

Frequently Asked Questions About Using Fresh Produce at School

Q: Can organizations such as a school club or PTA use schools' permitted kitchen facilities?

A: Organizations may be able to operate under a school kitchen permit with prior permission of the school district's Food Service Director and the Whatcom County Health Department. If the school district is willing to take responsibility for the event, a group may operate under the district's permit. If the district is not willing to take responsibility, a permit from the Health Department is required.

Q: If families bring fresh produce items to the classroom for a snack, does food preparation need to be done in a permitted kitchen?

A: The State Food Code does govern such activities, however, the Whatcom County Health Department considers this activity to be low risk -- similar to sharing treats for a birthday -- and has chosen not to regulate it. Occasional fresh snacks prepared in a home kitchen are fine (e.g., apple slices cut at home), however produce served as part of a regularly scheduled snack program (e.g., families sign up to provide a snack every day), would need to be prepared in a permitted kitchen (see above for using school kitchen). All foods must be non-potentially hazardous (i.e., foods that do not require refrigeration for safety).

Q: If a class is using fresh fruits or vegetables as part of a lesson plan in a school classroom, is a permit required?

A: No, as long as the food is served only to that class and is consumed on the day it is made, or students take the food home. As above, food served as part of a regularly scheduled meal or snack program must be prepared in a permitted kitchen.

Q: Who needs a Food Worker Card?

A: If unpackaged foods are handled, a food worker must obtain a Food and Beverage Worker Permit in most circumstances. Under some conditions, such as for a temporary food service event, one person with a Food Worker permit is sufficient to supervise food preparation.

Q: How do I get a Food Worker Card?

A: For information about getting a Food Worker card and to download a Study Guide, go to: http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/health/environmental/food_safety/foodworkers.jsp
A Health Department staff can come to your school to offer training and administer the test to a group. Minimum group size is 12 if training is during normal business hours and 20 if training is after hours. Cost per person is \$10.

Q: If a class/school is cooking food for sale (e.g., a school fundraiser), does the food need to be prepared in a permitted kitchen?

A: Yes.

Q: Are there any permitting requirements for potlucks?

A: No. The State Food Code defines a potluck as an event where people are expected to bring food to share and there is no money exchanged for food. Schools can hold potlucks as often as desired.

Q: Are there any permitting requirements for bake sales?

A: Bake sales are exempt from permit as long as all items sold are non-potentially hazardous (i.e., refrigeration not required for safety). Baked goods must be individually wrapped. Place a clearly visible sign that says the foods are prepared in a kitchen that is not inspected by a regulatory authority.

2/6/2012

Resources for Further Information:

Whatcom County Health Department Food Safety Program

http://www.whatcomcounty.us/health/environmental/food_safety/foodsafety.jsp

Definitions of terms used in *Washington State Retail Food Code Working Document*:

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/food/ruleworkingdoc-chapter1.pdf>

Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA)

<http://agr.wa.gov/>

For information about getting a WSDA Food Processor License go to:

<http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/FoodProcessors/>