SAMPLING & FOOD SAFETY

All vendors, regardless of product, must meet the health requirements that prevent food borne illness.

The standard requirements and recommendations for preparation and sampling at Farmers Markets are:

- Preparation of fruit and vegetable samples requiring cutting or slicing should be done on-site immediately prior to consumption.
- No home prepared food samples shall be served at the market.
- Clean knives and cutting boards must be placed in protective plastic containers, food storage bags, wrapped in plastic, etc.
- Replace soiled knives, cutting boards, etc. with clean items every two hours.
- Use single service items whenever possible.
- Store soiled items in a closed bag or container to avoid attracting insects.
- All fruits and vegetables must be rinsed thoroughly in clean water.
- Products may be rinsed or cleaned prior to bringing them to the market. The items should be stored in disposable food bags.
- Rinse melons in a 200 parts per million chlorine solution prior to slicing for sampling.
- Fruit and vegetable sample servings must be protected from contamination at all times.
- Serving must be done in a manner protecting the sample from any bare hand contact.
- Disposable gloves, single service utensils, napkins or tissues, or toothpicks are all adequate methods to avoid handling prepared samples.
- Any ice used for cooling must be continuously and properly drained to avoid wrapped items soaking in melted ice water.
- Canned items may be opened one jar at a time and sampled with clean disposable utensils.
- Use toothpicks, wax paper, paper sampling cups or disposable utensils
- Temperature control must be maintained on items needing refrigeration after opening.

The County Environmentalist may have specific additional requirements depending on the food to be prepared and served, the general location of the event or food concession area, the availability of city water and sewage, and other considerations.

The Rules of the State Board of Health require that a permit to operate a temporary food booth be obtained prior to any prepared food being sold.

RESOURCES

Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries Farmers Market Authority Administrative Code, Chapter 80-7-1 Rules for Certification of State Farmers Markets, http://fma.alabama.gov/pdfs/CertifiedFarmersMarket80-7-1.pdf

Ragland, D.V.M, MPH, Robert D. 2010. Guidance for Determining Whether a Poultry Slaughter or Processing operation is Exempt from Inspection Requirements of the Poultry Products Inspection Act, http://origin-www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISNotices/Poultry_Slaughter_Exemption_0406.pdf

Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries

John McMillan
Commissioner

DIRECT MARKET GUIDELINES

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MEATS

- Only raw meats, including fish and seafood, that are processed, packaged and labeled at an inspected facility or are otherwise exempted from inspection may be sold at a farmers market
  - Exempted meats: rabbit, quail and bison
- All processed meat sold in the state of Alabama must be processed by a USDA certified processor.
- Beef, pork, poultry and lamb products sold at farmers markets must originate from livestock slaughtered in a government (federal or state) inspected facility.
- All meat and poultry products must be wrapped and labeled with the seal of inspection on package.
  - USDA publication "Guidance for Determining Whether a Poultry Slaughter or Processing Operation is Exempt from Inspection Requirements of the Poultry Products Inspection Act, Revision 1, April 2006," provides detailed information on the requirements for the sale of poultry at markets.
- Meat products, other than fish and shellfish, must be brought to the market in frozen condition and kept frozen until sold.
  - Selling packaged meat at the farmers market requires sanitary handling and temperature control. A mechanical unit capable of maintaining the meat and poultry products in the frozen state is recommended to be used.
    - i.e. a freezer

Live animals are prohibited for sale at farmers markets in Alabama.

DAIRY PRODUCTS

- All dairy products including, but not limited to milk, cheese and goat cheese, butter, and yogurt, must be processed, packaged and labeled at a facility permitted and inspected by the Alabama Department of Public Health's Milk and Food Processing Branch.
- Product must have the proper labeling vendor contact information or have information posted so consumer will know who to contact if necessary.
- It is illegal to sell unpasteurized milk in Alabama through any means. Sale of raw milk for human consumption is not legal and cannot be sold at markets.

SHELL EGGS

- Egg sales that take place on the farm are not subject to the Alabama Shell Egg Law.
- Shell eggs are considered farm products and may be sold at farmers markets with proper labeling information on package.
- Information required:
  - Name of egg packer
  - Address of egg packer
  - Date eggs were packed
  - Grade
- Eggs must be refrigerated at or below 45°
- Carton or egg container and egg product itself must be sanitized and free from fecal matter and other farm filth.
- Eggs must meet USDA grading and weight classes and can be found at:

  http://fma.alabama.gov/PDFS_NEW/Shell_Eggs.pdf

POULTRY

- All poultry producers are encouraged to register with the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries.
- Exemptions to on-site inspection by the US Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) apply to processing of less than 1,000 and 20,000 birds per year.
- Processing for both exemptions require that the poultry is healthy when slaughtered, the slaughter and processing are conducted under sanitary standards, the final product is identified as exempt product and labeled, and products do not move in inter-state commerce.
- With the 20,000 bird exemption, the facility used to slaughter or process poultry cannot be used to slaughter or process another person's poultry unless the administrator of FSIS grants an exemption.
- FSIS expects the poultry sold in commerce to bear safe handling instructions.

HONEY

- Honey is considered an agriculture commodity and may be sold at farmers markets.
- All beehives need to be registered with the ADAI.
- Products sold in Alabama as "honey" or using the word "honey" must be pure honey.
- The word "imitation" may not be used in the name of a product that resembles honey, regardless of whether it actually contains any honey.

BOILED PEANUTS

Boiled peanuts are considered an agricultural commodity and may be sold at farmers markets.