

Food Truck Guide



Choose a Location

Make an appointment with a business counselor from the Office of Small Business, City Hall, Room 110 to understand the process and discuss your plans. [sfgov.org/osb](https://businessportal.sfgov.org/osb)

Choose one of two location options: Selling on Public Property or Private Property. The application process varies depending on the option you choose.

If operating in the public right-of-way (eg. sidewalks, streets, or alleys) apply for a permit to operate your food truck on public property from the Department of Public Works (DPW). [sfdpw.org](https://businessportal.sfgov.org/dpw)

If operating on private property (eg. any space off the street such as a parking lot or private parcel) apply for a permit to operate through the Planning Department. You may apply for permanent use or temporary. [sf-planning.org](https://businessportal.sfgov.org/planning)

NOTE Operating on public property will require neighborhood notification and can lead to a public hearing if the application is contested by neighboring businesses or residents. Work with your neighbors to gain support and be sure to explain how your food truck can be a good addition to the neighborhood and how you plan to be a part of the community.

NOTE Private organizers like Off the Grid and SOMA StrEat Food Park also operate on *private property*. These companies already have permits but charge a fee and/or a percentage of your sales to participate at their locations.

NOTE For public property, there are *buffer zones* around restaurants, schools, and certain neighborhoods, where you cannot operate. Expect to stay 75 ft. away from any restaurant and at least 500 ft. from any grade school.



Set Up Your Business

Create a plan for the type of food truck you will open. businessportal.sfgov.org/start/create-a-plan

Obtain a Business address. Even though you will be selling out of a truck, you will need a physical address in order to register your business.

Choose a business structure. LLCs, Corporations, and Limited Partnerships must register their structure with CA Secretary of State before registering locally. businessportal.sfgov.org/start/choose-a-structure

Apply for an Employer Identification Number (EIN), also known as a Federal Tax ID Number from the IRS. This is used to identify your business and allows you to hire employees. If you are a sole proprietor without employees, you may choose to use your Social Security Number instead.

Register your business with the City through the Office of the Treasurer and Tax Collector (TTX). businessportal.sfgov.org/start/register-your-business

Choose and file a business name. File a Fictitious Business Name (FBN) Statement at the SF Office of the County Clerk if you will be using a name other than your given name, the names of your partners, or the officially registered name of your LLC or corporation. Research the name's availability in your county before filing. businessportal.sfgov.org/start/choose-a-name

Apply for a Seller's Permit from the CA State Board of Equalization in order to sell taxable goods in the state of California.

Obtain workers' compensation insurance if you will have employees. You will need this in order to obtain the Department of Public Health (DPH) Permit to Operate.



Prepare Your Space

Determine the level of Mobile Food Facility Classification you fall under and review the requirements for your classification level. There are 5 levels. [sfdph.org](https://businessportal.sfgov.org/sfdph.org)

Find a place to prepare your food. All mobile food vendors must operate in conjunction with a food facility, also known as a commissary, such as a licensed commercial kitchen. Thus, you will need to rent a commercial space for preparing food, and storing your inventory.

Purchase a truck, cart, or trailer but make sure you know and understand the health requirements. [sfdph.org](https://businessportal.sfgov.org/sfdph.org)

NOTE Be sure to obtain or create schematics of your truck. You will need these to obtain a food permit.

NOTE If you are operating certain types of mobile food facilities (classification 4 and 5), appliances, plumbing and other structural items may require certification by the CA Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). [hcd.ca.gov](https://businessportal.sfgov.org/hcd.ca.gov)

Secure a location for parking and truck maintenance. All mobile food facilities that prepare food must be parked at a designated food facility when not in use.

Food Truck Guide



Food & Alcohol

Obtain a Manager's Food Safety Certification for yourself and/or a designated employee. This person is responsible for teaching other employees proper food handling.

Ensure all employees have a Food Handler Card. SF DPH offers a few options for obtaining this card.

Create a list of all foods to be served with information on how, when and where each food item is prepared and cooked. You will need this list to obtain a food permit.

Apply for your Mobile Food Facility Permit to Operate from the SF Department of Public Health (DPH). Your application will require a list of food to be served, truck schematics, Commissary Verification, Restroom Verification, Proof of Worker's Compensation Insurance, Proof of Food Safety Certification, Written Operational Procedures, and a Business Registration Certificate. sfdph.org

NOTE If you chose to operate on private property, you must also submit a Private Property Owner Verification form to DPH.

Don't serve any foods containing trans fats, per California State law. SFDPH enforces the trans fat compliance program to ensure that no food containing artificial trans fat is stored, distributed, served, or used in the preparation of any food. sfdph.org

Use containers that are compostable or recyclable if you serve takeout or allow customers to take food home. The SF Mandatory Recycling and Composting Ordinance prohibits certain food service ware, like Styrofoam containers. sfenvironment.org/zero-waste

NOTE If you chose to operate on public property, you must provide a copy of your final DPH permit to the Department of Public Works (DPW).



What If...

If your truck operates at a location for more than an hour, you and your employees must have use of a restroom within 200 ft. of the truck.

If you will have a Point of Sale (POS) station (aka cash register), you must register it with the SF Department of Public Health Weights and Measures Program.

If you plan to hire employees, be sure to follow all wage and employment guidelines. businessportal.sfgov.org/start/hire-employees

NOTE If you make any changes to your food truck's Written Operational Procedures, menu or equipment you will need DPH approval.



After Opening

Follow all DPH operating instructions to maintain a safe and healthy truck for customers and employees.

Always clear your truck location of trash or debris before you leave. When operating on public property, be sure you don't obstruct the sidewalk.

Post all required posters and permits including No Smoking signs, minimum wage information, health inspection results, written operational procedures, etc.

Mark your calendar. Schedule equipment maintenance and set reminders to renew your permits and licenses as needed.

Be prepared for SFDPH Health Inspections by checking walls, floors, and ceilings for damage; following best practices for food storage; collecting garbage; and ensuring workers have good hygiene. sfdph.org

Prepare and pay your local, state, and federal taxes. Learn more from these departments:
sftreasurer.org
sfassessor.org
ftb.ca.gov
irs.gov



To speak with a business counselor
visit the Office of Small Business
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1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 554-6134