



Starting a Mobile Food Business

What is a Mobile Unit? - Mobile Units fall into one of two categories:

"**Mobile food service operation**" means a food service operation that is operated from a movable vehicle, portable structure, or watercraft and that routinely changes location, except that if the operation remains at any one location for more than forty consecutive days, the operation is no longer a mobile food service operation.

"**Mobile retail food establishment**" means a retail food establishment that is operated from a movable vehicle or other portable structure, and that routinely changes location, except that if the establishment operates from any one location for more than forty consecutive days, the establishment is no longer a mobile retail food establishment.

Can a mobile unit do catering?

No, catering requires a commercial building that is separately licensed. "Catering food service operation" means a food service operation, where food is prepared for serving at a function or event held at an off-premise site, for a charge determined on a per-function or per-event basis. The charge is contracted based the entire luncheon, banquet, or event and not based on an individual meal or lunch. A Mobile Unit may be used as an ancillary support vehicle to the catered event, but in no way exempts the operation from having a catering license.

Can a mobile unit cook, prepare or sell food at a residential address?

No, any food cooking, preparation or sales must take place at an event. The mobile operator may not use the mobile license in an attempt to circumvent building and zoning codes by operating a home kitchen.

SIZING THE UNIT

Mobile units shall be equipped and sized so that equipment storage and food preparation can take place inside the unit. Grilling and some food prep may be done outside of unit, if it can be done under sanitary conditions. A private home may not be used for the storage of food or related items. Food and related items can only be stored on the secured Mobile unit, at the servicing area, or at the commercial establishment from which it is purchased.

PERSON IN CHARGE

The licensee must designate a "Person in charge" to be present that can demonstrate knowledge required under section 3717-1-02.4 of the food code.

FOOD WORKERS

Food workers must be trained when and how and when to:

- properly wash hands,
- don and change disposable gloves,
- monitor food temperatures,
- report a personal illness,
- protect foods from contamination,
- wear hair restraints,
- clean and sanitize utensils and equipment

FOODS

Foods shall be safe, unadulterated and honestly presented (3717-1-3.0 of the Food Code).

Foods must be obtained from sources that comply with law (3717-1-3.1 of the Food Code). All meat and poultry must come from USDA or Ohio Dept. of Agriculture regulated sources.

Home canned foods are NOT allowed nor are home cooked or prepared foods. Home prepared foods that comply with the cottage food regulations (OAC 901:3-20-01) may be used in or resold from the mobile unit. Ice for use as a food or a cooling medium shall be commercially prepackaged.

SINKS & DISHWASHING

Mobile units shall be equipped with a stainless steel three-compartment sink.

The basins of the sink must be sized to accommodate the largest piece of equipment to be washed. Each end of the sink is to be equipped with drain boards that allows water dripping from wet utensils to drain back into the sink. Dish sprayers and cloth towel drying are not allowed; air drying and disposable towels are allowed. An approved sanitizer must be used for sanitizing equipment & utensils. Operator must have the correct test strips available and check sanitizer concentration.



Each unit must have a separate hand-washing sink supplied with warm water, hand soap, and disposable towels. If the hand sink is close to areas where food is stored and prepared a splash-guard may be required.



Hot and Cold water must be provided to sinks, and the water must be pressurized.

WATER SUPPLY

Direct connect – The unit may directly connect to a municipal water supply.

Tank – The unit may have a water storage tank made of approved materials. The tank must be equipped with an access port for cleaning and a drain at the lowest point of the tank.

Water connections - Only FDA or NSF approved hoses or drinking water piping may be used to supply water.

Backflow Prevention – All water connections must be protected by an air-gap or an approved backflow prevention device that meets standard **ASSE 1012 or 1024**. Check that one of these numbers is stamped on the device before purchasing.



Backflow prevention devices



Food/water grade hose



NSF Water tanks

Water Heater – Either tank-type or instant heaters are acceptable. Water must be available at a minimum temperature 100°F.

WASTEWATER

A holding tank must be used to collect wastewater. Wastewater must be disposed of in a sanitary sewer system. Waste cannot be discharged onto the ground or storm drains.

EQUIPMENT



Units must have sufficient NSF approved refrigeration and hot holding equipment to maintain Potentially Hazardous (PH) foods at proper temperatures (glass door merchandisers for prepackaged foods cannot be used for storage of PH foods). Cold foods must be maintained at 41° F or below. Hot foods must be maintained at 140° F or above. Each refrigerator storing food must have an accurate thermometer. Each unit must have a metal stem thermometer (0° - 220°F) to check cooking temperatures.



UTENSILS

Utensils must be kept clean and free of soil at all times. Unless the unit is thoroughly screened and free of flying insects, all foods and utensils must be stored in a manner to protect from contamination.

WALL, FLOORS & CEILINGS

All surfaces must be smooth, nonabsorbent, durable and washable. Surfaces should be substantially free of voids, cracks, holes or crevices, which may accumulate dirt and grease or be difficult to clean. Materials like FRP (Fiberglass Reinforced Plastic), good quality vinyl tile or linoleum, Formica, sheet aluminum and stainless steel provide good finish surfaces. Enclosures around fryers should be stainless or aluminum. All bare wood must sanded smooth and painted with a food grade quality oil-based paint. Food contact surfaces must be of food grade materials: smooth, durable, nonabsorbent and easily cleanable.

LIGHTING

A minimum of fifty (50) foot-candles of artificial light are required on surfaces where food preparation, cooking or dishwashing take place. Lights must be placed so working surfaces are not in shadow. Dual fluorescent tubes running the entire length of the trailer is usually sufficient to meet this requirement. Shields or coated bulbs are required on lighting units.

VENTILATION

Equipment that will be used to fry foods must be located under ventilation hoods or at an open window large enough to provide ventilation. Ventilation should be sufficient to remove steam, heat and cooking fumes.

FIRE

Local fire authorities may require that each unit be equipped with a working five-pound ABC type fire extinguisher. Units with deep fryers using vegetable oil may be required to have a liquid chemical extinguisher.

PLAN REVIEW REQUIRED

New or extensively remodeled units will need to submit plans to this department for approval prior to licensing. Ask for a Mobile Food Business Application from this department to get started. To have a review done by this department you will need to submit:

- A detailed menu or list of foods to be served.
- An equipment list detailing the make, model # and type of each piece of equipment.
- A scale floor plan showing location of equipment, sinks, water heater, water storage, wastewater storage, lighting, windows, doors, ventilation etc.
- A surface finish schedule detailing materials used for walls, floors, ceilings, shelving and countertops.

SIGNAGE

The name of operation and city of origin shall be displayed in individual 3 inch high lettering on the outside of the unit. The area code and phone number shall also be displayed on unit.

PRE-OPENING INSPECTION

After the license application has been submitted with the fee, a pre-opening inspection should be scheduled. Following a satisfactory inspection, you will receive your license to operate. The cost of a Mobile License is currently \$192.00 per year. This license will allow you to operate the licensed unit throughout the state of Ohio.

All licenses expire on March 1st of each year and renewal notices are mailed in February, so make sure to keep the Health Department updated on your current address.

Please review the Ohio Uniform Food Safety Code for full requirements:

<http://www.odh.ohio.gov/en/rules/final/3717-1>