



Opening a Food Establishment – Frequently Asked Questions

These guidelines are meant to be general requirements for most operations. Each operation is unique and may have requirements outside of this document. Please visit with an Environmental Health Specialist for specific recommendations and requirements.

1. What rules does the Brazos County Health District follow when conducting inspections?

Brazos County has adopted the Texas Food Establishment Rules. In addition, the city of College Station and Bryan both have adopted Food Ordinances which have some additional requirements. Go to Brazoshealth.org for more information.

2. Will I need a Food Establishment Permit?

If you are selling or giving away food or beverages to the public that include time/temperature control for safety (TCS food), you will need to obtain a permit. If you are packaging and wholesaling the food, then you will need a Manufacturer's Permit from the Department of State Health Services.

3. I am a caterer. Do I still need a permit?

A caterer is defined as a person or company providing food and drink at a social event or other gathering. Most caterers will need to be permitted. If you are catering any event or gathering for the general public, you must be permitted in Brazos County. If you provide food or drink directly to a consumer, or deliver food directly or indirectly through a delivery service, you will be required to be permitted. A caterer that is contracted by an individual or organization to provide food for a private event such as a wedding or family reunion on an occasional basis will not be required to be permitted in Brazos County.

4. What kind of building can I use?

Food made in a private home **cannot** be permitted. All food must be stored and prepared in a permitted commercial building that has been approved by the building inspection department for your city. The building must be sealed to prevent insect and rodent entry, and constructed in such a way as to ensure the walls, floors, ceilings, and all surfaces in the kitchen are easily cleanable. Concrete floors must be sealed in some way to ensure that water and food debris is not being absorbed into the floor.

5. What kind of equipment is required?

At **minimum** at least one handsink, a three compartment sink, a mop sink, and adequate refrigeration will be required. A handsink is required in any food preparation or dishwashing area, generally within at least 20 feet. All plumbing must meet the plumbing code. (See the building inspection department). You should submit plans to Brazos County Health Department for approval before beginning construction or remodeling for approval of equipment locations.

6. Do I need a three compartment sink if I have a dishwasher?

Even if you have a commercial dishwasher capable of sanitizing (with heat or chemical), you still must have a three compartment sink. Dishwashers frequently have maintenance issues; if your dishwasher breaks down and you do not have a three compartment sink, you must immediately close. Brazos County requires all new establishments to have a three compartment sink.

7. Will I need a vent system/fire suppression?

You will need to call your city's fire department for information on venting and fire suppression.

8. Will I need a grease trap?

You will need to check with your city's Environmental Department. If you are doing any preparation or cooking, you will most likely be required to install a grease trap.

9. What training is required for my staff?

Almost all establishments must have at least one full time person who is a Certified Food Manager. An exception is made only for those establishments that do not prepare any TCS foods in any way, but may still offer them for sale. An example would be a convenience store that sells refrigerated milk and other items, but does no food preparation. These establishments must have a food handler's card. In addition, all employees who handle food or wash dishes and equipment must have a valid Food Handler's card that is licensed by the Texas Department of State Health Services.

10. What is required to purchase a permit?

Plans should be submitted to Brazos County Health District for approval. This should be done ideally before any construction or remodeling has been done, and there is no charge for a plan review. After plans have been approved, you may fill out the application, show proof of a Certified Food Manager, pay the appropriate fees, and schedule an opening inspection. Walk through inspections prior to the establishment being ready for an opening may also be requested; there is no additional charge for this service.

11. What does the inspector need to see at the opening inspection?

All refrigeration should be on and at the appropriate temperatures. Thermometers should be in each hot and cold holding unit, as well as a thermometer available for checking cooking temperatures (if necessary). Hot water must be at least 110F at your three compartment sink and at least 100F at all handsinks. You must have sanitizer available for use at your three compartment sink, and the dish machine should also be operational if used. You will need chemical or thermal test strips to check the sanitization process. All handsinks must have soap and paper towels. Everything should be clean and basically ready to operate. We recommend that no food requiring temperature control to be purchased and stored in the establishment until after your inspection. If food is found to be out of compliance with temperature requirements, it will be discarded. **No food may be prepared or served to the public until the permit is received.**

Telephone Contacts You May Need:

Brazos County Health District Environmental Health: 979-361-4450

City of Bryan Planning and Development: 979-209-5010

City of Bryan Solid Waste (grease traps): 979-209-5912

City of College Station Planning and Development: 979-764-3570

City of College Station Solid Waste (grease traps): 979-764-3663

Texas Alcoholic and Beverage Commission: 979-260-8222

Texas Department of State Health Services Retail Food Manufacturing: 512-834-6626

Department of State Health Services Region 7: 254-778-6744