



SKAMANIA COUNTY COMMUNITY HEALTH

Rock Creek Center
710 SW Rock Creek Drive
PO Box 369
Stevenson, WA 98648
(509) 427-3850 Fax: (509) 427-0188
www.skamaniacounty.org

BEER, WINE AND DISTILLERY TASTING ROOMS **New establishment and or change in owner**

Food Protection Program reviews and approves applications for the construction of new food establishments or the remodeling of existing ones. The process begins by submitting plans to the Food Protection Program. Plans are reviewed to ensure that the establishment will have all the necessary facilities and equipment. When changing ownership of an existing food establishment, the new owner must apply for a permit to operate.

EXEMPT FROM CODE

- Commercially pre-packaged, non-potentially hazardous food served directly into single service articles
- No fee

Tasting rooms that only serve wine, beer or spirits into single-service articles (disposable cups) or provide customers with new, clean glassware to keep or allow customers to bring their own glassware for their own use so long as no glassware is reused anywhere in the establishment do not need to obtain a tasting room permit.

Other activities that are exempt from the Food Code include the offering of non-potentially hazardous, ready-to-eat foods produced in a licensed food establishment or food processing plant (such as crackers or pretzels) that are served without direct hand contact, with limited portioning, directly onto or into sanitary single-use or single-service articles from the original package.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Why do I need to go through the Public Health plan review process and obtain a Food Establishment permit?

Businesses that provide food or beverages to the public are typically required to obtain a food establishment permit from the local health department. The Washington State Food Codes require all food establishments to receive plan approval and to operate with a valid food establishment permit. With minor exceptions, wine and distillery tasting rooms that handle food are defined by the Food Code as "food establishments" and are required to be supported with sanitary facilities such as hand sinks, restrooms and ware washing sinks.

My tasting room has been in operation for a number of years now. Why am I *now* being told that I need to get an annual food establishment operating permit and to submit plans?

As the number and complexity of wine tasting rooms have expanded in recent years, some tasting rooms have evolved more complex food handling practices such that they no longer qualify to be "exempt from permit." In December 2010, the Washington State Department of Health was asked by the Washington State Wine Commission to write a column for their newsletter about food service in the wine industry and the appropriate permitting of food service in tasting rooms. The Washington State Department of Health has encouraged local health jurisdictions to work toward greater consistency in tasting room permitting and operations under applicable provisions of the Food Code. In Skamania County, many wine tasting rooms have already obtained food establishment operating permits and have submitted plans for approval prior to operating.

Are some tasting rooms totally exempt from the Food Code?

Possibly. Tasting rooms that limit operations in the following ways are totally exempt from the Food Code and are not required to obtain an operating permit or submit plans:

1. Wine or spirits are served into single-service articles (disposable cups);
2. Customers are provided with new, clean glassware to keep;
3. Customers bring their own glassware for their own use; or

Other activities that are exempt from the Food Code include the offering of non-potentially hazardous, ready-to-eat foods produced in a licensed food establishment or food processing plant (such as crackers or pretzels) that are served without direct hand contact, with limited portioning, directly onto or into sanitary single-use or single-service articles from the original package. If you are uncertain if Public Health plan review and permits are required for your operation, please contact us.

I don't qualify as exempt from the Food Code. How do I start the Plan Review Process?

Your first step is to thoroughly read through the Plan Review Guide for Wine & Distillery Tasting Rooms. The Plan Guide describes in specific detail the various documents, plans and fees required for Public Health plan review. The Plan Guide also includes contact information for plans examiners who are available for coaching on the plan review process. The Plan Guide can be found at <http://www.skamaniacounty.org/community-health/homepage/public-health/food-safety/>

The wastewater from my business is handled by a septic system. How do I proceed?

First, find out if your facility has a septic system that is approved for your business operation. For further information, please contact Community Development at 509-427-3900 with your tax parcel number. You must be able to demonstrate that your septic system is approved for your business and this approval must be included with your plans for Food Establishment Plan Review.

How long does the plan review process take?

Our goal is to complete initial plan review within 10 business days from the day that complete plans are submitted to our office. If the plans examiner has questions or comments, you will be contacted via email, phone, and/or letter for addition information in order to complete plan

review and approve your plans. The more complete your application, the less likely there will be delays.

How much will plan review and an operating permit cost?

This will all be determine after the initial site visit to inspect your building and what you are serving.

How do I determine the risk level of the menu served at my tasting room?

The plans examiner will assign a permit classification to your business based on your proposed menu and food handling processes. Three risk levels are used to determine the annual permit fee and inspection frequency for food establishments. The risk level is based on the types of food offered at an establishment and the complexity of food handling.

Risk Level 1 Tasting Rooms - This risk level is assigned to tasting rooms that reuse glassware. Tasting rooms under this risk level may also offer commercially packaged portions of cheese. Other activities allowed under the Risk 1 category include preparation of espresso and/or blended drinks and service of hot dogs. Risk Level 1 Tasting Rooms are inspected once a year.

Risk Level 2 Tasting Rooms - This risk level is assigned to tasting rooms that receive, store, prepare, cold hold, and serve potentially hazardous foods. It includes limited preparation steps, such as baking bread, assembly of cold sandwiches or toasting/grilling sandwiches for immediate service. Examples include tasting rooms that offer pre-sliced cheese and deli meats, slice cheese and deli meats on-site or prepare sandwiches. Risk Level 2 Tasting Rooms receive one routine inspection and one educational visit each year.

Risk Level 3 Tasting Rooms - This risk level is assigned to tasting rooms with complex food preparation steps, including thawing, cutting, cooking, cooling, cold holding, reheating, hot holding, time as a control, Approved HACCP and serving of potentially hazardous foods. It includes all operations that provide cooking or hot holding of foods. Risk Level 3 Tasting Rooms receive two routine inspections and one educational visit each year.

My employees have Liquor Control Board alcohol server permits, why do they need a Food & Beverage Service Workers' ("Food Workers") Permit?

Food & Beverage Service Workers' Permits are required by state law (Chapter 69.06 RCW) for all people working with or around open food or beverages. To get a Food Worker' Permit, food workers take a class and pass a test. Having a Food Workers' Permit means that you have demonstrated basic food safety knowledge to prevent food borne illness. The Liquor Control Board alcohol server permits are intended to prevent sales of alcohol to underage or intoxicated customers.

How do I obtain a Food & Beverage Service Workers' Permit?

Classroom and online instruction and exams are available. Visit our website at <https://www.foodworkercard.wa.gov/language.html> for details.

Can I use a licensed caterer to provide food service at my tasting room?

Licensed catering requires the caterer to prepare foods in an approved kitchen (such as a restaurant or commissary). The caterer must maintain control of the food until the food is served to the individual consuming the food. This means that the caterer must be the food server and also be responsible for cleaning up after the event. Generally, a catering license allows the caterer to provide food service to discrete, private events that are not open to the public and

where the quantity and variety of food is arranged for and paid in advance (such as wedding receptions). If events are publically advertised or customers pay individually for the food being provided, the food service must be licensed as a general food establishment or a temporary food establishment.

What about private events? Are permits required for private events?

Permits are not required for private events that meet the Food Code definition of "private event." A private event is a private gathering restricted to members and guests of members of a family, organization, or club; where the event is **not open to the general public**; and where **food is provided without compensation**. A business that prepares and provides food to private events would need to be licensed for catering.

My tasting room is not open every day. Do I qualify for a Temporary Food Service Establishment Permit?

Temporary Event Permits are typically used in conjunction with temporary events like fairs, festivals, Barrel Tasting, Passport Weekend and farmers' markets. The Food Code defines "Temporary Food Establishment" as:

Operating at a fixed location, with a fixed menu, for not more than twenty-one (21) consecutive days in conjunction with a single event or celebration, such as a fair or festival; or

Operating not more than three days per week at a fixed location, with a fixed menu, in conjunction with an approved recurring, organized event, such as a farmers market.

Temporary Event Permits are not issued to ongoing operations. If an event is not advertised publicly and attendance is restricted to members and guests of a family, club or organization (not open to the general public,) a Temporary Event Permit may not be needed.

How about licensed mobile food vehicles? Can they be used to provide food service to my wine or distillery tasting room?

Yes they can. Licensed mobile food vehicles are required to operate out of approved kitchens or commissaries. Mobile food vehicles are required to comply with plan review and permit requirements and operate along approved routes.