

GUIDANCE FOR FOOD SAMPLING AND BEVERAGE TASTING

Overview

Under current Chief Medical Officer of Health Orders, businesses and entities are required to:

- implement practices to minimize the risk of transmission of infection among attendees;
- provide procedures for rapid response if an attendee develops symptoms of illness;
- ensure that attendees maintain high levels of sanitation and personal hygiene;
- comply, to the extent possible, with the [COVID-19 General Relaunch Guidance](#), this guidance and any other applicable guidance at: alberta.ca/biz-connect.aspx

This document has been developed to support owners and operators of businesses/entities where food sampling and beverage tasting occur (e.g, retail stores, grocery stores, farmers markets, public markets and tasting events) in reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 among attendees (including workers, volunteers, patrons and the general public). The guidance provided outlines public health and infection prevention and control measures specific to these activities. Guidance for businesses and entities that offer food sampling and beverage tasting may also be found, as applicable, in the:

- [Guidance for Retail Businesses](#)
- [Guidance for Grocery Stores](#)
- [Guidance for Farmers Markets and Public Markets](#)
- [Guidance for Trade Shows and Exhibiting Events](#)

Where applicable, operators are required to follow the [Food Regulation](#) and [Food Retail and Foodservices Code](#) and existing occupational health and safety requirements.

In Stage 2, with 2 metres of distance maintained between members of different households (with the exception of [cohort families](#)), the following capacity restrictions apply:

- A **maximum of 200 spectators are permitted for outdoor seated/audience** events/settings.
- A **maximum of 100 individuals are permitted in an outdoor gathering** (including attendees, staff, and volunteers).
- A **maximum of 100 spectators are permitted for indoor seated/audience** (events/settings).
- A **maximum of 50 individuals are permitted an indoor gathering** (including attendees, staff, and volunteers).

This document and the guidance within it is subject to change and will be updated as needed. Current information related to COVID-19 can be found: alberta.ca/covid-19-information.aspx

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COVID-19 Risk Mitigation

Sampling and Tasting Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A designated individual (e.g., server) should prepare and serve all food and beverage samples. Self-serve samples and tasting are not permitted.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Servers serving food or beverage samples should wash or sanitize hands immediately before and after serving.○ Servers should avoid touching their faces.○ Servers should wear a face mask for the duration of time spent serving. Face shields are not an acceptable alternative.• Physical contact between the server and patrons should not occur while serving food or beverages.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The server should place the individual food or beverage portion on a table for the patron to pick up, rather than passing it directly to the patron.• Make hand sanitizer (containing at least 60% alcohol) or hand washing stations, available to patrons.• Encourage hand hygiene before and after consuming samples.
Food Sampling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Food samples should be served in pre-prepared or individual portions.• Servers should avoid plating multiple samples in advance. If multiple samples are prepared in advance, they should be kept in a sealed container and removed one at a time to be served.• If food samples must be cooked or prepared onsite, preparation should ideally occur in a designated kitchen or area that is closed to patrons.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If food must be cooked or prepared in the same area where it is served (e.g., microwave), this area should be separated from patrons by barriers such as acrylic shields.

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Beverage Tasting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify or initial any reusable individual glasses/cups to avoid mix-ups.• Consider providing a new or clean/sanitized glass or cup for each tasting.<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Facilitate patrons in discarding disposable tasting cups after each sample.• Where beverages are poured into a glass/cup that a customer has already used (smelled, tasted from, etc.), the beverage bottle/tap should never touch the rim of the patron’s glass/cup.• Servers should not touch beverage container necks or the rims of cups/glasses with their hands when pouring samples of a beverage.• Discourage guests from sharing the same cup or glass, even if they are from the same household.• In situations where patrons may spit out their beverage after tasting (e.g., wine), operators should provide single-use, disposable cups in place of communal or shared spittoons or spit buckets.• Where food is provided to patrons as part of beverage tasting, it should be served directly to the patron by the server,<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Eliminate any self-serve foods and food containers from the tasting area.
Physical Distancing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use barriers, signs, floor markings and verbal announcements to facilitate physical distancing.<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Where sampling is used to promote the sale of food and beverages, additional staff are recommended so that the server does not need to perform transactions and facilitate tasting/sampling simultaneously.• Servers and patrons should avoid shaking hands and other types of physical contact.
Other Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Operators/organizers should take steps to ensure that servers and patrons are protected from transmission at all times in places where samples are served and consumed. Strategies include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Using floor markings and signs to encourage people to physically distance while lining up for samples or gathering around a sampling booth.◦ Installing clear acrylic partitions between the server and the patrons.◦ Arranging display tables so that a 2 metre distance is maintained between patrons and servers.• Encourage patrons to consume their samples in a different area from where the samples are being served. Physical distancing should be facilitated in these areas (e.g., space tables so that patrons are seated at a distance of 2 metres from patrons seated at other tables).