



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES DIVISION

Starting a Food Business in Marin County

Environmental Health Services (EHS) permits and regulates retail food facilities in the County of Marin for compliance with the *California Retail Food Code (a.k.a. Cal Code)*. If you are interested in starting a business which will provide food to the public, you should contact EHS for assistance.

An annual **Health Permit** from EHS is required for a retail business doing any of the following with food: preparing, serving, storing, and/or handling food for dispensing or selling directly to the consumer.

If you are **purchasing an existing restaurant**, you may apply for a **Change of Ownership Inspection** from EHS as the permit to operate is non-transferable. A Registered Environmental Health Specialist (REHS) will conduct an inspection and evaluate the facility for compliance with current *Cal Code* standards. The findings of the inspection will be documented in a letter which shall include:

- Corrections necessary to bring the existing operation into compliance before a permit to operate (Health Permit) can be issued. An example is the replacement of a 2-compartment with a 3-compartment sink; and/or
- If a change in operation or remodel is proposed, a plan review and approval are required to ensure the facility meets *Cal Code* requirements prior to construction and issuance of a Health Permit to operate.

Constructing and Remodeling a Food Facility

The *Construction Plan Approval Procedures for Food Facilities* and informational handouts are available on the EHS Food Plan Check website to assist you in your design and submittal process. Download the *Construction Plan Approval Procedures for Food Facilities* at the following site:

<http://www.marincounty.org/~media/files/departments/cd/ehs/food/plancheck/plancheckguide2009.pdf>

EHS Approval - After your plans are reviewed and approved by EHS, the approved plans must be submitted to the local **Building Department**. (*Note that EHS staff is available for consultations prior to plan submittal.*)

Building Department Approval must be obtained before construction may begin.

Contact EHS to request inspections of the facility when construction is **80 to 90% complete**.

Final construction approval must be issued by both **EHS and the Building Department**. After final approval from EHS, application can be made for the annual Health Permit to operate.

Other Agencies that may be involved in the proposed food operation are listed below. Once you have chosen your location, contact the following agencies of the city or unincorporated county area where your business is located. They will identify requirements that may affect the business (e.g. need for grease trap interceptors, zoning issues, compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act).

- Planning Department
- Building Department
- Sanitary District
- Business Licensing Department
- California Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC)

Food Safety Certification

State law mandates that certain food facilities are required to have at least one (1) owner, or employee, successfully pass an approved and accredited **Food Safety Certification Examination**. In addition, employees handling food must obtain a **Food Handler Card** within 30 days of hire.