

Caterer Guide

Caroline Simmons
MAYOR



Setup Business

- Create a plan** for the type of catering business you will open.
- Choose a business address.** Need a physical address (No PO box) to register your business and receive mail.
- Choose a business structure.** LLCs, Corporations, and Limited Partnerships must register their structure with CT Department of Revenue Services before registering locally.
- Trade Name Registration Form** In Stamford, you must register your trade name through the Town Clerk's office. More information can be found on the Create a Name page.
- Apply for an Employer Identification Number (EIN)** Known as a Federal Tax ID Number from the IRS. This number 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.
- REG-1: CT Tax Registration Form** In order to register your business with the State of Connecticut, you must complete the REG-1 Business Tax Registration Form. By filling out this form and the proper addendums, you can get your permit to sell tobacco products, fuel, etc. with the City through the Office of the Tax Collection and the Office of the Assessor.
- Sales and Use Tax Permit** is required in order to sell or lease tangible personal property in the State of Connecticut. You can fill out this permit using the Taxpayer Service Center.
- 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 Commissary

- Find a location zoned for your business.** Every location is zoned differently -some could require a "Change of Use" or "Conditional Use" application, which can include a public hearing and neighborhood notification
- Plan Review Checklist:**
 1. A meeting will be scheduled with Stamford Department of Health (DH)
 2. Submit a plan review application to the DH
 3. Pay the \$70 application fee and provide:
 - Scale plan of establishment, specification sheets for all equipment
 - List of vendors where food is purchased and a copy of the menu
 - Copy of garbage and linens service
 - Copy of Qualified Food Operator certification.
 4. A Stamford DH inspector must review the plan. You will be asked to revise the application if needed.
 5. Final plans must be submitted, reviewed, and approved by DH and in ViewPermit
 6. The DH must also conduct a pre-operation inspection. Proper alterations must be made if the caterer does not match the required layout. Once the needed changes are complete, a final inspection will be needed.
- Find a place to prepare your food.** Every caterer needs a food facility to prepare their food, such as a licensed food kitchen. This will be a commercial facility where food will be prepared and stored. No food shall be prepared or stored at home, this is prohibited.
- Must have the proper equipment** to keep catered food at the required temperature. This may include chafing dishes, steam tables, refrigerators, coolers, etc.

Finance

- Loans and loan assistance programs** available specifically for small businesses to take advantage of. This funding can be used to pay for a variety of costs including construction, machinery, worker wages, and many other expenses small businesses often incur. Please look into each of the following listing for specific information regarding what each of the loans covers and the requirements needed to receive the funding.
- Here is a list of some prominent small business loan programs:**
 - Enterprise Zone Program;
 - Small Business Assistance Program;
 - New Job Creation Tax Credit Program;
 - Small Business Express Loan;
 - Community Investment Corporation 504 Basic;
 - Connecticut Innovation Fund
- Banks** Financing is generally short-term loans, seasonal lines of credit, or single-purpose loans for machinery and equipment. Most banks require an organized and well-constructed business plan, any personal/business credit history and a cash flow projection for at least one year. Refer to the United States Small Business Administration website for more information on securing a bank loan.
- SCORE** The Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) is an SBA supported nonprofit association made up of thousands of volunteer business counselors throughout the U.S. SCORE is dedicated to the mentoring and education of small business owners. The Fairfield County SCORE Chapter, located in Norwalk Connecticut, is one of the most successful in the country.

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Food & Alcohol

What If..

After Opening

- Fats, Oils, and Grease** Install approved grease-capture equipment (i.e. traps or interceptors) in your kitchen to prevent clogged pipes and sewer backups.
- Gas & Electric Services** If your business needs new or additional gas or electric services, contact Eversource Building and Renovation Services to start the application process.
- Obtain a Food Handler Inspection** The Stamford Health Department, Environmental Health and Inspection Division issues this license to all food service establishments in the City of Stamford to ensure public health and the practice of proper food preparation methods by the establishment. Unless you plan to serve light food like pretzels and chips without a full kitchen.
- Apply for your Health Permit to Operate** from the Stamford Department of Public Health within 6-8 weeks of your planned open date. Your application will require Proof of Worker's Compensation Insurance, Proof of Food Safety Certification, and a Business Registration Certificate.
- Keep a calibrated probe thermometer nearby** at all times. The thermometer must have a temperature range of 0—220 degrees F, accurate to +/- 2 degrees F, and be available to monitor temperatures of food prior to transport, upon arrival, and at the time of serving.
- Store foods, beverages, utensils and related equipment** at least 6 inches off the ground at any event.
- Bring a copy of the approved prepared Food Safety Certificate** to all events. Must be able to provide this when asked.

- If you plan to hire employees**, be sure to follow all wage and employment guidelines.
- If you make changes to your Written Operational Procedures, menu, or equipment** you will need Stamford DH approval.
- Negotiate compensation & payment plan** prior to signing a contract. Consider taking a class or seeking other advice on contracts

- Post all required posters and permits** including No Smoking signs, minimum wage information, health inspection results, etc.
- Mark your calendar.** Schedule equipment maintenance and set reminders to renew your permits and licenses as needed.
- Solicit work.** Use the web, word-of-mouth, or a partnership.
- City Restaurant Health Inspection** - The City of Stamford Health Department requires a pre-operational health inspection and a routine health inspection around every six to twelve months thereafter. It's advisable to review what the health inspector is going to check during their inspection.
- Prepare and pay your local, state, and federal taxes.** Learn more from these departments:
 - Stamfordct.gov/tax-collection
 - Ct.gov/DRS
 - Irs.gov

Important City Department Phone Numbers:

Planning and Zoning	203-977-4711
Building Department	203-977-5651
Department of Health	203-977-4382
Fire Marshal	203-977-4651

Find all related permits and resources on the online version of this starter guide:
www.ChooseStamford.com

For further business assistance, please contact
Stamford's Office of Economic Development
(203)-977-5168
EconomicDevelopment@StamfordCT.gov