

Food Cart Construction Guide



2025

Food Cart Construction Guide

June 2025



For reasonable accommodations or alternative formats please contact the Minneapolis Health Department at health@minneapolismn.gov or 612-673-2301.
People who are deaf or hard of hearing can use a relay service to call 311 at 612-673-3000. TTY users call 612-263-6850.

Para ayuda, llame al 311. Rau kev pab 311. Hadio aad Caawimaad u baahantahay wac 311.

Contents

Purpose	3
Definition	3
Food Cart.....	3
Requirements.....	3
Approved Source.....	3
Approved Commissary Kitchen.....	3
Cart Placement and Safety Requirements.....	3
Additional Requirements	4
Allowable Foods.....	4
Unapproved Foods.....	4
Plan Submittal and Review	5
Plan review process	5
Required supporting documents	5
Licensing and Required Inspection	6
General Equipment Information.....	6
Equipment design and construction	6
Unapproved equipment.....	6
Sinks and water	7
Waste Disposal.....	7
Waste collection and storage	7
Disposal Location	7

Purpose

This guide will help individuals or groups submit food cart (Cart) plans to the City of Minneapolis. Construction, equipment, and physical facility standards outlined in this guide are based on the minimum requirements of the Minnesota Food Code.

Definition

Food Cart

"Food Cart" means a food and beverage service establishment that is a nonmotorized vehicle self-propelled by the operator operating at any one place with the approval of the regulatory authority as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 157.15, subdivision 6.

Requirements

Approved Source

A Cart must not use or serve food that was stored or prepared in a private home. All food must come from Approved Sources for Food Products. Cooking of any kind is not allowed on or near the Cart.

Approved Commissary Kitchen

A Cart must operate out of a licensed Minneapolis kitchen, also known as a commissary kitchen. The commissary kitchen must be used for all food storage and preparation. The commissary kitchen must also be used to wash equipment and utensils, and to store single service items like to-go containers. If the cart has water tanks, the clean water tank should be filled and the used (waste) water tank should be emptied at the commissary.

Cart Placement and Safety Requirements

- Carts can only be placed at locations pre-approved by the City. Each licensee can request up to three (3) locations.
- After approval from the City, licensed Sidewalk Food Carts may be placed on city sidewalks on goods and services corridors.
- Carts must be located away from possible contamination sources.
- Carts located indoors must not be located on carpet for easy cleanup of spills.
- Carts located outdoors must be equipped with an easily cleanable, detachable awning.
- Cart operation must be accomplished entirely from a single self-contained unit.
- Electrical service must comply with Chapter 1315.
- A fire extinguisher, when required, must be present with a minimum 2A 10 B C rating.
- Gas hook-up and service, when required, must comply with Chapter 1346.

Additional Requirements

- Carts cannot substantially impair the movement of pedestrians or vehicles or pose a hazard to public safety. A pedestrian walkway of no less than six (6) feet must be maintained around the cart.
- Cart dimensions cannot exceed eight (8) feet in height, eight (8) feet in length, and four (4) feet in width.
- Cart umbrellas or awnings must have a minimum overhang of 12 inches in any direction.
- Carts must be capable of being moved by one person.
- Carts can only operate at certain times based on location:
 - Near residential or mix used buildings with residents – 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.
 - Designated extended hour zones – Check with Business Licensing for details
 - All other locations - 6:00 a.m. to midnight
- Carts must be returned to their commissary kitchen daily.
- Cart licenses are not transferable to any other cart or person.
- Cart licenses are only transferable to other locations with pre-approval by City licensing.

Allowable Foods

All food and beverage items sold from the Cart must be approved by the City prior to selling. The following is a general list of approved foods allowed to be sold from the Carts:

- Pre-wrapped or packaged non-hazardous foods: (popcorn, candy, canned/bottled beverages, cookies, tortilla chips, packaged ice cream)
- Precooked ready-to-eat items (like hot dogs, sausages, bratwurst)
- Cooked foods prepared in the commercial kitchen (like taco meat, empanadas, chili)
- Hand scooped ice cream
- Hot/cold beverages (coffee, tea, soda, water)

Other foods may be approved by the Minneapolis Health Department

Unapproved Foods

Cooking raw foods on or near the Cart is not allowed. Only foods cooked at the commissary kitchen or from approved source are allowed. See “Approved Source” section on previous page.

Plan Submittal and Review

Cart plans must be submitted to City of Minneapolis as a Food plan review before beginning construction, or remodeling of an existing Cart. If you purchase a Cart before plans are approved, and it does not meet the requirements, the City will not be able to approve that Cart.

Plan review process

To start the review of your Cart, you must download and complete the City's [food business plan review application](#). The completed application must be emailed to Minneapolis Development Review (MDR) at development@minneapolismn.gov.

Once MDR receives your application, they will email you the link, instructions, and password to the City's ProjectDox website. ProjectDox is the website the City uses to receive, review, and approve plans and documents.

You will upload supporting documents for your Cart in ProjectDox. You can also visit the [City's food plan review website](#) for details and information about the required documents, technical help, and resources.

MDR will forward your plan to the City's Health Department for review and approval once they confirm you provided all the required paperwork. Plans are reviewed in the order they are received. If your application is incomplete, the review process may take longer. Your plan reviewer will notify you through the ProjectDox portal of any changes, plan revisions, information, or additional documents required. You'll also be notified through the ProjectDox portal when your plan review is complete and approved.

Wait to receive your plan approval notification and letter before beginning constructing or purchasing your Cart.

Required supporting documents

Be sure to upload the following documents in ProjectDox:

- The intended menu.
- Drawings of the cart, with all equipment, drawn to scale. Include information on the construction materials and exterior finish materials.
- Specification sheets for all food service equipment.
- Detailed information on any custom fabricated equipment.
- Detailed information the clean water and wastewater tanks.

Additional information may be requested during the plan review process to allow for a thorough review. For further information, please visit the [City Food Plan Review](#) website, or call 612-673-3000.

Licensing and Required Inspection

After your plan is approved and your Cart project is near completion, follow these steps:

1. Apply for license.

Download and complete the City's [food cart license application](#). Email your application to the City's Business Licensing team at businesslicenses@minneapolismn.gov.

Please note the food **license application and fees** are different and separate from the **food plan review application and fees**. The City's Business Licensing team will inform you if your application is incomplete.

2. Request a final inspection for your cart.

When your cart is ready, contact your assigned plan reviewer to request a final inspection.

All equipment must be installed and operating properly.

General Equipment Information

Menu and food processes determine the type of equipment required.

Equipment design and construction

- Food service equipment such as refrigerators, hot-hold units and any equipment that food touches must meet NSF or equivalent sanitation standards.
- Provide a thermometer in each refrigerator to measure air temperature. Provide a thin-tipped metal stemmed thermometer to measure internal food temperatures.

Unapproved equipment

Examples of equipment that are **not approved**:

- Unfinished wood
- Household roasters/crock pots
- Galvanized food storage containers
- Enamelware
- Paintbrushes
- Wooden spoons
- Plastic tables
- Non-food grade plastic containers
- Tubing or beverage cold plates in contact with stored ice

Most common ANSI accredited certification programs	
Certifying Group	Mark
NSF International (NSF)	
Intertek Marked "ETL Sanitation."	
Underwriters Laboratory (UL) Marked "Classified UL EPH."	
Canadian Standards Association (CSA) Marked "CSA Sanitation to NSF/ANSI."	
Baking Industry Sanitation Standards Committee (BISSC) Marked "Certified BISSC."	

Sinks and water

- If food is prepared or assembled at the Cart, a hand sink must be provided on the cart.
- Soap and paper towels must be provided.

When water is required, the following requirements must be met.

- Hot and cold running water must be supplied under pressure with a mixing faucet.
- Water must be obtained from an approved source, such as the commissary kitchen.
- Water tanks must be easily cleanable, constructed of an approved non-toxic material, and at least five gallons.
- The water inlet must be protected from contamination and be designed to prevent attachment of a non-potable service connection.
- Hoses used to obtain water must be of food grade quality and provided with an approved backflow prevention device.
- The water tank, pump, and hose must be cleaned and sanitized according to the manufacturer's specifications before being placed into service after construction, repair, modification, and periods of non-use.

If direct drainage lines are not provided, the Cart must be supplied with a liquid waste holding tank. Wastewater must be emptied down the mop sink at the commissary kitchen.

Waste Disposal

You are responsible for properly storing and disposing of all waste created by your business at the end of each day. Waste includes:

- Waste liquids
- Garbage
- Litter
- Other refuse

Waste collection and storage

When leaving the approved location, waste from your business must be cleaned up and placed in the container(s) on your cart.

The waste container(s) must be:

- Leakproof
- Non-absorbent
- Kept covered with tight-fitting lids

Disposal Location

All waste must only be disposed of at commissary kitchen.