFFs, visit

<https://rma.venturacounty.gov/divisions/environmental-health/mobile-food-facilities/> or click on the links below.

- [Electronic Plan Submittal Portal](#) - Submit applications and plans online.
- [Application for Permit to Construct Form](#) - PDF
- [Plan Check Guide For Mobile Food Facilities](#) - PDF
- [Construction Guidelines for Compact Mobile Food Operations](#) - PDF
- [Guía Para la Revisión de Planos Para Los Vehículos de Alimentos](#) - PDF

Note: Food carts (or other non-motorized conveyances) displaying 25 sq. ft. or less of commercially prepackaged non-perishable food do not require a permit but must meet CRFC requirements.

### **Cottage Food Operations (Home-Based Businesses)**

Cottage Food Operations allow for approved non-potentially hazardous foods (like baked goods or jams) to be made and sold from a private home. Check the EHD website at <https://rma.venturacounty.gov/divisions/environmental-health/cottage-home-food-operations/> for the list of approved foods, registration forms, and safety requirements.

Note: Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations (MEHKOs) are not allowed in Ventura County.

### **Temporary Food Facilities (Food Service at Community Events)**

Temporary Food Facility (TFF) or food booth is an approved food facility that operates at a fixed location for the duration of an approved community event. A community event is

defined as an event that is of civic, political, public, or educational in nature, including the county fair, city festivals, circuses, and other events approved by EHD. The event must be held in public property and the organizer must be a non-profit charitable organization. An event may also be formally recognized by a local jurisdiction's adoption of a proclamation designating the event as a community event.

### Helpful Links & Contacts

#### Helpful Links/References:

##### Get Our App:

[VC SafeDiner](#) is a quick and easy way to view the latest inspection results for your favorite food facility in Ventura County. The app allows you to search by name, address or city; and also provides a map feature allowing you to view food facilities within a radius of your current location. Full inspection results for the last year are displayed including recorded violations and inspector comments.

In addition to obtaining a valid health permit from Ventura County Environmental Health Division, you may need other types of permit and approvals. You will need to contact your local business licensing department for information on obtaining a business license.

Here are some useful links:

- [California Department of Food and Agriculture License/Permit](#) (dairy, meat, animals)
- [California State Food and Drug Branch Certificate/License and Registrations](#) (cannery license, water vending, processed food registration)
- [Liquor License](#) (alcohol licenses/permits)