

Fundamentals of safe sampling

WHAT is a sample? it is small (no more than 3 oz) and it is free to customers.

WHERE are samples prepared? Cooked foods can be sampled only if prepared/cooked on site at the market or in a licensed food facility. NO prep/cooking in an unlicensed home kitchen.

WHEN: Sample when it works for you – there's no obligation to sample. You might get almost as much benefit with less cost from sampling intermittently.

WHY sample? Most vendors sample for marketing and promotional purposes.

Sampling also can be a key part of product development. That's beyond the scope of this piece, but the [OSU Food Innovation Center](#) can help.

WHAT is needed to sample?

- Hand wash station – several gallons of potable water, catch basin, liquid soap and paper towels.
- ***Sanitizing gel is not a substitute for a hand wash station.***
- Clean tools -- Cutting board, knives that do not fold, spatulas, melon baller, tongs. Keep them clean during the period of sampling. Bring multiple tools or plan to clean some during the market.

DOs and a DON'T

- **Do** clean your water container regularly with a light 50 ppm bleach solution.
- **Do** make simple signs – index cards or signs you can write on and wipe off. Highlight produce varieties and their differing qualities.
- **Do** offer serving suggestions, recipe ideas and pairing tips.
- **Do** display some of the product whole next to the samples.
- **Do** make plans to avoid contamination of samples not taken.
 - Put a toothpick in each sample and separate the samples
 - Buy small souffle cups
 - A cheese shaker to dispense one or two toothpicks at a time

- **Do** have a trash receptacle and take the trash home with you.
- **Don't** try to sample lots of products at one time. Think about sampling new items, slow sellers or just rotate what you sample. Too much choice is paralyzing to customers.

Products that require more care

ALL produce should be washed before cutting, but certain products are especially risky to cut if not clean. Melons in particular require special care.

It is possible to sample meat, poultry or eggs and cook onsite, but it requires extra care because these are potentially hazardous foods.

Sampling both animal proteins and produce together would require separate cutting boards and tools to prevent cross-contamination. Best to leave that to professionals chefs and food safety experts.