



Food Safety Program - Frequently Asked Questions

TWU's food safety program sets requirements for proper handling of food to protect the health and safety of the university community. This document attempts to answer the most common questions about food safety requirements under the [applicable regulations \(25 Texas Administrative Code 228\)](#).

Q. What is covered by this program?

- A. All preparation or distribution of food and beverage items on campus.** This includes any food or beverage items that are sold, or merely given away. These requirements apply to the Denton, Dallas, and Houston campuses, as well as any university-sponsored off-campus events.

Q. What is included in the definition of “food”?

- A.** Any raw, cooked, or processed edible substance; including ice, beverages, and ingredients meant for human consumption.

Q. What kind of foods ARE permitted to be distributed on campus?

- A.** Only food from an “approved food source” may be distributed on TWU campuses and at university events. Approved food sources are limited to restaurants, caterers, pre-prepared foods from grocery stores and other food establishments that are properly licensed by the State of Texas. In addition, unopened pre-packaged food and uncut produce may be distributed. **Obtaining food items from an approved food source and further preparing them in any way prior to distribution is not permitted without a permit from the state** (see below).

Q. What does “preparing” mean?

- A.** Preparing food means **modifying or combining food items in any way, as well as reheating items**. Food is no longer considered to be from an approved food source if such actions are conducted after the food is received from an approved food source. However, the consumer of the food may modify or combine items after they receive it.

For example, buying bulk candy and allowing consumers to combine the items is not considered “preparing”. On the other hand, purchasing vegetables from an approved food source and combining them in a salad is NOT acceptable. Another acceptable example;

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providing cookies and frosting obtained from an approved food source, and allowing the consumer to decorate the cookies themselves.

Q. What if I want to prepare food on-site at my event or activity?

- A. The organizer of your event or activity must complete a [Temporary Food Establishment Permit](#) application from the Texas Department of State Health Services (TXDSHS) and meet all of the requirements of a [Temporary Food Establishment](#). We recommend that the organizer submit the application no later than 30 days prior to the event to make sure the permit is reviewed and approved in time for your event. It is also recommended that you discuss your event with TWU Risk Management first to learn what TXDSHS expects.

Q. What training is required?

- A. The required training depends on the type of event in which food is being distributed.

Food Prepared On-Site: Food prepared at an event, under either a permanent or temporary food establishment permit, must comply with the training requirements of the [Texas Food Establishment Rules](#). This includes certified third-party training for managers and all food handlers.

Bake Sales: At least one member of the organization holding the bake sale, who will be present at the event, must review and sign the Bake Sale Food Safety Rules document and monitor compliance with the applicable rules during the event.

Q. Why can't I just sell/distribute food I make in my kitchen?

- A. Food made in a private home (or any other location that is not a licensed food establishment) is not considered an approved food source under state law and **MAY NOT be distributed on campus**. There are specific rules about what is called "cottage food", but these rules are aimed at small home based businesses, and have requirements for food safety training, labeling, and other limitations that do not make this approach suitable at TWU.

Q. What about my departmental potluck or meeting?

- A. The TWU Food Safety Program does allow distribution of food made in residential kitchens for departmental potlucks or meetings, and employee or student organizations, but **ONLY** if the event is limited to members of the department or organization (i.e. not open to the public). All attendees must be aware that the food was prepared in individual home kitchens. Such events must not be held in publicly accessible areas (e.g. hallways or building lobbies that might result in distribution to the public), and must not be advertised outside of the department.

Risk Management also strongly recommends that lists of ingredients be provided to participants at such events (see question below about allergens).

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Please note: The University is not responsible for foodborne illnesses or other health issues arising from the consumption of food associated with such events.

Q. What are the rules for ice?

- A. Ice is considered a food, and is thus restricted like all other foods. **Only ice under the direct control of a properly licensed food establishment may be consumed.** Ice used to cool food (including packaged food) must be made from drinking water. Packaged food must not be stored in direct contact with ice or water if the water could enter the packaging.

Q. What are the rules for bake sales and fundraisers involving food?

- A. Only the sale of pre-packaged food, uncut produce, or pre-prepared food from a grocery store, caterer or restaurant can be distributed at such events. One example would be buying cupcakes at a store and selling them individually. Certain food safety requirements still need to be followed by those handling and/or distributing the food (see below).

Q. What about unpackaged self-serve bulk foods (similar to the “bulk food” bins in grocery stores)?

- A. If the food items are obtained from an approved source, and proper sanitation provisions are followed, this is permitted without a food establishment permit. An example of this is various candies in jars where customers scoop out their own candies.

Q. Are there rules for food that must be kept hot or cold?

- A. Foods that must be temperature-controlled to prevent illness are subject to additional rules.

Examples of such food include pizza slices purchased from a restaurant or cheese cake purchased from a grocery store. Any food that normally must be kept cool or warm **must be served within 4 hours** once removed from the temperature control (such as a refrigerator or oven). **All foods must be served within 24 hours of purchase.** The time the food is purchased or removed from temperature control must be noted to ensure compliance with this time restriction. Foods may not be reheated once obtained from a licensed food establishment.

Q. What are the rules about illnesses and serving food?

- A. The person in charge of the event **must prevent those who are ill from coming into contact with food**, generally for at least 24 hours after they stop showing symptoms, with some exceptions.

Additional limits exist for individuals who have had jaundice with onset in the past seven days. Such individuals need written medical documentation confirming it is not caused by hepatitis A or another fecal-orally transmitted infection. Those diagnosed with Salmonella typhi must wait at least 3 months before working with food. Those with a skin lesion containing pus or having an open wound that is draining on the hands or arms must not be permitted to work with food.

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Q. What are other sanitary requirements?

- A. Proper hand hygiene is imperative** to prevent foodborne illness and cross-contamination; including proper hand washing, keeping nails trimmed, and not wearing any jewelry on arms or hands (other than a plain wedding band).

Single-use articles, such as food handling gloves or wax paper, should be used to distribute food, or utensils such as tongs should be used in a manner that does not permit cross-contamination. Food on display should be protected from contaminants via its packaging.

Additionally, food packages must be in good condition to maintain the integrity of the contents. Re-wrapping of individual items for sale is not permitted.

Q. How should information about allergens be communicated?

- A.** Foods containing known major food allergens (dairy, eggs, wheat, soy, peanuts, tree nuts, fish and shellfish) or foods that contain proteins derived from **these foods should be appropriately labeled or signage should be posted** at the point of distribution. For potlucks and similar events, ask those contributing food to bring a list of ingredients to share with other participants. If you are distributing a pre-packaged food product (e.g.: muffins purchased from a retail grocery store), keep the original label for reference.

If allergen content is unknown, a general safety warning that the foods sold may contain or have come into contact with these allergens is recommended in an easy-to-read sign at the point of distribution.