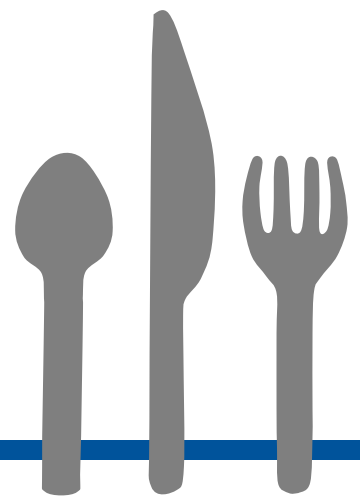


STARTING A FOOD BUSINESS

A HELPFUL GUIDE



To assist those who are planning to open
a food business in Columbus or
Worthington

Developed by the Food Protection
Program at Columbus Public Health

Updated March 2024



COLUMBUS
PUBLIC HEALTH

GREETINGS

We want you to have a successful business! While this guide has been developed by Columbus Public Health (CPH), we have also provided contact numbers for agencies that you may need to get in touch with to ensure that all proper steps are taken and that the required permits are received.

Contacting the agencies below will help you to stay on track and on time. All required permits must be obtained before CPH can issue a food license. For City of Columbus operations, check out www.bzs.columbus.gov.

OFFICE	SERVICE	PHONE NUMBER
Columbus Public Health Department	Plan review and inspections	614-645-6191
City of Columbus Building Services	General Info (9am – 4pm)	614-645-7433
	HVAC/REF Inspection Line	614-645-8235
	Electric Inspection Line	614-645-8265
	Plumbing Inspection Line	614-645-8355
	Structural Inspection Line	614-645-8235
	Find a licensed contractor	614-645-7314
	Plan Review	614-645-7562
City of Worthington Building Department	Building permits and inspections for the City of Worthington	614-431-2424
Ohio Dept of Commerce/Division of Liquor Control	Liquor License	614- 644-2360
Ohio Department of Taxation	Vendor 's License - Apply Online	Tax.ohio.gov
	Tax ID# (EIN)	www.irs.gov
Ohio Department of Agriculture	Licenses wholesale operations and home bakeries	614-728-6250 www.ohioagriculture.gov

Where do I begin?

Nearly every new or significantly altered facility serving or selling food or beverages in Columbus or Worthington must submit plans to CPH before a license can be issued. A sanitarian in our Food Safety Program will review the plans in order to ensure that the equipment, facilities and design will be suitable for the food items served or sold at the facility.

This guide will help you to determine when you need to submit plans, who you need to get in contact with, and what to expect as far as process and timeline.

PLANNING AHEAD

What is required in my facility?

Every business is unique. What will be required will be based on your menu. So, you must make sure that you have the space and equipment needed to store, prepare and serve those foods safely. Many retail stores will not need the extent of facilities and equipment that a restaurant would need, just as small operations may not need as much equipment that a larger operation would require.

EQUIPMENT YOU WILL NEED (& OTHER ITEMS)

Hand washing sinks: All facilities are required to have hand washing sinks, which are located in each service station, food, prep, bar, and dishwashing area, and equipped with soap and disposable towels or hand dryers. These sinks are required to have signs reminding employees to wash hands. A hand washing sink located in a restroom will not fulfill hand sink requirements. The plan review coordinator will look at each work area/station when determining the number of hand sinks required in a facility. Exception: In facilities that serve only prepackaged foods, a hand sink is only required in a restroom.

HELPFUL TIP: Each sink described in this section can only be used for its designated purpose (hand washing, dishwashing, food prep, mop sink). All waitress stations that are scooping ice must have a hand washing sink. Number and location of hand sinks are not determined solely by distance.

Commercial equipment: All equipment used for a retail food operation must be listed as commercial and must be certified by a recognized testing agency (e.g. NSF, ETL, UL sanitation). No household equipment is permitted. Casters are required for large equipment if it is not already on legs or permanently fixed (caulked) to the floor with space for cleaning.

HELPFUL TIP: Check the label on the equipment or request a specification sheet from the vendor before purchasing. Equipment needs to be approved by plan reviewer prior to purchasing to avoid costly returns. Request casters for larger pieces, such as coolers, to make them easier to move for cleaning.

Dry storage space: Enough space must be planned for storage of food, dishes, and equipment. Ensure that there are designated locations for bulk foods, cans, and other items. All food items must be stored at least 6" off the floor, both in walk-in coolers or freezers, and on storage shelving. Raw wood shelves are not allowed. Look for wire racks and food grade shelving.

Equipment and single service items (e.g. 'to go' containers) must be protected from contamination and stored at least 6" off the floor.

HELPFUL TIP: Bins for bulk items (e.g. rice, flour) must be made of food grade material and marked with the type of food inside. Trash cans and non-food grade containers cannot be used for bulk food storage. Exterior sheds/storage must be shown on plans and requires approval prior to use.

Chemical storage: Chemicals must be stored below and/or away from food items, equipment and utensils to prevent contamination of these items. Chemicals cannot be stored above the dishwashing sink or on the floor.

Employee area: There must be lockers, shelving or a designated area provided only for employee belongings. Personal belongings such as coats, purses, cigarettes, and phones cannot be kept in food areas. The employee area is also a great location for storage of employee beverage cups or food.

Utility sink: Also called a mop sink or service sink, all facilities are required to have a sink designated for cleaning of mops and cleaning tools, and for disposal of mop water. The utility sink must include a faucet and drain. This sink should have hooks or other means to allow mops to air dry.

HELPFUL TIP: A curbed sink provides an easier means to dump mop water, and is a good storage spot for the mop bucket when not in use. The mop sink(s) shall be conveniently located for easy access. The size and layout of the facility may require more than 1 mop sink.

Adequate lighting: Lighting must be enough in food areas and other areas to allow for safe work conditions and to facilitate cleaning. A guide to general lighting intensity requirements are listed below.

- 50 footcandles: cooking areas, food prep areas, food service areas
- 20 footcandles: customer self-service, inside equipment (e.g. reach in cooler), hand washing, dishwashing, utensil storage, restrooms
- 10 footcandles: walk-in coolers and freezers, dry storage, and other areas

HELPFUL TIP: When submitting a lighting plan for plan review, it should include (1) type of fixtures, (2) location of fixtures, and (3) whether using plastic covers, shields, or shatterproof bulbs to protect food & equipment.

Smooth and cleanable surfaces: All floors, walls and ceilings in food areas (service, storage or preparation) must be smooth and easily cleanable. Carpet is allowed only in areas for packaged food storage.

Approved surfaces which are commonly used...

- Floors: quarry tile, ceramic tile, sealed concrete, poured epoxy
- Walls: stainless steel, FRP, glossy painted drywall, painted concrete block
- Ceilings: vinyl coated ACT (drop ceiling), glossy painted drywall
- Base Coving: tile, rubber

Based on your menu and equipment that is used, many facilities will also need...

Dishwashing sinks: A 3-compartment sink designated for dishwashing is required in any operation that sells or serves unpackaged food. The sink should have curved interior edges and at least three (3) compartments for washing, rinsing and sanitizing. The sink should also have two (2) drain boards, one for collection of dirty dishes and the other for air drying. See the example on page 13. Dishwashers are optional, but a 3-compartment sink is required in a facility that sells or serves unpackaged food. Each compartment of the sink must be large enough to submerge the largest piece of equipment you have (i.e. a small bar sink would not be acceptable for washing large pots and pans).

All child care centers & bar service areas (coffee, smoothie, alcoholic etc) will require a 3 compartment sink with drain boards.

HELPFUL TIP: Try a 4-compartment sink to allow for presoaking!

Food processing sink (vegetable sink): Columbus Public Health does not allow food processing in a hand sink or dishwashing sink. A separate sink is required for the processing of produce and other foods. Processing can include washing, soaking, thawing, and using ice baths for cooling. If a food processing sink is not available, a facility will be limited to using only prewashed produce.

A food prep sink must have an indirect drain to prevent backflow from a sewage system into equipment in which food is placed.

HELPFUL TIP: Installing a food sink with an integral drain board will provide you with a food prep surface for items washed in the sink. Garbage disposals are not allowed on prep sinks.

Ventilation hoods: A ventilation hood is required at a grill line, or where other cooking equipment and high temperature dish machines are located, to prevent the accumulation of grease, heat, condensation, smoke and vapors.

Installation of a ventilation hood requires a permit and inspections. Contact Building Services (phone numbers on page 2) with questions about ventilation requirements or permits for installation.

Fire suppression system: If a ventilation hood is required because of the use of grease producing equipment (fryers, grill, etc), a Type I Hood with fire suppression is required. The fire suppression system acts like a fire extinguisher in case of a grease or cooking fire.

If a hood is required for heat, condensation or gas only, a Type II Hood might be allowed. Verify the type of hood required through Building Services (contact information on page 2).

Grease interceptor (grease trap): A grease trap is a device that is attached to sinks and/or drains to collect fats, oils and grease in order to prevent accumulation in our sewer system. Grease traps are connected to dishwashing sinks, some floor drains (e.g. at wok lines) and some dishwashers.

Grease traps are not a requirement of Columbus Public Health but, if installed, must be easily accessible for cleaning. Contact the City of Columbus Department of Sewers and Drains with questions regarding installation of outdoor vs indoor grease traps.

HELPFUL TIP: A grease trap can be a costly installation, and is generally required when a dishwashing sink is used. Make sure to research and budget for this item in your planning stages. If no grease trap is indicated on plans provide grease trap determination form signed by building department.

HELPFUL TIP: Grease traps must be cleaned periodically to keep them working properly. An indoor grease trap may need to be cleaned monthly/quarterly, while a larger outdoor unit may only need cleaning once or twice per year.

Dump Sink: Since hand sinks may not be used for purposes other than hand washing, and 3 comp sinks must be available at all times for ware washing, a dump sink is required for the disposal of liquid matter from bussed glasses, tableware, and other equipment.

RUNNING YOUR BUSINESS (WITH FOOD SAFETY IN MIND)

Here are some important questions about how you will safely prepare food for your business that you should start to think about. These questions may also be asked during future inspections:

Employee Training...

- How will you train your staff about food safety?
- What food safety practices will be covered during staff orientation?
- What is your employee health policy? What do you do about a sick worker? How will you share this policy with employees?

Services...

- Who will provide your waste pickup?
- How will you handle grease waste and cleaning your grease interceptor?
- Do you have a certified pest control operator?
- Who will clean your hood system and/or fire suppression system?
- Who will provide support and maintenance for your dishwasher?
- Is your facility secure, and is your food supply safe? Do you make sure to use approved suppliers? Does your food come from approved sources?

Facilities...

- Do you have enough hot water capacity for the busiest time of day?
- Do you have the storage space needed for dry goods?
- Do you plan to expand the operation, and will you have the space?
- Are floors, walls and ceilings constructed with cleanable materials?

Equipment...

- Do you have enough space in your coolers and freezers? Can you prevent overstocking and make certain to allow for air circulation?
- How will you keep hot foods hot?
- How will you keep cold foods cold?
- Have you purchased thermometers for all coolers? Do you have thermometers for taking food temperatures?
- Do you have sanitizer and sanitizer test strips?

Plan for Easy Cleaning...

There are several things you can do to prevent the amount of future maintenance necessary for your facility and provide ease of cleaning.

- Have you considered stainless steel on walls at the grill line, and behind and around grease producing equipment?
- Have you placed heavy equipment on casters, so that it can be moved easily? Every other piece of equipment, especially at the grill line, should be on casters. This makes it easier to clean behind and between equipment.
- Can you avoid sealing equipment and sinks to walls, and instead brace and set equipment away from walls and other equipment? This makes it easier to clean behind 3 compartment sinks, dishwashers, etc.

Fixed Equipment...

- Is all equipment that is fixed (because it is not easily movable) installed to allow for easy cleaning? This means that it must be spaced from nearby equipment or sealed to walls or equipment.
- Is table mounted equipment that is not easily moveable on legs or sealed to a table?
- Is all floor mounted equipment (in kitchen areas) that is not easily movable sealed to the floor or elevated on 6 inch legs?

Processes...

- What will be your process for date marking ready-to-eat food products?
- How will you ensure that a 'first in, first out' system is used for foods?
- How will foods be properly thawed? Do you have enough cooler space to allow for overnight thawing?
- Can large amounts of leftover food be properly cooled? Do you have shallow pans, ice wands, or other necessary tools?
- Will you keep temperature logs? Who will be responsible? When will you take temperatures?
- How will you avoid bare hand contact with ready to eat foods? Will you use gloves, tongs, utensils, deli paper, or other tools?

FOOD SAFETY EDUCATION

Educating your employees is an important part of planning for a successful food business. The Ohio Uniform Food Code requires that a Person-in-Charge (PIC) be present during all hours of operation of a food business.

The PIC must understand basic food safety concepts, and will need to demonstrate knowledge by compliance with the food code. This person must make sure that safe food handling practices are followed to lower the risk of foodborne illness.

Columbus Public Health provides food safety classes that will assist in educating your employees. We provide a **Person In Charge class** (4 hours) which reviews the basics of food safety and requirements of the Ohio Uniform Food Code. We also provide the nationally recognized **ServSafe® course** (16 hours).

The current schedule and registration form is at <https://new.columbus.gov/Services/Public-Health/Housing-Assistance-Programs/Food-Assistance-Programs>.

STEPS TO OPENING YOUR BUSINESS

Columbus Public Health reviews facility plans to make sure that the design and equipment in a facility are proper for the storage, preparation and service of the foods on the proposed menu or food list.

Step 1: PLAN REVIEW

Who must submit plans?

- New facilities: New construction and facilities that have never been licensed as a food operation in the past.
- Remodeled or altered facilities: Major changes or alterations such as installation of a walk in cooler or ventilation hood, or expanding a kitchen.
- Change of business type or change of owner: Changes in layout or equipment (example: a new owner converts a bakery into a full service restaurant, and grills and ovens have been added to the kitchen); a new owner takes over a facility.

*If you are not sure whether plan review is required, please contact Columbus Public Health 645-7005.

What is the process?

After we have received your set of plans, application and payment for plan review, CPH will begin reviewing the plans within 30 days of payment. An expedited option is available for an additional fee.

If there are any questions about the plans, or changes that need to be discussed, we will contact you (generally by e-mail).

When plans are approved, we will notify you (generally by e-mail). A formal approval letter will follow, and will be emailed to the Plan Review Contact noted on the application.

Step 2: LICENSING

Opening Inspection: After plans have been approved and all work is complete, you will need to contact CPH for an opening inspection. The opening inspection can be conducted once you have all required 'sign-offs' from the appropriate city departments. (Newly constructed facilities will need to have final approval from Building Services before a license can be issued.)

During the opening inspection, the sanitarian will ask for some information about the license holder (owner) and facility. It is helpful to have business information available, including federal tax ID and owner contact information.

Licensing: If there are no outstanding issues, payment will be collected for the license, and an inspection sheet will be given indicating permission to operate. At this point the operation is licensed and approved to operate. The printed license will be sent to you in the mail.

License renewal is once a year, and payment for licenses must be received by March 1 every year. Late fees are added after March 1.

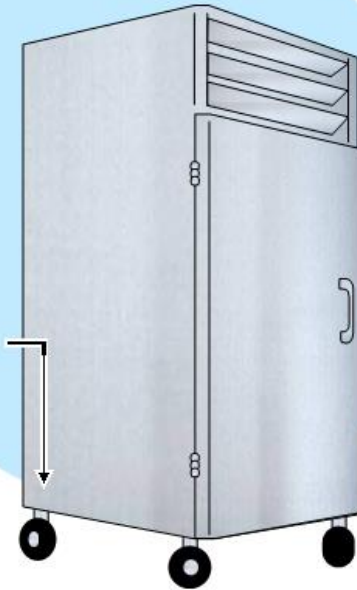
EQUIPMENT EXAMPLES

HANDWASHING SINK



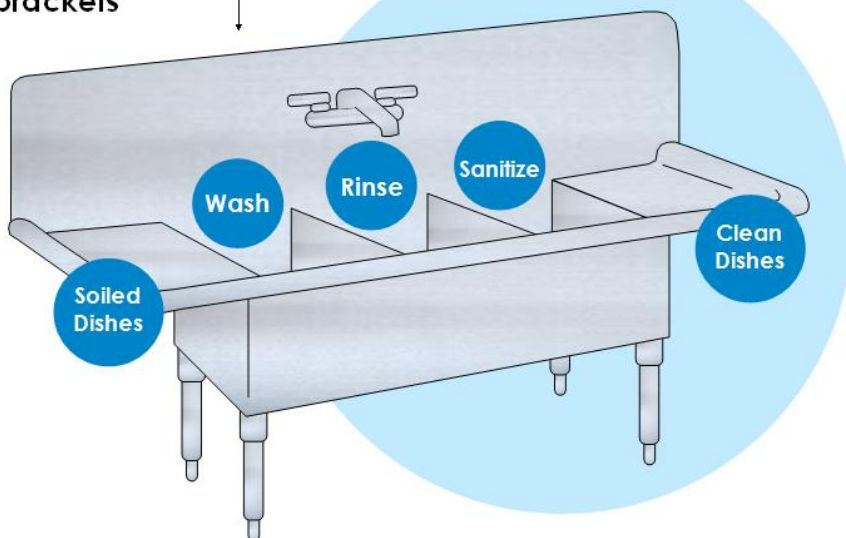
REACH-IN REFRIGERATOR

On casters so it's easy to move and clean around



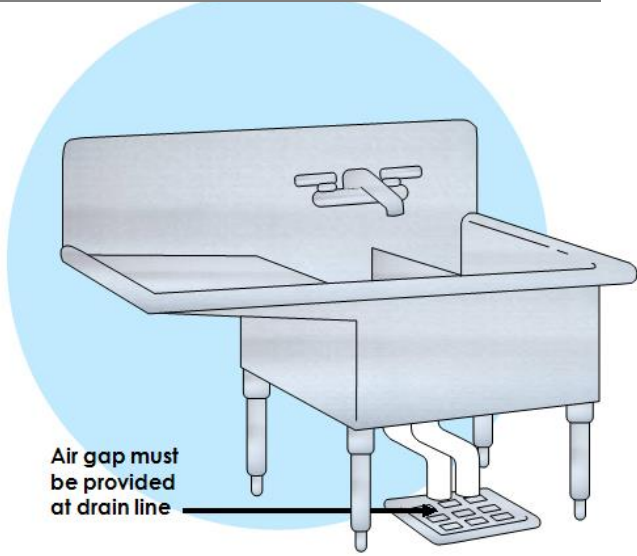
3 COMPARTMENT SINK

Installed 4" off the wall with brackets

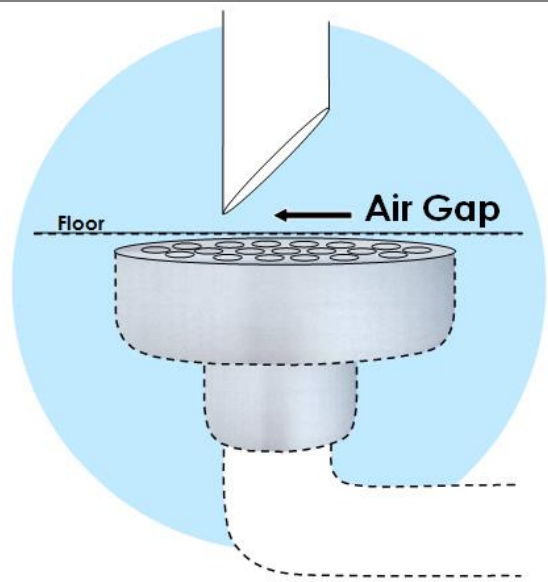


EQUIPMENT EXAMPLES, CONTINUED

FOOD PREPARATION SINK



INDIRECT CONNECTION



COMMERCIAL DISHWASHER

