

Artisanal Cheese Sampling Guidelines for Events

I. Personnel

- A. Personnel must wear clean clothing, hair protection (hairnet, hat, or hair pulled back neatly off the face), and non-latex gloves while handling cheese.
- B. At venues that require ServSafe training, one of the following is acceptable in lieu of ServSafe Handler or Manager training:
 - 1. **HACCP** training;
 - 2. **FSPCA Preventive Controls for Human Food** training (offered by International Food Protection Training Institute, Institute for Food Safety and Health, Association of Food and Drug Officials);
 - 3. **Online Food Safety Basics for Artisan Cheesemakers** (offered by North Carolina State University through the American Cheese Society).

II. Product Transport

- A. Refrigerated trucks or coolers with ice packs are to be used to move the product to the Event.
- B. Truck transport space and/or coolers must be clean and debris-free. Individual coolers should be sanitized before use.
- C. Transport must be equipped with a thermometer to ensure that product is transported at a temperature of 41 degrees F or lower.

III. Product Storage/Holding at the Event

- A. Clean coolers with ice packs or are to be used to hold cheese at the Event, and equipped with a thermometer to ensure that the internal temperature of the cooler is at 41 degrees F or lower. A single sample shall be designated as a Temperature Control (TC) sample. Integrity of the TC sample is maintained by placing into a Ziploc bag after the initial temperature probe. Infrared thermometers are not considered appropriate for testing internal temperature of cheese.
- B. Product for sale at the Event must also be kept in coolers or refrigerators at a temperature of 41 degrees F or lower.

IV. Preparation of Samples and Display of Samples

- A. Cheeses to be sampled must be wrapped and cut if possible at the producer's facility prior to the event. Cheese that is to be consumed immediately after preparation (i.e. soft cheeses served on a spoon or scraped onto a sampling utensil handed directly to the consumer) may be prepared for sampling on-site with sanitized tools handled by gloved personnel.
- B. At the Event, the samples may be brought out of coolers for transition to ambient temperature 20 minutes before the start of the Event.
- C. Cheeses may be out of stocking temperature and at ambient temperature for up to four hours after removal from coolers, after which time they must be discarded. Low-moisture cheeses (defined as having 50% moisture or less) made from pasteurized milk are not considered Potentially Hazardous Foods and are exempt from this requirement. (Examples of low moisture semi-hard and hard cheeses are cheddar, edam, gouda, swiss, and asiago, Monterey jack, Colby, parmesan, pecorino)
- D. If not actively sampling, samples should be covered with plastic wrap or a non-porous shield or tray.
- E. Toothpicks, spoons, or other consumer utensils must be either provided individually to consumers or pre-portioned with samples. Consumers may not serve themselves from a bowl or tray of samples.
- F. Trash disposal for the consumer must be readily accessible as close to the sampling area as possible; trash disposal containers for used gloves, utensils and other sampling material must be accessible at or near each sampling station.