



Catering Guidelines for Pima County

Q: What is catering?

A: Catering is preparing or providing food for someone else to serve; or preparing, delivering and serving food at the premises of another person or event. If you agree to deliver or serve the food, the proper equipment for food protection and maintaining food temperatures is required according to the regulations in the *Pima County Code Title 8*.

Q: Who can be a caterer?

A: Any person who has an operating permit from the Pima County Health Department can be a caterer. A business or tax license cannot be substituted for the Health Department's permit.

Q: I contract with customers to purchase, cook and serve food in their private residence. I don't store any food purchased for them in my home. I only use the appliances in my customer's home kitchen for cooking. Do I have to have an operating permit from the Health Department?

A: No, you are a "Personal Chef." Personal Chefs are restricted to storing, preparing and serving food in a customer's private home. All food is purchased for storage, preparation and serving at the customer's home. The Health Department recommends that you attend an accredited course in food safety.

Q: Can a restaurant have a catering operation?

A: Yes, any type of food establishment can have a catering operation if the establishment is able to comply with the Pima County Food Code. The food establishment must have the necessary equipment to prepare the menu items. Preparation, transportation and serving of the food must comply with the regulations in *Pima County Code Title 8*.

Q: Sometimes, I give food away at special events. Is my operating permit sufficient for special events?

A: No, you are required to have a temporary food license if you sell food or give food away. The Health Department operating permit is only for the address shown on the permit.

Q: Sometimes, I cater special events. Is my operating license sufficient for special events?

A: No, you are required to obtain a temporary food license in addition to your annual operating license for all special events where the public is invited. The public may gain entry to the event by paying an admission fee or the event could be open to the public.

for free. Examples of special events where a temporary food license is required are the Pima County Fair, fundraising events, cook-offs, pizza and other food giveaway promotions, the 4th Avenue Street Fair, the SAHBA Home Show, fiestas and pancake breakfasts or spaghetti dinners advertised to the public.

Private events are those that are by “invitation only.” Typically, private events do not advertise or publicize to attract attendees. A wedding, a club meeting or a training seminar are examples of private events. You do not need temporary food permit to cater or deliver food to a private event.

Q: What if I only provide food for a food booth at a special event, but I will not be onsite to serve the food. Is a temporary license required?

A: Yes, either you or the coordinator of the special event must have a temporary food license for the food booth.

Q: How do I become a caterer in Pima County?

1. Submit an application and your menu for an operating permit to the Health Department. You will be required to pay the permit fee and a pre-operational inspection fee.
2. The menu can be specific or state the categories of food items from which a customer would order. Any unusual or specialty food processes should be described on the menu.
3. If you plan to rent space, time, and/or equipment in another food establishment that has a current operating permit from the Pima County Health Department, you must obtain a notarized statement from the owner authorizing you to use the establishment. **The notarized statement must be submitted to the Health Department with your application.**
4. If you construct a commercial kitchen, you must first complete the plan review process before applying for the operating license. For the plan review requirements, contact the Pima County Development Services Department at 520-740-6490.
5. If you operate your own food establishment, then the food must be prepared in that establishment.
6. When you are ready for the pre-operational inspection, call Consumer Health and Food Safety at 520-243-7908 to schedule.

Health Department Reminders

1. Comply with *Pima County Code Title 8*, including the “person-in-charge” requirements in the *Arizona Food Code*, Chapter 2-102.11.
2. Provide “Consumer Advisory” statements for any menu items that include raw or undercooked animal foods.
3. Keep all potentially hazardous foods at the correct food temperature: hot holding (130°F or above) or cold holding (45°F or below) at all times, including the time while the food is being transported and served.

4. Help plan the menus, provide the appropriate equipment, and methods to transport and serve the foods safely.
5. Use food from an approved source to prepare the menu items. All foods must meet requirements in the *Arizona Food Code*, including labeling. Caterers cannot use any foods made in a non-licensed or home kitchen including canned, bottled or packaged foods.
6. All food must be delivered to the to the approved food establishment.
7. Store all food at the approved food establishment.
8. Clean and store all equipment and utensils at the approved food establishment.