



Caterer Checklist

This guide tells you which forms you need to fill out, offices you need to visit, and decisions you need to make.



Get Going

These things are crucial to accomplishing other steps, so get them in motion now.

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.

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.

Apply for a Business Tax Certificate Permit from the Office of Finance. If you plan to expand your services, such as serving alcohol or having employees, other permits may be required.

Apply for a Public Health Operating license from the L.A. County Department of Public Health - Environmental Health and Safety.



Visit

Talking to people at these offices will help you figure out what you need.

Office of Finance
Special Desk Unit
200 North Spring St. Room 205
Los Angeles, CA. 90012
(844) 663-4411

Dept. of Environmental Health and Safety
5050 Commerce Drive
Baldwin Park, CA. 91706
(213) 473-3231



Read

Reading up on these materials will prepare you for opening your catering business.

Review the City of Los Angeles Minimum Wage Frequently Asked Questions to make sure your business is compliant.

Visit finance.lacity.org for essential reading about permits and taxes.

Review the [fee schedule](#) for licenses issued by the L.A. County Department of Public Health

Read the California Department of Public Health's [Safe Food Handling Practices](#) guide

Choose Your Business Entity

- ❑ You could operate your catering business as a sole proprietorship or partnership, but you should also consider other legal entities that could protect your personal investments such as a corporation or limited liability company (LLC). Research your options carefully; you may also speak with a lawyer who can advise you based on the catering service you plan to operate.

Tip: Catering will involve being in other people's business or homes, which increases the likelihood of injury or property damage. Establishing your business as an LLC or corporation would make sure that your business, and not you personally, would be responsible for any liability.

Get Licensed

- ❑ [Register your business](#) with the City, County and State.
- ❑ Apply for a [Business Tax Certificate](#) from the Office of Finance and mail the completed form to the address provided in the application
- ❑ Visit the L.A. County Department of Public Health to apply for your Public Health Operating license and other licenses or permits you may need, based on your operations

Tip: You may be asked to provide various types of information with your health permit application such as a copy of your menu or a description of your safe food handling practices

Open Your Business

- ❑ Connecting with people will be the key to your success. Network with event planners, join your local Chambers of Commerce, or get a booth at a fair or farmers market.
- ❑ Social media marketing can be effective method for getting the word out. Start a Facebook or Yelp page for your business, and consider using other platforms such as Instagram or Twitter to showcase your work.

Bring on staff

- ❑ Before you start serving food, you'll need to obtain a Manager's Food Safety Certification for yourself and/or a designated employee.
- ❑ Review business.lacity.org/manage/employees for information on additional wage and employment guidelines.
- ❑ All employees who handle food (preparation, storage or serving) must also take a food safety training course and obtain a Food Handler Permit. New employees have 30 days to obtain the permit. A list of accredited providers can be found at:

Tip: California law requires an on-duty catering employee or manager to have state food safety certification

Here are a few business types that frequently require catering:

- ❑ Law Offices
- ❑ Ad Agencies
- ❑ Banks and Financial Offices

Here are some local events that offer booths for rent or ample networking:

- ❑ CicLAvia - CicLAvia is an open street event throughout Los Angeles that brings out thousands of visitors a month.
- ❑ Los Angeles Food & Wine Festival - LA Food and Wine is a four day food festival that brings out foodies from all over Southern California
- ❑ Downtown Art Walk - The Downtown Art Walk is monthly showcase of many of the galleries in Downtown Los Angeles. Thousands of visitors come each month to eat local fare and walk from gallery to gallery.

