

**CALIFORNIA CONFERENCE OF  
DIRECTORS OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**

**GUIDELINES FOR THE INSTALLATION AND USE  
OF OPEN-AIR BARBECUES**

revised July 2008

---

**BACKGROUND**

This guideline was originally created in May 1999. This revision was completed by the Bay Area Food Technical Advisory Committee in response to the adoption of the California Retail Food Code (CRFC).

The California Retail Food Code contains requirements for the use of open-air barbecues, which are defined in Section 113843. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide uniform minimum structural and operational criteria to assure that proper health and sanitation standards are met.

**SCOPE**

The provisions of the CRFC which permit the use of an open-air barbecue, apply only to approved food facilities where the open-air barbecue is operated on the same premises as, in reasonable proximity to, and in conjunction with a permanent food facility that is approved for food preparation, or a temporary food facility, or mobile food facility that is operated at a community event (Section 114143a).

**DEFINITIONS**

1. **Open-air barbecue-** means a piece of equipment designed for barbecuing food, where the food is prepared out of doors by cooking directly over hot coals, heated lava, hot stones, gas flame, or other method approved by the department, on equipment suitably designed and maintained for use out of doors, that is operated by a temporary food facility, or a mobile food facility that remains fixed during hours of operations at a community event or a permanent food facility (Section 113843).

<p><b>Note:</b> Barbecuing means that cooking is achieved by radiant heat and not via conduction or convection. The food being barbecued must be heated <b>directly over</b> the heat source and not through an intermediate medium or vessel. Wrapping the food in foil or placing the food in cooking utensils, i.e., pots and pans, and then placing the wrapped food or utensil over the heat source, does not constitute barbecuing. Examples of equipment that are not considered to be open-air barbecues include but are not limited to, griddles, ranges, ovens, and some underground vaults and pits.</p>
---

2. **Permanent open-air barbecue-** shall mean an open-air barbecue unit that is permanently fixed in place.
3. **Temporary open-air barbecue-** shall mean an open-air barbecue unit that is of

such size and design so as to be readily movable to storage and clean up facilities.

## **STRUCTURAL REQUIREMENTS**

1. Only those approved permanent food facilities, mobile food facilities, and temporary food facilities that meet the requirements for food preparation and service will be approved to operate and maintain an open-air barbecue. Adequate preparation and storage space and adequate equipment shall be provided to accommodate the operation of the open-air barbecue so as not to interfere with the sanitary operation of the food facility.
2. The open-air barbecue is separated from public access to prevent food contamination or injury to the public by using ropes or other approved methods. Minimum 3 foot distance recommended or as approved by the local fire department. Check with the local fire jurisdiction for specific minimum distance requirements.
3. If the open-air barbecue is a permanent structure, it shall be equipped and maintained with a floor surface that is smooth, impervious, and easily cleanable. This floor surface must extend a minimum of five (5) feet from the open-air barbecue on all open sides. When wall surfaces are within five (5) feet of a permanent open-air barbecue they shall be durable, smooth, nonabsorbent, and washable [Section 114301H (I)].
4. An open-air barbecue may be operated adjacent to a mobile food facility at a community event, if approved by the enforcement agency [Section 114307 (c)].
5. The floor surface on which a temporary open-air barbecue is located shall be smooth and easily cleanable. The floor shall be made of approved material, including, but not limited to, metal, tile, and concrete, or other acceptable material.
6. The open-air barbecue shall be located in an area which suitably protects the food and/or equipment from dust, dirt, and overhead contamination. The surface of the ground adjacent to the open-air barbecue must consist of a material which will inhibit the generation of dust.
7. The open-air barbecue and all accessory equipment associated with its operation shall be made of nontoxic materials, constructed so as to be rodent-proof, readily and easily cleaned, kept clean, maintained in good repair, and designed for its intended use. Exterior surfaces of open-air barbecue units shall be made of acceptable materials that are flush, smooth, and made nonabsorbent by utilizing an approved sealer where appropriate. Food contact surfaces shall meet or be equivalent to approved applicable sanitation standards.
8. All accessory equipment located at an open-air barbecue site (other than the open-air barbecue unit) shall be portable. No permanently installed food-related equipment (including but not limited to, refrigeration and hot holding units), structures, counters, or enclosures are permitted. Permanently installed electrical or plumbing connections to food equipment are not permitted other than gas lines to the open-air barbecue unit.
9. Approved toilet and hand washing facilities which are on the same premises as the

on-site food facility shall be available for use within 200 feet of the open-air barbecue. All restroom and hand washing facilities shall be kept clean, fully operative, and in good repair. All hand washing facilities associated with the open-air barbecue operation shall be approved by the enforcement officer prior to use.

10. All necessary approvals and permits from the local fire and building authorities must be obtained for all open-air barbecues.

### **OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS**

Foods which are intended to be stored at or served from an open-air barbecue are limited to foods barbecued directly upon the open-air barbecue and condiments such as relish, onions, or catsup that are prepackaged or dispensed from approved pump-type, pour-type or squeeze-type containers, or fully enclosed dispensing systems. Buns, rolls, or garnishes such as lettuce, tomatoes, or pickles are not permitted to be stored at, or served from, an open-air barbecue unless dispensed from units approved by the enforcement agency.

1. All foods held at a open-air barbecue must be returned to the food facility during periods when the open-air barbecue is not in use.

<p><b>Note:</b> open-air barbecues operating at temporary food facilities must comply with other requirements as noted in sections 114335 et seq.</p>
---

2. No food preparation may take place out-of-doors except the barbecuing of foods on the open-air barbecue and the application of condiments to the foods barbecued. No other form of preparation including, but not limited to, forming, trimming, grinding, or slicing, may take place out-of-doors.
3. Foods which are barbecued on the open-air barbecue may be served directly from the open-air barbecue unit using sanitary utensils or returned to the food facility for serving.
4. All food to be barbecued on an open-air barbecue shall at all times be protected from dust, dirt, insects, rodents, and other forms of contamination.
5. All foods capable of supporting the rapid and progressive growth of pathogenic microorganisms shall be barbecued according to Sections 114004. Cooked and refrigerated food that is prepared for immediate service in response to an individual consumer order may be served at any temperature (Section 114014).
6. An accurate, metal stem, probe type thermometer suitable for measuring the temperature of the potentially hazardous food shall be kept readily available for use at the barbeque (Sections 114157 and 114159).
7. All open-air barbecue equipment, utensils, and accessory fixtures associated with an open-air barbecue shall be kept clean and in good repair. They shall be cleaned daily or more often as needed. Food contact surfaces, including utensils, shall be cleaned and sanitized according to Section 114097 and 114099.6.

8. No open-air barbecue may be operated under conditions in which the foods are likely to be adulterated. The operator of the open-air barbecue shall immediately cease operation and dispensing if unsanitary conditions exist whereby the food may become contaminated, rendered unwholesome, or otherwise adulterated (e.g., by inclement weather), as required by Section 113980.
9. No insecticide shall be used at an open-air barbecue unless it is approved for use within food facilities and is used in a manner consistent with the label instructions such that it will not cause contamination of food or utensils (Sections 114254 – 114254.3).
10. No live animals, birds, or fowl shall be kept or allowed within 20 feet of any area where food or beverage is prepared, stored, kept, or served, except as noted in Sections 114259.4 – 114259.5.
11. All food waste or rubbish associated with an open-air barbecue shall be placed in disposable bags, impervious to moisture, and sealed or stored in non-absorbent, rodent proof containers which have tight-fitting lids. All waste containers shall be kept clean and in a sanitary condition.
12. All equipment associated with an open-air barbecue must be returned to approved clean up and storage facilities at the end of each day's use.
13. Approved storage facilities shall include accommodations that will properly protect the equipment from contamination when the open-air barbecue is not in use. The storage of the open-air barbecue equipment in the on-site food facility shall not interfere with the sanitary operation of the approved on-site facility, and the storage facilities shall be available during periods when the open-air barbecue is not in operation.
14. All employees, while preparing or serving food at an open-air barbecue, shall have their hair confined, wear clean, washable outer garments, and refrain from the use of tobacco in any form.
15. Open-air barbecues may only be operated by the permit holder adjacent to the permanent food facility, mobile food facility, or temporary food facility.

## **AIR QUALITY EXEMPTIONS**

Notwithstanding any of the provisions of this part, neither the department, nor any city, county, city and county air pollution control district, or air quality management district shall require the enclosure of an open-air barbecue or outdoor wood-burning oven if the enforcement officer determines that the open-air barbecue or wood-burning oven meets all of the following requirements:

1. The open-air barbecue or outdoor wood-burning oven is operated on the same premises as, in reasonable proximity to, and in conjunction with, a permanent food facility that is approved for food preparation, or a temporary food facility or a mobile food facility that is operating at a community event. The permit holder of the

permanent food

facility, temporary food facility or mobile food facility shall be deemed to be the permit holder of the open-air barbecue or outdoor wood-burning oven, and shall be responsible for ensuring that it is operated in full compliance with this part.

2. The open-air barbecue or outdoor wood-burning oven is not operated in, or out of, any motor vehicle, or in any area or location that may constitute a fire hazard, as determined by the enforcement officer.
3. The open-air barbecue or outdoor wood-burning oven is separated from public access to prevent food contamination or injury to the public by using ropes or other approved methods.
4. If the open-air barbecue or outdoor wood-burning oven is a permanent structure, it shall be equipped with an impervious and easily cleanable floor surface that extends a minimum of five feet from the open-air barbecue or outdoor wood-burning oven facility on all open sides.
5. Sanitary facilities, including, but not limited to, toilet facilities and handwashing facilities shall be available for use within 200 feet in travel distance of the open-air barbecue or outdoor wood-burning oven and shall comply with all provisions of this part (Section 114143).