

The Law & Vegan Food Stalls

So, after a discussion with local authorities and a friendly chap whose trivia included every grand prix winner since 1958, I've put together a brief guide to all the legal implications of free food handouts. Practice has taught us that most of the time many of these conditions won't apply. Equally, it is mercifully rare that council officials take the time to check. But no harm in knowing – and most suggested here is just sensible practice when working with food.

Different local authorities may have different conditions or by-laws so there is no harm in checking with the applicable persons in advance of any big event. Fundamentals? You can't sell food, it has to be entirely free or there are all manner of other complications. Show off your hygiene measures, it reassures the public and any curious council workers! It isn't a bad idea to have one person there who has a certificate in food hygiene, nor find a sympathetic premises that is registered to make your food at. You are on to a winner that there is no meat, dairy or eggs involved – this reduces the risk of any food contamination! The only real issue for vegans is rice – don't reheat it. It is a common source of food poisoning. Likewise, if using pulses make sure you have pre-soaked beans for sufficient lengths of time – particularly red kidney (navy) beans, which can be poisonous otherwise!

That out the way, enjoy a breakdown of the key conditions and legal obligations involved in getting great tasting vegan food to the public!

E/C Directive 852/2004

Annex II. Chapter III.

Requirements for movable and/or temporary premises (such as marquees, market stalls, mobile sale vehicles)

1. Premises [aka street stall]...so far as is reasonably practicable, to be sited, designed constructed and kept clean and maintained in good repair and condition as to avoid the risk of contamination, in particular by animals and pests.

Use clean tables, in good working order. Don't go placing your stall too close to an exposed bin, animals or other potential sources of contamination. Whilst, we're at it. Don't obstruct the highway either or expect unwanted attention and intervention!

- 2a) appropriate facilities are to be available to maintain adequate personal hygiene

Visible and effective provisions to wash hands, either in the form of dry alcoholic wash, or antibacterial soap, a bowl and hot water (stores in a thermos). You might also include gloves, if applicable hair nets or scrunchies to tie long hair back.

- b) surfaces in contact with food are to be in a sound condition and be easy to clean and, where necessary, to disinfect.

Easiest way round this? Use disposable table clothes everytime. Or cloths that can be thoroughly washed. It isn't a bad idea to also make sure you always wash and disinfect the table top (and visibly so!) at the start of every stall.

c) Adequate provision is to be made for the cleaning and, where necessary, disinfecting of working utensils and equipment.

Have a portable washing up bowl, antibacterial washing up (co-op stuff is vegan & cheap), a reasonable supply of hot water stored in thermos flasks. Or, have utensils clearly cleaned in advance and a ready supply of clean items to use when appropriate.

e) An adequate supply of hot and/or cold water is to be available.

So cold water is easy. Hot water, you can store in a thermos flask. You don't need too much – providing you have it there to fulfil this condition if local authorities / council folks need that reassurance.

f) adequate arrangements and/or facilities for the hygienic storage and disposal of hazardous and/or inedible substances and waste ...are to be available.

Basically, don't leave rubbish everywhere. Pop it in a black sack to be recycled/disposed later, and don't have the black sack too near your food or that's contamination.

h) foodstuffs are to be so placed as to avoid the risk of contamination so far as is reasonably practicable

'Reasonably practicable' means that we're all friends and reasonable practice is sufficient. For a street stall there are natural elements and conditions you can't control – for everything else just use your common sense. Keep food off the floor, and covered until it is in use on the stall. If you have pigeons going crazy around your stall, that isn't looking good. Negotiate with them. Or alternatively site your stall somewhere else.

Chapter V

1. All articles, fittings and equipment with which food comes into contact are to:
 - a) be effectively cleaned and, where necessary, disinfected
No problemo. Stuff you use has to be clean, and it might help to have disinfectant on site to tick that box.
 - b) be so constructed...and be kept in such good order... as to minimise any risk of contamination
So basically only use appropriate cookery implements. And don't use antique ones that are evidently falling apart or not fit for purpose.
 - c) 'with the exception of non-returnable containers and packaging, be so constructed, be of such materials and be kept in such good order, repair and condition as to enable them to be kept clean and, where necessary, to be kept disinfected.'

Plastic tubs need to be in decent condition with fitting lids basically. As with conditions laid out in b) just make sure it looks appropriate to task and is well cleaned.

Chapter VIII Personal Hygiene

1. Every person working in a food-handling area is to maintain a high degree of personal cleanliness and is to wear suitable, clean and, where necessary, protective clothing.

Dress to impress! Ha. Well not quite, but wear an apron or a group t-shirt with any trailing or loose clothing safely dealt with. Be clean don't be crusty!

2. No person suffering from, or being a carrier of disease...is to be permitted to handle food or enter any food-handling area in any capacity if there is any likelihood of direct or indirect contamination.

If you feel like death, are prone to projectile vomiting, sneezing uncontrollably etc. Then a stall might not be the best place for you to be!

Chapter X Provisions applicable to the wrapping and packaging of foodstuffs

1. Material used for wrapping and packaging are not to be a source of contamination.

Use sensible packaging designed for food use, and if it is meant to be disposable don't reuse it.

2. Wrapping materials are to be stored in such a manner that they are not exposed to a risk of contamination.

Not really an issue, keep clingfilm, parchment paper etc. stored safely away from possibly sources of contamination.

3. Wrapping and packaging operations are to be carried out so to avoid contamination of the products

Best to wrap and package in advance, ideally at a premises that is registered with the local authority. Use appropriate materials etc. Broken record anyone?

Chapter XII Training

1. food handlers are supervised and instructed and/or trained in food hygiene matters commensurate with their work activity

Folks involved need to know the essentials of food hygiene, to the level appropriate to any tasks they might undertake as part of a stall.

NB. There is an individual responsibility here. If there is no formal organiser you may need to make sure you are familiar with your obligations etc.

Food Hygiene (England) Regulations 2006

Schedule 4 Regulation 30 Temperature Control Requirements

If food has been heated and is intended as 'hot' food it needs to be consumed or delivered to consumer with a period of 2 hours from initial heating.

If food is intended to be kept chilled (e.g. salads) then once removed from refrigeration, the dish must be delivered to the consumer within a period of 4 hours.