



Denver Food License Information

The Denver Department of Excise and Licenses (the “Department”) issues licenses for retail and wholesale food establishments in Denver. The type of license required depends on how the food is prepared, served, and sold. All retail and wholesale food establishments must comply with the Department of Environmental Health’s Rules Governing Food Establishments and any applicable state or city law.

Food-Retail License

An establishment that sells or serves food to consumers primarily for off-premises consumption. License fees are based on number of employees and the type of activities covered. Examples include a grocery store, deli, bakery, butcher, or a market selling food directly to customers. However, Farmer’s markets and sellers that offer only uncut fresh fruit and vegetables for sale, or prepackaged non-potentially hazardous food, do not need to obtain any food licenses.

Depending upon how the food is packaged or prepared, there are 5 classes of Food-Retail licenses:

- a) Sale of produce, bulk foods, or other unpackaged food;
- b) Sale of milk, dairy or preprocessed, prepackaged meats (also covers (a) above);
- c) Sale of fresh meats, including cutting, grinding and packaging (also covers (a) – (b));
- d) Bakery or Deli (also covers (a)-(c));
- e) Multi use (allows any two of the above, as well as seating).

Food-Wholesale License

An establishment that sells food at wholesale or otherwise stores, prepares, or packages food intended for human consumption. License fees are based on number of employees and the type of activities covered. Examples include commercial kitchen, caterer, distributor, or any other establishment that prepares or manufactures food for wholesale.

Depending upon how the food is packaged or prepared, there are 4 classes of Food-Wholesale licenses:

- a) Sale of packaged, bottled, or canned products;
- b) Sale of produce, bulk foods, other unpackaged food, preprocessed dairy such as butter, cheese or ice cream, or prepackaged meat products (also covers (a) above);
- c) Sale of fresh meat including cutting, grinding, cooking, or other processing (also covers (a)-(b));
- d) Sale of milk and dairy products (also covers (a)-(c))

If you sell food products directly to consumers (retail) and you sell at wholesale, you are not required to have both a Retail and Wholesale license for that location. Instead, you must be licensed in the category of your principal or primary business function.

Retail Food Establishment License (Restaurant with Seating)

An establishment that sells or serves food to consumers and provides seating primarily for on-premises consumption. Examples include a restaurant, cafe, coffee shop, or sandwich shop. License fees are based on the amount of seating capacity.

Restaurant Stand Up License (Kiosk or Stand Up Counter without Seating)

An establishment that sells or serves food to consumers where the primary business is not the operation of a sit-down restaurant and no seating is provided to consumers. Examples include food kiosks or concession stands that serve food or drink at the mall or a sporting event.

Retail Food Mobile License (Food Truck or Food Cart)

An establishment that sells or serves food to consumers that reports and operates from a commissary and is readily moveable, such as a truck or cart. Examples include a mobile food truck that travels to different locations, moveable hotdog stand that sets up on a periodic basis, or other food carts or pushcarts that are wheeled and towed to a specific location. Please note that Retail Mobile Food Licenses have restrictions on where they can park, setup, and operate. Additional permits for parking and specific locations may be required.

Restaurant Drive-In

An establishment that sells or serves food to consumers where the food is ordered from a drive-up window or call-box and no seating is provided inside of the restaurant.

Restaurant-Temporary License

An establishment that sells or serves food to consumers which operates at a fixed location for a temporary time (not more than fourteen (14) consecutive days), is associated with a single event or celebration. License fees are based on the number of event dates. Examples include a food booth at Taste of Colorado, music festival, or any other event. A Restaurant-Temporary License must be approved by the Executive Director of the Department of Environmental Health.

Food Peddler

A person that sells or serves prepackaged food directly to the public from a non-fixed location but does not operate out of food truck or food cart.

Peddler

A person that sells non-perishable food items directly to the public from a non-fixed location but does not operate out of food truck or food cart.