

Christmas Market Seller's Guide

PRODUCE • FOOD GIFTS • HANDMADE GOODS

Booth plans, displays, prices and ready-to-eat service



A stall worth stopping for

Good products need a workable stall, clear prices and a seller who has time to talk.

A Christmas market can swallow a surprising amount of money before you sell your first jar. There's the pitch fee, the packaging you forgot and the extra hour spent tying ribbon around biscuits. A good plan catches those costs early. It also gives you a stall you can set up in the cold, products you can explain in a sentence and enough room to serve people without knocking over the display.

This guide is for small growers, home producers and makers planning Christmas markets. It covers whole produce, packaged food, preserves, bottled products, handmade gifts and food served for eating at the market. You don't need to sell all of them. Choose a manageable range and use the pages that match your operation.

Find what you need	Pages
Choose a market, selling route and permissions	3-7
Products and a focused first range	8-14
Labels, food handling and packaging	15-18
Booth layouts, utilities and build plans	19-27
Displays, pricing and customer service	28-34
Preparation, market day and problem solving	35-37
Print-and-use planning sheets	38-40
Official sources and further checks	41-42

How to use the rules

US-first guidance, with a separate UK checklist. Local requirements and the event contract control what you may sell. Sources were checked on 14 October 2026. Prices are worked examples in US dollars, not a market price survey. Use your own currency and costs.

Build dimensions are in millimetres, with approximate inch conversions. Measure the actual materials before cutting. The drawings describe display furniture beneath a manufactured canopy. Photo illustrations show appearance and atmosphere. They aren't evidence of a tested structure or an approved food booth.

Start with one main offer

A smaller range is easier to make, explain and replenish.

Selling route	Good first offer	What changes the workload
Whole produce	Apples, pears, winter squash and herb pots	Weather protection, grading, weighing and freshness
Packaged gifts	Approved biscuits, sweets or preserve jars	Kitchen permission, labels, shelf life and batch records
Chilled take-home food	Supplier-packed cheese or approved chilled desserts	Refrigerated transport, display and customer storage advice
Ready-to-eat food	One soup with bread, or hot drinks with one bake	Food-service permit, water, power, handwashing and service speed
Handmade gifts	Textile decorations, cards or garden wreaths	Making time, product safety, packaging and display stability

Pick the route your equipment can support

Write down your available kitchen space, transport capacity and reliable help. Then choose a range that fits. A seller with one car and no event power has a different starting point from a caterer with a refrigerated van. Chilled cheese and hot soup can earn their place, but both need working equipment throughout the event. Cold December air doesn't replace refrigeration.

Keep the first test small

Try six to ten product lines, with two or three sizes at most. A product line means one flavour, design or size that you must count separately. Make a recognisable main offer, add a modestly priced purchase and include one gift set. Use customer questions and actual sales to decide what earns more space next time.

A sensible first combination

A preserve seller could bring three approved flavours, a two-jar gift sleeve and packed crackers from an approved supplier if resale is allowed. Adding hot drinks would create another service operation. Cost that change before saying yes.

Choose the market before the stock

A beautiful event can still be a poor match for your products.

Ask who attends and what they come to buy. A short school fair, a town-centre evening market and a three-day destination event need different stock and staffing. Visit a comparable event if you can. Watch where people stop, which entrances they use and whether queues block neighbouring stalls. A large attendance figure tells you little about the number of shoppers who will pass your pitch.

Ask the organiser	Get a useful answer
Product eligibility	Producer-only or resale allowed? Category limits? Approved menu and samples?
Pitch and shelter	Exact usable dimensions, surface, slope, stall supplied or bring your own?
Trading commitment	Arrival slot, unload distance, opening hours and compulsory attendance
Utilities	Voltage, assigned circuits, usable capacity, water points and waste disposal
Documents	Insurance limits, permits, food training and fire/electrical evidence
Weather and security	Closure decisions, cancellation refunds, overnight storage and theft cover
Total charges	Pitch, commission, electricity, parking, waste and extra staff passes

Put a limit on your exposure

Make a conservative sales forecast before paying a non-refundable fee. Include the full day away from home, not just the published opening hours. Check the last cancellation date and who bears the loss if the event closes. Ask for the current vendor handbook and keep the organiser's written answers with your booking. A conversation at last year's market isn't this year's permission.

Walk-away signs

An organiser who cannot confirm the pitch size, power supply or cancellation terms is asking you to buy stock against unknowns. Resolve those gaps before committing to equipment or perishable ingredients.

Who needs to say yes

The organiser's acceptance covers the event. It does not settle every licence or food rule.

In the US, state and local authorities regulate retail food sales and food service. Requirements change with the product, kitchen and selling method. Start with the health department for the event location and your state agriculture or food agency. Describe the actual products and processes, including samples, rather than asking only whether you can sell 'homemade food'. [1,2]

Contact	Confirm before you trade
Health department / food agency	Cottage-food eligibility, approved kitchen, temporary food permit, sampling and training
City / county business office	Business registration, trading permission, home-business zoning and event requirements
State revenue department	Seller registration, sales-tax treatment by item, filing and price-display method
Weights and measures	Approved legal-for-trade scale, net quantity and pricing by weight
Fire authority / event safety lead	Canopy documentation, cooking, cylinders, heaters, extinguishers and exit routes
Alcohol authority	Manufacture, sampling and retail permissions for alcoholic drinks or relevant products
Insurer	Public/general liability, product liability, staff, stock, equipment and event-specific terms

Home production needs a product-by-product check

A cottage-food route can limit recipes, annual sales, delivery methods and where sales happen. It may require registration, training, inspection or prescribed wording. For example, Washington's programme allows only products approved on the permit and excludes categories such as meat and dairy. That example is not a rule for every state. Check your state's current list and the destination market's rules. [3]

Keep a one-page permission record

For each product, record who approved it, the kitchen used, permit reference, label version, storage method and expiry or renewal date. Keep the written answer. If you change the recipe, process or pack size, ask whether the approval still applies.

UK sellers: make these checks

Use the relevant nation and council's guidance for your event.

For England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the FSA's start-up guidance says to register a food business with the local authority at least 28 days before trading. This includes home and temporary food businesses. Registration is free. A food-safety management system and suitable training are separate duties. Ask Environmental Health whether your proposed operation also needs approval or other permissions. Scotland has its own Food Standards Scotland guidance. [4]

Area	Action
Market / street trading	Ask the council and organiser which market licence or street-trading permission covers your pitch. [5]
Food sold in packaging	Confirm whether each item is prepacked, prepacked for direct sale (PPDS) or packed to order.
Allergen information	PPDS food needs the food name and a full ingredient list with regulated allergens emphasised. [6]
Loose food and drinks	Provide accurate allergen information and a reliable way for staff to answer before purchase. [7]
Alcohol	In England and Wales, check the premises licence or Temporary Event Notice route. Scotland and Northern Ireland differ. [8]
Business and safety	Confirm tax records, insurance, weights and measures, product safety, waste and any gas or electrical evidence.

Check the food category before printing labels

Food you pack at home and sell yourself from a market stall can fall within PPDS rules. Food supplied to another retailer may be treated differently. Do not assume that a small batch or handwritten label creates an exemption. Bring a sample label and explain where the food is packed, who sells it and when the customer chooses it. The council can then advise on the right category. [6]

Different food temperatures

Do not copy US hot-holding numbers into a UK operating plan. The UK food-control notes on page 16 use FSA guidance. Check Scotland's requirements separately and agree the written plan with your local authority.

Check the process, not the jar

A sealed lid tells you that a container is closed. It does not prove shelf stability.

Product or process	What to resolve
Fruit jam / jelly	Approved recipe and process, permitted ingredients, jar size and storage instructions
Chutney, pickles or salsa	Product classification, acidity control and a validated commercial process where required
Mincemeat	Fruit-only versus meat-containing recipe, fats, alcohol, process and storage conditions
Infused oil, pesto or garlic mixtures	Specialist process advice and approved storage. Do not assume room-temperature safety.
Bottled syrup or cordial	Recipe, filling process, packaging, unopened shelf life and after-opening instructions
Cheese, eggnog and chilled desserts	Approved production or supplier, continuous cold chain and a defensible use-by period
Vacuum packing / fermentation	Ask about specific controls, specialist approval or a variance before adding this process

Commercial shelf-stable acidified and low-acid canned foods can trigger FDA establishment registration and process-filing requirements. Product classification and the scheduled process need specialist attention. A home-preserving recipe, a single pH reading or a lid that has pulled down does not settle the commercial requirements. Ask a food process authority, university extension food specialist or your regulator about the route for the exact product. [9]

Build a product file

Keep the approved recipe or specification, supplier details, process instructions, packaging specification and batch sheet together. Record any required checks with the batch. Set shelf life using evidence appropriate to the product, packaging and storage conditions. Do not borrow a competitor's best-before date. If a recipe changes, stop using the old label and check whether the process needs reviewing.

An easier route for a first event

Buying sealed cheese, bottles or preserves from an approved producer may reduce production work. You still need permission to resell, accurate labels, traceability and the correct storage. Tell shoppers who made the product.

Produce with a Christmas purpose

Give shoppers a reason to take vegetables home alongside their gifts.

Offer	Presentation	Practical detail
Roasting vegetable bag	Named mix of sound roots and winter squash	State contents and quantity. Do not imply every ingredient is homegrown if bought in.
Apples and pears	Shallow trays arranged by variety	Use a clear unit or weight price and check fruit beneath the top row.
Cooking herb collection	Rosemary, sage and thyme pots in a carrier	Add care notes and keep soil separate from food preparation.
Winter squash gift	One sound squash with a recipe suggestion	Sell the variety and useful cooking size, not just its looks.
Garlic / onion bundles	Dry, ventilated bunches or paper bags	Sort out soft bulbs and avoid damp decorative wrapping.
Holiday meal preorder	A fixed produce box for collection	Set an order deadline, substitution policy and collection slot.

Handle produce like stock you paid for

Harvest and grade close enough to the event to preserve quality. Remove damaged items before packing and keep a second grading tray for anything knocked during transport. Follow crop-specific storage guidance. Leafy herbs, apples and squash do not all like the same conditions. Use clean, food-appropriate containers and protect stock from rain, exhaust, animals and the ground.

Sell by weight only with a scale accepted for trade in your location. Account for the container weight when calculating net product weight. If selling fixed bags, check the packed quantity and show it clearly. Whole produce and cut or prepared produce can have different food requirements. Ask before adding tasting slices, peeled vegetables or salad bags to an otherwise simple produce stall.

Make the garden connection useful

A short cooking card can explain what the variety is good for. Keep advice specific: roasting, baking or storing. Avoid unsupported health claims and promises about pesticide use or organic status.

Jars people can give or keep

A small flavour range makes choosing easier and keeps your production list under control.

Preserves work well as an edible gift because the customer can see what they're buying and carry it without much fuss. Start with a familiar flavour, a seasonal option and something to serve with a holiday meal. Each recipe still needs its own permission and process check. Treat the following as product ideas, not preservation instructions.

Product idea	Buying occasion	Useful companion
Berry preserve	Breakfast gift or household treat	Packed oat biscuits or a two-jar sleeve
Orange marmalade	Breakfast hamper	A printed serving card
Approved apple / cranberry preserve	Seasonal table or host gift	A small wooden spreader sold separately
Approved onion or fruit chutney	Cheese-board accompaniment	Supplier-packed crackers
Approved fruit mincemeat	Home baking in December	A short pastry-use card
Honey from an approved source	Tea, baking or gift set	A clearly identified producer story

Make a jar feel finished

Use a consistent lid colour and a label that can be read without rotating the jar through a ribbon. Keep the product name visible, with ingredients and storage instructions accessible. A paper sleeve around two jars often travels better than loose straw and an oversized basket. Test the package by carrying it for ten minutes and placing it on a car seat. The jars should stay upright and separated.

Protect the information

Keep batch codes visible and keep a record of which jars go into mixed gift boxes. Include the information required for the outer pack and each item. A customer should be able to find allergens and storage instructions without dismantling the gift. If a hamper contains a chilled item, the hamper needs a cold-chain plan and clear storage advice too.

Avoid a costly display habit

Put a small quantity of each flavour on the riser and replenish it. Tall pyramids of glass create breakage risk and make the back labels awkward to read.

Bottles, cheese and holiday treats

Decide the storage route before ordering a bottle or gift box.

Idea	Selling angle	Conditions to settle
Spiced cordial / fruit syrup	A drink to mix at home	Approved recipe, processing, dilution directions and shelf life
Bottled apple drink	A local seasonal purchase	Approved supplier or juice process, storage and labelling
Eggnog	A chilled holiday indulgence	Approved dairy/egg process, cold chain and short shelf-life controls
Cheese selection	A small cheese-board gift	Approved dairy source, supplier storage instructions and allergens
Flavoured butter / chilled spread	A ready-to-use food gift	Product permission, refrigeration and date control
Alcoholic drink	A gift or licensed tasting	Manufacturing, retail, age-checking and sampling permissions

Eggnog deserves its own plan

Use an approved process and pasteurised ingredients appropriate to the recipe. The FDA advises using pasteurised eggs or egg products in drinks such as eggnog that will not be thoroughly cooked. Alcohol does not replace a validated safety process. Keep the product under its required temperature control and give the buyer clear storage and use-by instructions. For a first market, sourcing a sealed product from an approved supplier may be the workable choice. [10]

Show the range without warming the stock

Keep chilled sale stock in suitable refrigerated equipment. Use labelled display cards, photographs or empty display packs to explain the choices. Mark an empty bottle as a display sample so nobody buys it. If using chilled display equipment, confirm it can hold the product temperature while doors open throughout service. Write the collection and transport advice on the package, not just on a sign behind you.

Check every bottle style

A pretty swing-top bottle is not automatically suitable for your filling process, carbonation or hot fill. Ask the packaging supplier for its permitted uses and match those to the approved product specification.

Packed bakes and pantry gifts

Choose products that still look good after a drive, a cold setup and several hours on display.

Range	Examples to assess	Main consideration
Biscuits and cookies	Shortbread, ginger biscuits, oat cookies	Breakage, fat staining and ingredient/allergen labels
Cakes and slices	Approved fruitcake portions or plain loaf slices	Recipe-specific shelf life. Icing and fillings may change storage needs.
Confectionery	Brittle, toffee or approved fudge	Nuts, dairy, humidity and temperature changes
Dry mixes	Cocoa mix, baking mix or mulling spices	Accurate ingredients, preparation directions and allowed home-production route
Savoury packs	Crackers, seasoned snacks or approved roasted nuts	Allergens, oxidation and pack seals
Ready-made gift box	Two bakes plus a small preserve	Correct outer-pack information and no hidden chilled item

Test the package before buying hundreds

Pack a small trial batch in the proposed food-contact packaging. Leave it under the expected storage conditions for the justified shelf-life period and assess quality alongside any safety checks your food adviser requires. Biscuits that soften overnight need a different barrier, even if the bag looks lovely. Let products cool as the approved process requires before packing so trapped moisture doesn't spoil the result.

Offer a price ladder

A single serving catches the person buying something for the walk home. A standard pack gives a useful household purchase. A gift box provides a higher-priced option without adding several new recipes. Use the same base products across these formats, then cost the extra box, divider, label and packing time. Gift packaging can consume the margin you thought the larger sale would bring.

Keep claims modest and accurate

Do not label a product gluten-free, allergen-free or suitable for a specific dietary need unless the recipe, suppliers and handling controls support the claim. Vegan does not mean allergen-free.

Handmade gifts with a clear use

A buyer should understand the item before you finish your first sentence.

Product	Why it fits	Detail that earns trust
Sewn tree decorations	Light, giftable and easy to group	Firm stitching, secure hanging loop and honest material description
Garden-cutting wreaths	A direct link to seasonal gardening	Finished size, hanging method and realistic care instructions
Cards and gift tags	Small purchase or add-on	Protected paper, visible designs and clear pack count
Wooden plant markers	A useful gardener gift	Smooth edges, suitable finish and readable marking
Dried-flower decorations	A compact home gift	Protected stems and a box that survives the trip home
Knit accessories / fabric goods	Practical winter presents	Size, fibre content and care information checked for the market

Separate simple making from regulated categories

Toys, children's products, candles, cosmetics, electrical goods and food-contact items can need extra safety checks, testing or documentation. Small quantities and handmade production do not create a blanket exemption. Use the CPSC small-business guidance in the US and the relevant UK product-safety guidance. A decorative label cannot turn an item designed for play into a non-toy. [11,12]

Soap also needs care with classification. Ingredients and claims can place a US product under soap, cosmetic or drug rules. Avoid medical claims unless you have the required basis and permissions. Check cosmetic duties before making lotions or balms for sale. Garden wreaths need sound fixings, covered sharp wire ends and advice to keep unsuitable plant material away from children and pets. [13]

Price the making time

Time five pieces made in an ordinary batch. Count cutting, assembly, finishing and packing. Use the average, including normal rejects. A decoration that takes twenty minutes cannot be costed as if it took five.

Build a menu you can serve

A short queue is useful. A stalled queue sends people elsewhere.



Photo illustration: keep service equipment separate from payment and provide a usable handwashing station.

Menu idea	Why it can work	What you must plan
Soup and a bread roll	One portion size and a short service sequence	Approved preparation, reheating or hot transport, holding and allergens
Hot chocolate / spiced apple drink	An easy seasonal offer to explain	Potable water, safe drink temperature, milk control and power
Baked potato with two fillings	Familiar, filling and customisable	Cooking capacity, hot holding, chilled toppings and portion costs
Toastie or savoury pastry	A compact meal to carry	Cook time, food handling, equipment and queue capacity
Waffles / doughnuts / roasted nuts	A product made in view	Cooking approval, burn protection, ventilation and allergens

For a first event, choose one main food and one drink, then rehearse ten orders. Count the time spent taking payment, filling cups, adding lids and handing over napkins. A menu that sounds simple on paper can need three people at peak times. Keep hot equipment behind a barrier and make pickup a separate point from ordering. Use commercial food-service equipment and a layout approved for the menu.

Choose stock with a pencil first

Forecast by product and by hour, then test the limits of the plan.

Use expected transactions rather than the event's total attendance. A first-event forecast is a planning guess, so write down its assumptions. Estimate how many people pass, how many stop and how many buy. Then compare the result with your serving capacity. If one person can complete only thirty orders an hour, a forecast of sixty needs a change in staffing or menu.

Example: packaged-gift stall	Opening quantity	Role
Familiar preserve flavour	36 jars	Main purchase
Seasonal preserve flavour	24 jars	Alternative
Chutney with meal suggestion	18 jars	Savoury choice
Biscuit packs	30 packs	Lower-price purchase
Two-jar gift sleeves	12 empty sleeves	Pack existing jar stock to order
Textile decorations	20 pieces	Separate small gift section

Do not count the same stock twice

The twelve gift sleeves above are packaging, not twenty-four extra jars. Each gift sale removes two jars from the flavour totals. Set the till buttons and stock sheet up to reflect that. Keep a display quantity and a reserve quantity for every line. The opening stock figure includes both. Count samples, damage and gifts to friends too, because they still use paid-for stock.

Plan a low, likely and busy day

For example, model 35, 60 and 90 transactions at your expected basket value. Compare the contribution after product costs and fees with the event's fixed costs. Buy perishables against a cautious forecast until you have evidence. Use preorders with agreed collection windows to reduce uncertainty. Reserve those products separately and stop taking orders when your production or safe storage capacity is full.

For hot food

Estimate portions for each trading period. Prepare smaller approved batches where possible, with a restock trigger and a last-cook time. Never chase late sales by stretching holding limits or selling food with an uncertain history.

Labels that answer real questions

A festive sleeve should leave the useful information easy to find.

Label element to confirm	Practical check
Product identity	Use an accurate name. Make flavour and pack size easy to distinguish.
Net quantity	Show the required weight, volume or count in the format your rules require.
Ingredients	Use the required order and include compound ingredients as applicable.
Allergens	Declare regulated allergens in the required format. Check every supplied ingredient.
Business details	Include the responsible business name and required contact/address information.
Storage / dates / lot	Use justified instructions and applicable date or batch information.
Other required statements	Check nutrition labelling or exemption, cottage-food wording and product-specific notices.

This is a label review checklist, not a universal legal template. FDA guidance covers US packaged-food label elements, but cottage-food wording and product exceptions need local checking. Current allergen guidance must be used alongside older label guides. The nine US major allergens are milk, egg, fish, crustacean shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, soybeans and sesame. Required source names and specific nuts or species need accurate declaration. [14,15]

Give staff one reliable allergen record

Keep a recipe-by-recipe matrix that includes toppings, garnishes and bought-in ingredients. Keep supplier labels behind it. Review substitutions before using them and replace outdated printed information. An 'ask us' sign only works if somebody can check an accurate record. If you cannot answer a customer's question with confidence, say so and do not guess.

UK reminder

The UK regulates 14 allergen groups. Use the FSA list and the correct rules for prepacked, PPDS or loose food. PPDS ingredients need allergen emphasis within the ingredient list. Do not reuse a US label unchanged. [6,7]

Keep food inside its safe limits

Agree the written operating plan before the first trading day.

US model-code examples	Control
Cold holding	41°F / 5°C or below for food needing temperature control
Hot holding	135°F / 57°C or above for food needing temperature control
Cooked, cooled food reheated for hot holding	165°F / 74°C for 15 seconds, reached within 2 hours
Cooling cooked food	135°F to 70°F within 2 hours, then to 41°F within 6 hours total

These are FDA Food Code examples, with exceptions and local adoption differences. The 2026 Code is a model, not a single nationwide permit. Confirm the limits for your menu. A temporary event may forbid cooling on site. Cooking requirements vary by food, so put the approved cooking target for each item on the kitchen sheet. [16]

UK: FSA guidance for England, Wales and Northern Ireland	Control
Chilled storage	Cold food at 8°C or below. Set refrigeration at 5°C or below to allow for fluctuation. [17]
Hot holding	63°C or above. Follow the approved action if this cannot be maintained. [18]

Check the food, then record the action

Use a suitable calibrated probe and clean it between checks. Test before loading, on arrival and at the intervals in your food-safety plan. Record the product, time, reading and action. Air readings help monitor equipment, but they do not always show the temperature inside food. Avoid repeated lid-opening and keep backup stock under control until needed.

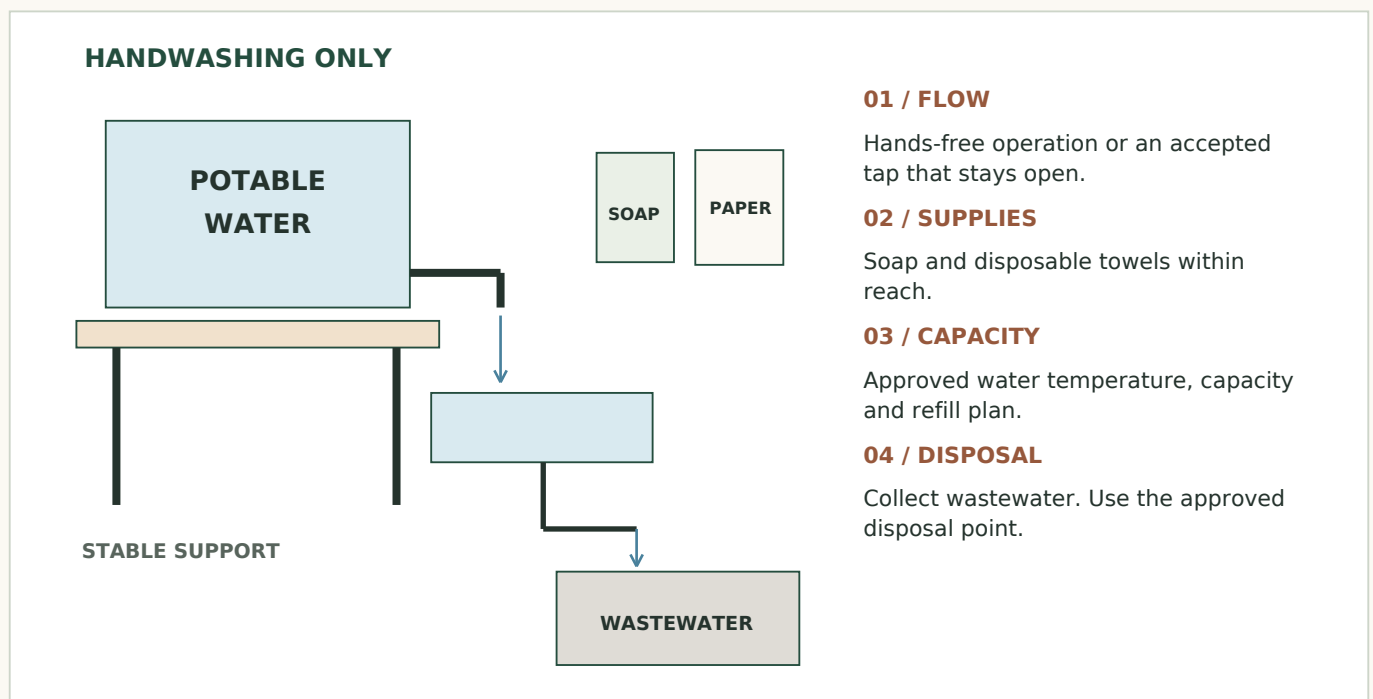
When a reading fails

Stop selling the affected food. Isolate it and use the written corrective-action procedure. If its time and temperature history is unknown, discard it. Do not invent a new holding period, mix it into a fresh batch or assume reheating makes it safe.

Use separate utensils for different foods and prevent bare-hand contact with ready-to-eat food. Replace contaminated gloves and wash hands as required. Keep raw ingredients away from ready-to-eat stock. Report illness before work and follow the authority's exclusion and return-to-work rules. [19]

Give handwashing a proper place

The station must work while the booth is busy.



Have the local authority approve the station type, water temperature, capacity and wastewater arrangements. Some events accept a gravity-fed unit. Others require a plumbed portable sink. The diagram shows a planning arrangement, not a universal specification. A button that must be held down can prevent proper washing of both hands. Sanitiser gel does not replace the required handwashing facility. [19]

- Position the station where staff can reach it without crossing a hot cooking area. Keep it clear of stock and boxes.
- Bring potable water in food-grade containers reserved for that use. Plan refills before the first container empties.
- Provide liquid soap, disposable towels and a nearby waste bin. Keep spare supplies dry.
- Collect wastewater in a suitable container and empty it only at the approved disposal point.
- Confirm utensil washing separately. A handwash basin is not a sink for washing pans or ingredients.

Clean before you sanitise

Remove debris, wash, rinse where required and apply an approved food-contact sanitiser at its labelled concentration and contact time. Use the right test strips. Follow the product's directions, including any final rinse. Store chemicals away from food and never mix cleaning products.

Pack for the walk home

A gift has to survive bags, elbows and the back seat of a car.

Match the container to the product

Use packaging sold as suitable for the food and conditions involved. Hot soup needs a cup and lid rated for hot liquid, not a decorative paper pot. Biscuits need protection from moisture and breakage. Divide glass jars so they cannot knock together. Test the handle of a filled carrier and check that condensation doesn't lift the label. Keep ribbons and plant material outside the food-contact area.

Keep this record	What it lets you do
Supplier and delivery record	Trace ingredients, packaging and bought-in goods
Recipe / specification version	Know exactly what went into a product
Batch and process sheet	Link production date and required checks to sale stock
Packaging / label version	Identify which information went out with a batch
Sales and destination record	Locate affected market stock or known preorder customers
Complaint / withdrawal record	Record the concern, isolate goods and follow the agreed response

Prepare for one damaged jar

Carry a rigid broken-glass container and a cleaning kit. Stop service in the affected area, protect people and remove exposed food that could be contaminated. Replace damaged packaging before it reaches the customer. Keep a spare roll of labels and a few plain carriers, but do not relabel away a missing batch history or an expired use-by date.

Make a recall possible

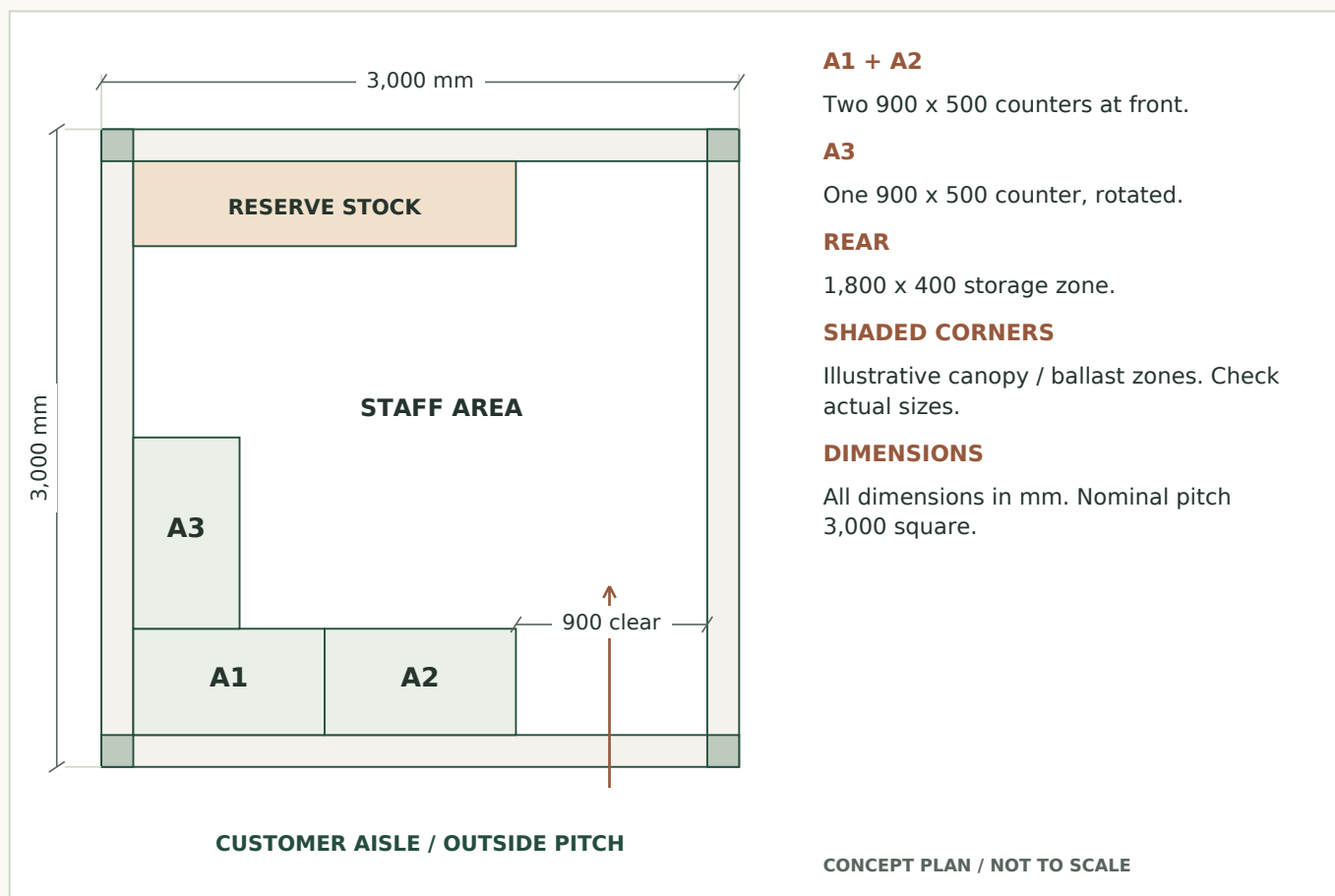
If a supplier reports a problem or a customer raises a credible safety concern, stop the affected sales and isolate the stock. Keep the batch details and contact the relevant authority or supplier promptly. Use your records to identify the products and known customers involved. Do not rely on memory after a busy December weekend. Keep records for the period your rules and insurer require.

Reduce waste without hiding information

Use one or two box sizes and removable seasonal sleeves. Reuse clean transport crates. Keep all required food information with the product, even when a customer chooses minimal gift wrapping.

A 3 m gift-and-produce booth

Two front counters, one side return and a clear staff entrance.



This plan uses three 900 x 500 mm counter modules. Two form a 1,800 mm front run and the third turns down the left side. Reserve the right-front section for staff access. Rear storage sits in a separate shallow zone, leaving the centre usable. The light perimeter band is a planning allowance for canopy legs and ballast. Replace it with the real equipment footprints before building.

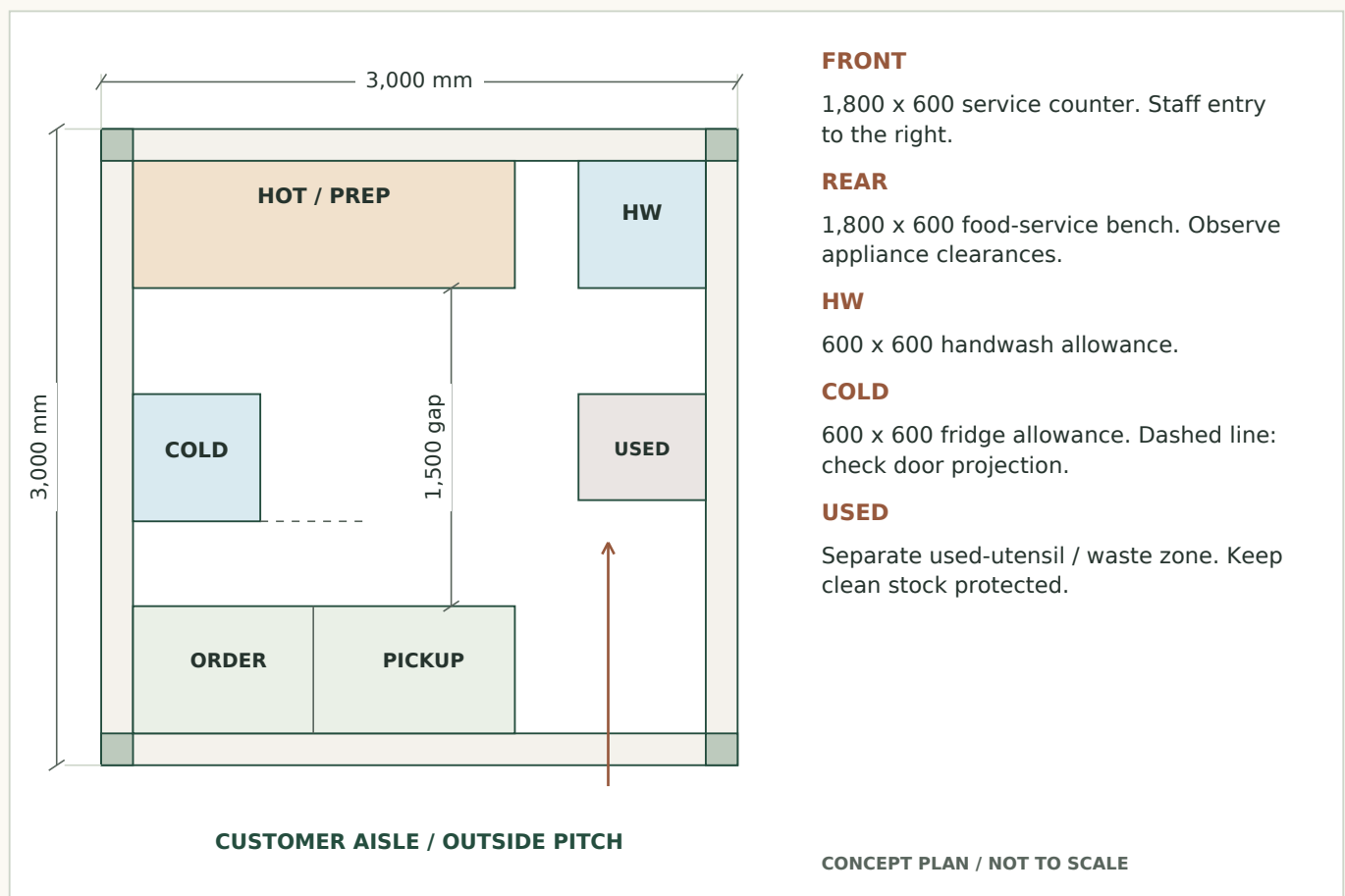
- Customer aisle is outside the pitch. Keep signs, bags, stock and queue barriers out of that aisle unless the organiser approves them.
- Keep the front-right counter clear for payment and handover. The 850 mm counter height is about 33.5 inches.
- The diagram leaves a 900 mm staff opening before site adjustments. Check the required clear width, actual ballast and any accessibility needs.
- Use this layout for whole produce, closed food packs and gifts. Move open-food preparation to approved food-service surfaces.

Measure the usable space

A nominal 10 x 10 ft pitch is about 3,048 x 3,048 mm. A 3 m canopy can have less usable internal space. Draw the actual feet, weights, sidewalls and neighbouring boundaries. The printed plan is not to scale.

A food-service booth that flows

Ordering, preparation and pickup need distinct places.



This is a layout concept for a simple drinks-and-soup menu using commercial counters. The rear worktop holds equipment with the clearances its manufacturer requires. The handwash unit has its own access. A dedicated entry remains at front-right. Keep hot equipment and food preparation behind the customer boundary and provide the guards required by the authority. [19]

- Take payment at the left end. Pass an order marker to the server without moving cash or phones into the food area.
- Serve at the centre pickup point. Route the queue along the space assigned by the organiser, leaving neighbouring stalls accessible.
- The marked 1,500 mm central gap is before doors, people and equipment projections. Recheck it with the actual fridge door open.
- Keep refuse and used utensils separate from clean stock. All equipment and storage must fit within the permitted footprint.

Add equipment, then redraw

A fryer, grill, extraction system, raw-meat station or LPG cylinder changes this plan. A 3 m booth may be too small. Get a menu-specific layout approved and use a larger pitch if the required separations cannot fit.

Keep the booth working after dark

Shelter, power and safe footing come before garlands.

Use a canopy with instructions you can follow

Choose an event-accepted commercial canopy and keep its instructions and any requested fire-performance evidence. Follow the manufacturer's anchoring and wind limits along with the organiser's requirements. There is no safe universal ballast figure for every canopy and site. Secure weights as directed and keep them within the pitch. Sidewalls change wind loading. Never attach a homemade roof, tall sign or decorative frame to the canopy unless its maker allows it.

Write an electrical load list

Illustrative appliance	Nameplate power	Current at 120 V
Hot-drink urn	1,500 W	12.5 A
Two soup kettles	400 W each	6.7 A combined
LED lighting	60 W	0.5 A
Combined example	2,360 W	About 19.7 A

This example already exceeds a 15 A supply before adding refrigeration or startup demand. Send the equipment list to the organiser or electrician and obtain the assigned supply details. Do not assume two sockets mean two circuits. Use suitable outdoor equipment, required GFCI/RCD protection and protected cable routes. Keep connections out of water and follow cable-reel instructions. Electrical distribution and testing belong with a competent person. [20]

Set a weather stop point

Agree who watches forecasts and who decides to stop trading. Follow the canopy's limits and the event's closure instructions. Secure loose stock before conditions worsen. Never hold a lifting canopy down with people. Use stable, slip-resistant flooring accepted for the site. Keep exits clear and avoid loose rugs with curled edges. Arrange warm clothing, breaks and safe lighting for the final load-out.

Combustion equipment

Do not run a generator, barbecue or fuel-burning heater inside the booth or a partly enclosed shelter. Use only a location approved by the organiser and fire authority, with exhaust directed away from people and openings. [21]

Build the furniture, buy the shelter

A simple counter is easier to reuse than a homemade market hut.



Photo illustration of a plywood counter. Follow the dimensioned 900 mm plan on pages 23-25, not the proportions in this photograph.

The project is a fixed plywood counter with an open back, a low shelf and a centre divider. It uses full side panels and a solid front to reduce sideways movement. Two modules form the front display and another can make a side return. Build one first, test its fit in the vehicle and rehearse carrying it before making the rest.

Specification	Detail
Finished module	900 wide x 500 deep x 850 high mm
Approximate inches	35.4 wide x 19.7 deep x 33.5 high
Main material	18 mm exterior-bond plywood with sound faces
Intended use	Closed packs, gifts, checkout and light display
Transport	Empty module, two-person lift as needed, secured in vehicle

Build boundary

This is a furniture concept, not a certified load-rated structure. It is not a canopy support, seat, step or cooking bench. Have a competent maker check materials, joints and stability for your stock and site. Heavy urns and open-food work need suitable commercial food-service tables.

Use straight, dry materials. Reject split timber and plywood with voids at the joints. Wear suitable eye, hearing and dust protection and clamp work before cutting or drilling. Have the timber supplier cut large panels if you cannot support them safely. Keep children and bystanders away from the work area.

Counter module: parts and fixings

All dimensions are finished millimetres for actual 18 mm plywood.

Part	Qty	Cut size	Purpose
A / top	1	900 x 500	Sits over both sides and front
B / side	2	832 x 500	Full height beneath top
C / front	1	864 x 832	Fits between sides
D / low shelf	1	864 x 482	Fits behind front to rear edge
E / centre divider	1	664 x 464	Above shelf, behind front
F / rear rail	2	864 x 100	Between sides at rear
G / side cleats	4	464 long, 30 x 30 section	Two for top, two for shelf
H / front cleats	2	804 long, 30 x 30 section	Between side cleats
J / front corner cleats	2	634 long, 30 x 30 section	Above shelf, below top cleats
K / divider cleats	4	200 long, 30 x 30 section	Two at shelf, two under top

Allow two 1,220 x 2,440 mm plywood sheets for the first module, then ask the supplier to nest parts for several modules. The allowance includes awkward offcuts. Do not assume all parts fit on one sheet. Allow for the saw kerf and trim damaged edges. Buy about 6 m of 30 x 30 mm cleat timber, plus waste allowance.

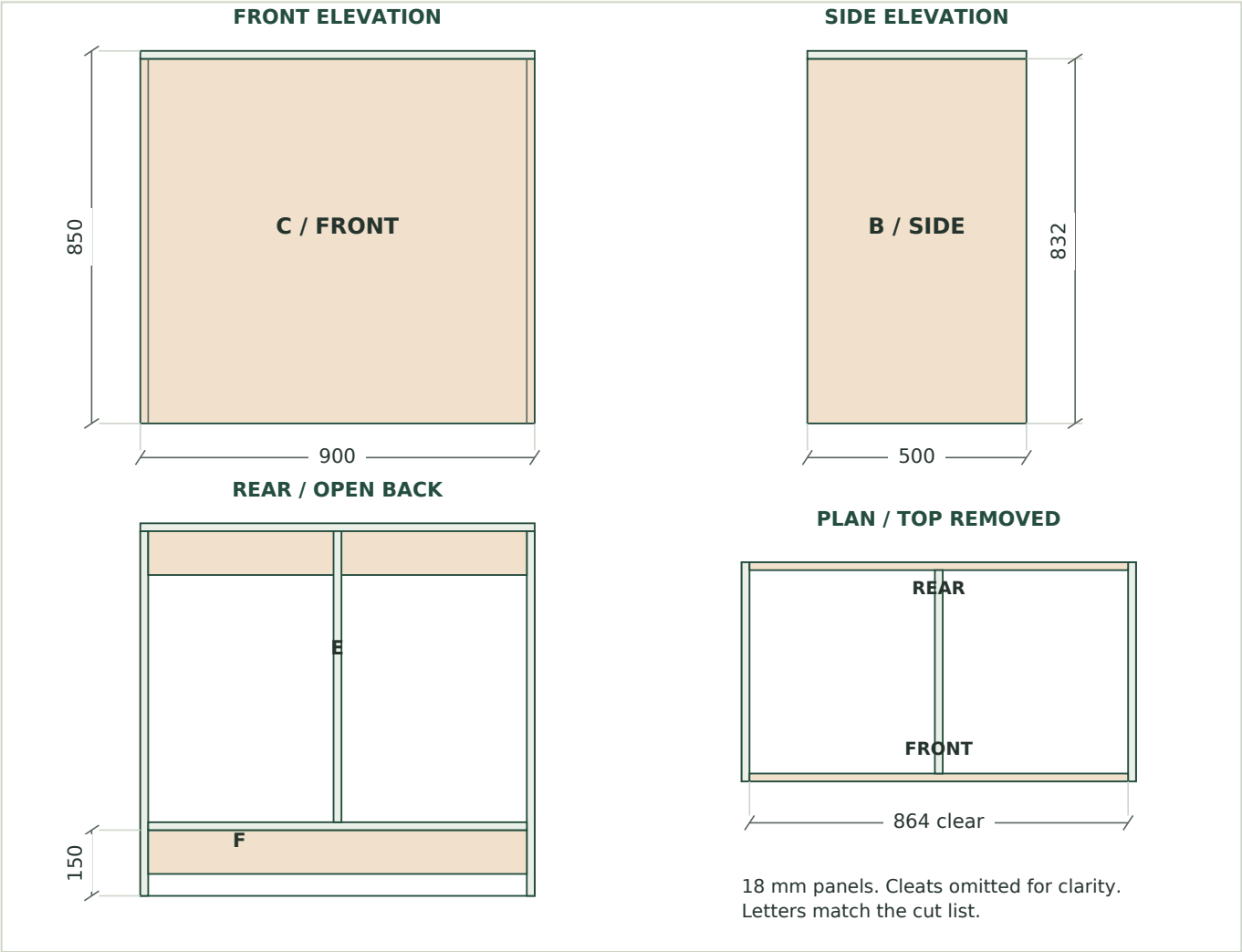
- Exterior-rated wood adhesive compatible with the plywood and chosen finish.
- About 100 corrosion-resistant 4 x 40 mm wood screws for panels into cleats. Pilot and countersink to suit the screw and timber.
- Four suitable 30 x 30 mm metal angle brackets for rear-rail ends, with short screws compatible with 18 mm panels. Check the bracket's fixing instructions.
- Four M6 x 60 mm bolts, wide washers and locking nuts if joining two modules. Confirm length after the dry fit.
- Sandpaper, edge sealer, durable finish, clamps, square, drill, tape measure and non-slip floor pads.

If plywood thickness differs

Recalculate the between-side width as 900 minus twice the actual thickness. Side height is 850 minus top thickness. Recalculate the shelf, divider and cleat positions before cutting. Do not substitute nominal 3/4-inch stock without measuring it.

Counter geometry and joint positions

Use written dimensions. Do not measure this drawing with a ruler.



Position / dimension	Set-out
Shelf	Underside 150 mm above floor. Top at 168 mm.
Rear rails	Lower: 50-150 mm above floor. Upper: 732-832 mm.
Centre divider	Centred across width, starts on shelf. Top meets underside of counter.
Front corner cleats	168-802 mm above floor, behind front at each side.
Top side cleats	802-832 mm above floor, behind front to inner face of rear rail.
Shelf side cleats	120-150 mm above floor, behind front to inner face of rear rail.

The front sits between the sides, flush with their front edges. It occupies the first 18 mm of depth. Rear rails occupy the last 18 mm. The shelf runs behind the front to the rear edge, resting on the lower rear rail. The divider fits between the front and rear rails. Its 664 mm height equals 832 minus the 168 mm shelf-top level.

Build and check the counter

Dry-fit the whole module before applying adhesive.

1. Mark every panel. Identify front, rear and the inside face. Check paired sides match. Sand exposed edges and round sharp corners without changing the joint faces.
2. Mark the side cleats at the heights on page 24. Their front ends sit 18 mm behind the front edge. Glue and screw through the side panels into the cleats. Keep screw tips inside the timber.
3. Fit the front between the sides. Add the two front horizontal cleats between the side cleats, plus the vertical corner cleats above the shelf. Glue mating faces and screw through the front and sides into the cleats. Clamp square.
4. Install the lower rear rail with its top at 150 mm. Its rear face is flush with the side-panel rear edges. Fix its ends using adhesive and the specified angle brackets. Fit the upper rail at 732-832 mm in the same way.
5. Lower the shelf onto the cleats and lower rear rail. Check it sits flat. Fasten through the shelf into its timber cleats. Attach the centre divider at the marked middle using paired 200 mm cleats at its bottom and top. Keep these cleats inside the carcass.
6. Place the top flush with the outer sides, front and rear. Check the two diagonals across the top footprint match before fixing. Glue and screw through the top into the upper cleats. Predrill all screw holes. Follow adhesive clamp and cure times.
7. Fill and smooth exposed screw recesses. Seal every face and edge with a suitable durable finish. Follow drying and full-cure instructions before loading or packing. Keep bare plywood out of direct contact with unpackaged food.
8. Check on level ground. Look for rocking, loose joints, sharp edges and sideways movement. Trial the intended stock with people kept clear. If it moves or deflects, stop and have the design checked. There is no load rating in this guide.

Join modules after positioning

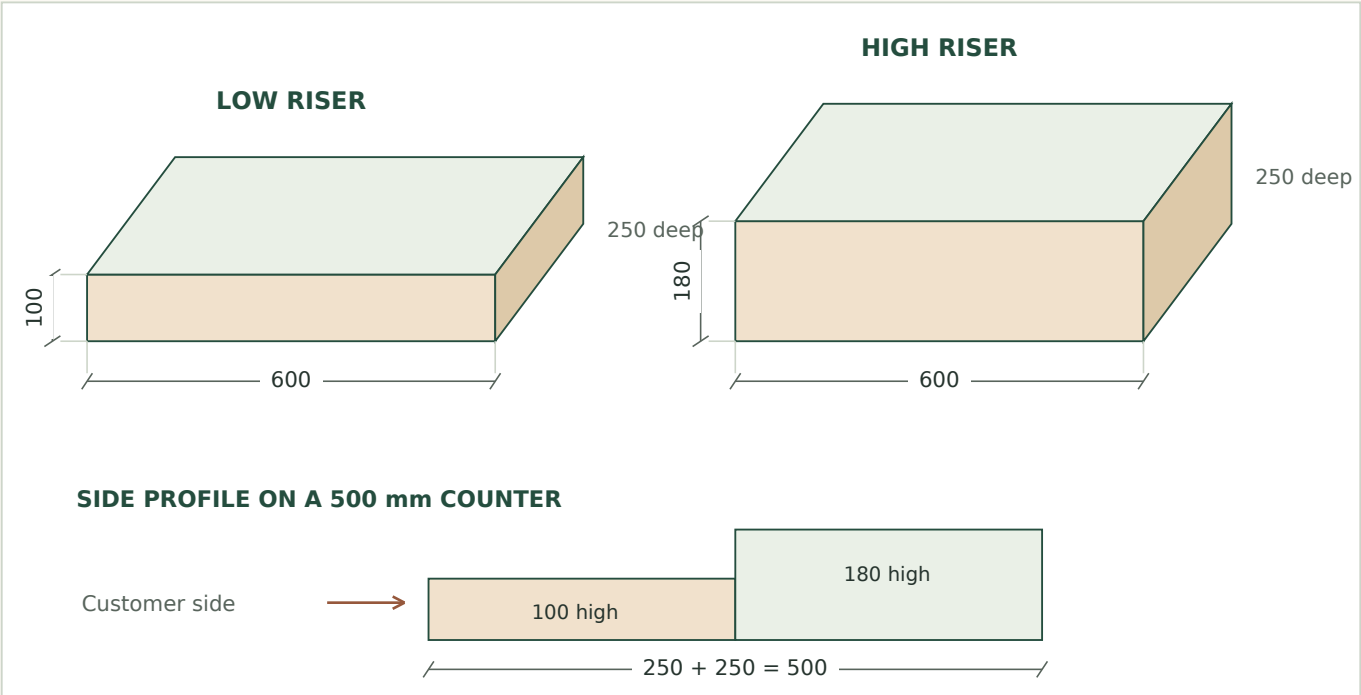
Empty and clamp adjoining modules together. Where joining side-to-side, drill four 7 mm clearance holes through both touching side panels, at depth positions 75 and 425 mm and heights 250 and 700 mm above floor. Fit M6 bolts with washers and locking nuts. Check nothing protrudes into a hand or walking space. Bolting counters together does not anchor the canopy.

Pack-out check

Remove connecting bolts before lifting. Carry empty modules, protect the finish and secure them against movement in the vehicle. Recheck all joints before each market. Do not drag a loaded counter across uneven paving.

Make two low display risers

Use stable box shapes for sealed packs and small gifts.



12 mm plywood parts	Low riser	High riser
Finished size	600 W x 250 D x 100 H	600 W x 250 D x 180 H
Top: one each	600 x 250	600 x 250
Sides: two each	88 x 250	168 x 250
Front and back: two each	576 x 88	576 x 168

The front and back fit between the side panels. The top covers all four walls. Dry-fit and check square, then glue the edges and use suitable small internal corner blocks as fixing surfaces. Pre-drill and choose screws that cannot emerge through the outer faces. Add blocks beneath the top at the corners, then secure the top. Sand, round the edges and finish all surfaces. Fit non-slip pads under the walls.

Place the 100 mm riser in front and the 180 mm riser behind it. Two 250 mm depths fill the 500 mm counter depth. Check the actual fit and secure the risers to the counter with appropriate concealed fixings or clamps that do not project into the public area. Put glass in shallow trays with retaining edges and keep heavy stock on the counter or low shelf. Do not stack the risers on each other.

A practical alternative

If a riser rocks, overhangs or hides the product information, use a single low tray instead. Test the complete display with normal customer handling before the event. These risers have no certified load capacity.

Use dark lettering on a pale background or the reverse. Choose one readable typeface for most words and keep decoration away from the numbers. Print at full size and read it from the customer's likely position. Try 28-36 point type for the main product lines on an A3 board, then increase it if the viewing distance needs more. A QR code can link to more detail, but keep prices visible without a phone.

Cut a 900 x 200 mm panel from 6 mm exterior plywood. Round corners, seal all edges and attach a weather-resistant printed face. Mount it flat to the counter front using four short pan-head screws and washers, 30 mm in from each corner. Select screw length to avoid penetrating the inner face. Keep the panel below the counter edge. Use commercial secured holders for tabletop cards.

Example: Berry preserve | 8 oz jar | \$12. Gift pair | two jars in a sleeve | \$23. State whether tax is included or added as required locally. For open food: "Please tell us about food allergies before ordering." Keep an accurate ingredient record behind that sign.

Let the products do the work

Use a few clear groups, not every decoration in the box.



Photo illustration: low levels and small product groups make a range easier to scan. Add compliant labels and prices to the real stall.

Build the display in this order

- Place the main product where it is seen first from the strongest approach direction. Keep its name and price alongside it.
- Use one low level and one raised level. Leave enough room for a customer to lift a pack without disturbing the row behind.
- Group matching items. Put an entry-price purchase near checkout and keep a small gift-set example visible.
- Add lighting that reveals the products without shining into shoppers' eyes. Use equipment rated for the conditions.
- Add a modest amount of decoration after the working areas are clear. Keep loose foliage, glitter and scents away from exposed food.

Photograph the finished test display and print a copy for setup. Mark the crates with their display position so a helper can rebuild it without asking where every jar goes. Keep the front tidy during trade by replenishing small quantities. A half-empty crate with a clear price often sells better than a crowded table full of hidden labels.

Give each product the right home

The same shelf does not suit a cheese, a wreath and a jar.

Product	Display method	Avoid
Whole produce	Clean shallow crates, front price cards and backup stock below	Deep heaps that bruise the bottom layer
Sealed jars / bottles	Short rows, low retaining trays and visible labels	Glass pyramids or unsupported shelves
Chilled food	Suitable refrigerated display or clear display cards	Leaving sale stock at room temperature for appearance
Packaged bakes	Protected trays sorted by flavour and price	Crushing bags together or covering ingredients
Wreaths	A secured commercial rack or low wall system approved for the pitch	Hanging heavy work from an unrated canopy member
Small handmade gifts	Shallow divided trays and one sample to handle	Hooks at face height or fragile goods on narrow edges

Leave an easy place to pay

Keep a clear counter section beside the card reader for a bag, a walking aid or a customer's own shopping. Bring the terminal towards the customer instead of requiring a long reach. Leave a clear approach and offer the same choice and service at the accessible position. The ADA standards include specific counter and clear-floor-space requirements. Confirm the application to the actual stall rather than treating one counter height as proof of compliance. [22]

Think about the return trip

A wreath buyer may still have another hour of shopping ahead. Offer a carry bag or a timed collection arrangement if the market permits it. Protect pointed stems and wires. For jars, pack the weight at the bottom and separate the glass. Explain chilled storage before taking payment so the customer can decide whether the purchase suits their day.

Keep scent under control

Candles, fragranced soap and strong dried plant scents can interfere with food sales. Separate them physically, keep food closed and check the market's rules. Leave enough space for customers who want to browse without touching every item.

Pay yourself before calling it profit

A busy day can still leave you working for very little.

Count the full product cost

Include ingredients or materials, packaging, direct making time and normal production loss. Divide a batch by saleable units, not the number you hoped it would produce. Then add a fair share of event costs if you want a full-cost price. These include the pitch, travel, setup and selling labour, insurance allocation and equipment use. Owner labour is a cost of the work. Profit is what remains after that cost.

Term	Meaning
Direct unit cost	Production cost per saleable item, including making labour
Event fixed costs	Costs incurred for the event regardless of the number sold
Contribution	Selling price minus direct unit cost and variable selling fees
Markup	Profit or price increase expressed as a percentage of cost
Margin	Profit expressed as a percentage of the selling price

Full-cost price formula

Price = (unit cost including allocated overhead + fixed payment fee per unit) / (1 - percentage payment fee - target margin). Use decimals for rates. The margin here is after the included costs, before income tax. The denominator must be positive.

Use a payment fee per transaction when one transaction contains several items. Allocate it across the expected basket rather than charging the whole fixed fee to every item. Percentage fees may apply to tax as well as the item price. Use the processor's real fee basis and local tax treatment. The worked examples simplify this by using pre-tax sales with a stated fee assumption.

Check the price against the buyer

Compare equivalent size, quality and presentation at the actual market. If your cost-based price is too high, change the pack size, making method or event choice. Do not solve the problem by silently removing your time from the calculation. Avoid a first-event range that only works if every item sells at full price.

Price a batch of preserve jars

Illustration only: use your own approved recipe, costs and saleable yield.

Batch of 24 saleable jars	Cost
Ingredients	\$36.00
Jars, lids and food labels	\$30.00
Cooking energy and consumables	\$6.00
Making and packing: 2.5 hours at \$18	\$45.00
Direct batch cost	\$117.00
Direct unit cost: \$117 / 24	\$4.875
Allocated event cost per jar	\$2.00
Full unit cost before payment fee	\$6.875

Assume the event's fixed costs are \$180 and you expect ninety comparable units to share them. That gives the \$2 allocation above. The fee assumption is 3% plus \$0.30 for a single-item card transaction. A target margin of 35% after these costs gives $(\$6.875 + \$0.30) / (1 - 0.03 - 0.35) = \$11.57$. Rounding the example price to \$12 creates room for whole-dollar signage.

At a \$12 selling price	Amount
Percentage fee plus fixed fee	\$0.66
Full unit cost	\$6.875
Remainder after included costs	\$4.465
Margin: \$4.465 / \$12	37.2%

Check what changes if sales fall

The \$2 overhead allocation is a forecast. If only forty-five comparable units sell, \$180 of event costs is \$4 per sold unit. Your realised margin will be lower. Use the event break-even method on page 33 to test the whole day. Do not subtract both the allocated \$2 and the full \$180 again in the same event calculation.

Keep the assumptions visible

This example counts normal production yield as twenty-four saleable jars. If two break or fail quality checks, divide the relevant batch cost by the remaining saleable quantity. Do not use a larger yield to make the price look attractive.

Time changes the price

A hand-sewn decoration and a cup of soup earn their margin in different ways.

Hand-sewn decoration	Per item
Fabric, filling and hanging loop	\$1.60
Packaging and label	\$0.40
Making time: 12 minutes at \$18/hour	\$3.60
Direct cost	\$5.60
Event allocation	\$1.20
Full cost before fees	\$6.80

With a 3% fee, \$0.30 transaction fee and a 30% target margin, the full-cost calculation is $(\$6.80 + \$0.30) / 0.67 = \$10.60$. At an \$11 example price, the remainder is \$3.57, or 32.5%. If the same item takes twenty minutes, making labour becomes \$6.00 and the price calculation rises to \$14.18. Timing the work changes the decision.

Soup and roll	Per portion
Ingredients and roll	\$1.80
Cup, lid, napkin and spoon	\$0.55
Preparation labour and cooking energy	\$0.65
Direct cost	\$3.00
Example selling price	\$8.00
Payment fee: 3% plus \$0.30	\$0.54
Contribution towards event costs	\$4.46

If the soup event has \$350 of fixed costs, including service labour, it needs 79 sold portions at this contribution to cover them: $\$350 / \$4.46$, rounded up. At 100 portions the contribution is \$446, leaving \$96 after those event costs. Unsold portions and spoilage reduce that result. They are not included in this clean example.

Capacity check

A four-hour event needs about twenty sales an hour to reach 79 portions. Rehearse the menu and payment process to see whether your actual team can do that, while maintaining the required food controls.

Make the offer earn its space

A discount needs a reason and a calculation.

Two-jar gift example	Amount
Two direct-cost jars: 2 x \$4.875	\$9.75
Sleeve and extra packing labour	\$0.75
Total direct bundle cost	\$10.50
Bundle price	\$23.00
Payment fee: 3% plus \$0.30	\$0.99
Bundle contribution	\$11.51

Two separate \$12 single-jar transactions contribute \$12.93 in total before event fixed costs. The \$23 gift pair contributes \$11.51 after its extra packaging. You give up \$1.42 of contribution in this comparison. It may still be useful if the bundle brings a sale that would otherwise be one jar, but a bigger receipt does not guarantee a better result.

Model the event as a mix

Example sales mix	Contribution
30 single jars at \$6.465 contribution	\$193.95
12 gift pairs at \$11.51 contribution	\$138.12
20 decorations at \$4.77 contribution	\$95.40
Total contribution	\$427.47
Less event fixed costs	\$180.00
Event result before income tax	\$247.47

This model sells 54 jars and twenty decorations in 62 transactions. Average contribution is about \$6.89 per transaction. At the same mix, \$180 / \$6.89 means roughly 27 transactions to break even. That estimate changes if buyers choose different products. Add unsold perishable stock, extra labour, refunds and other losses to the actual event result.

Count costs once

Contribution calculations use direct costs and variable selling fees. Subtract event fixed costs once afterwards. Full-cost product pricing allocates those fixed costs into items instead. Both methods are useful, but combining the deductions overstates the cost.

Make buying feel easy

Keep the conversation warm and the transaction short.

Open with a useful detail

A simple 'The chutney is good with a sharp cheese' gives somebody a reason to look. Let people browse. If they pick up a product, explain one useful feature, then give them space to decide. Avoid a long origin story while three people are waiting to pay. Put the story on a small card and keep the spoken version for customers who ask.

- Test the card reader, mobile signal and battery before opening. Bring an approved backup power bank and understand the processor's offline-payment risk.
- Carry a sensible float and keep the main cash supply out of sight. Record cash and card sales in the same product categories.
- Display the accepted payment methods and any lawful fees or minimums before checkout. Follow processor rules and local consumer law.
- Keep a clear refund and exchange policy that preserves the customer's legal rights. Give a receipt when required or requested.
- Use a separate order form for custom work. Record design, size, price, deposit, completion date and collection or delivery terms.

Handle samples as food service

Obtain sampling permission and include samples in the food-safety plan. Offer protected individual portions with suitable utensils, a waste point and accessible ingredient information. Do not leave an open communal bowl for repeated handling. Cost sample ingredients and staff time. If a lone seller cannot manage samples, payments and food controls, skip sampling until there is enough help.

Invite a future sale without trapping people

Show a website address or a tested QR code for later orders. Explain any preorder deadline and delivery area. Collect contact details only with a clear purpose and the permissions your local privacy and marketing rules require. Do not put every customer who asks a question onto a mailing list. Secure order sheets and keep personal details off the public counter.

Give helpers one clear role

During a rush, one person can take payment while the other serves or packs. Agree a handover phrase and a way to flag allergens or custom orders without shouting private details across the queue.

Work backwards from opening day

Book enough time for approvals, a trial build and one full rehearsal.

When	What to finish
8-12 weeks before	Choose events, confirm rules, apply for permissions and obtain insurance quotes. Test the range and equipment needs.
6-8 weeks before	Cost products, assess shelf life, order packaging samples and confirm suppliers. Begin the counter prototype.
4-6 weeks before	Approve labels, test transport, rehearse the display and confirm staffing. UK food registration timing must be met.
2-3 weeks before	Confirm utilities, documents and collection arrangements. Buy non-perishable supplies and prepare production records.
Final week	Produce within justified shelf life, count stock, test equipment and print signs. Recheck forecast and organiser updates.
Day before	Pack by unload order, charge equipment, prepare float and documents. Confirm safe food transport and staff arrival.

Run a driveway rehearsal

Mark the pitch on the ground using its actual dimensions. Load the vehicle as you intend to travel, then unload and build the booth with the people who will help. Time the work. Check whether the counter fits through the door, the lights reach their supply and the shelves remain stable when somebody picks up a jar. Take a photograph and write a packing order while the details are fresh.

Agree the stop list

Decide what means you do not open: missing permission, a failed cold chain, unsafe wind, no required handwashing or equipment damage that affects safety. Name the person who can make that decision. Keep the organiser's emergency number and your suppliers' contacts available offline. A printed contact sheet still works when the phone battery is flat.

Protect your production time

Freeze the range before the final production week. Late requests for new flavours or designs can create uncoded work, incorrect labels and poor stock balance. Offer a later custom order if you can fulfil it safely and profitably.

Use the same setup sequence

Start with the things that can stop trading.

1. Check in, confirm the pitch boundaries and inspect the ground. Locate the exit, water, waste point and event contact.
2. Install the canopy and required anchoring to the manufacturer's instructions. Confirm the weather plan before unloading fragile stock.
3. Position empty counters and secure the display. Keep the staff entrance and customer approach clear.
4. Connect only to the assigned electrical supply. Complete required safety checks and start refrigeration or holding equipment in time.
5. Set up handwashing, cleaning supplies and waste collection. Verify they work before bringing out open food.
6. Check food condition and temperatures. Place stock in the right storage, with batch records and labels ready.
7. Put up identity, product and price signs. Check they match the till and the actual pack sizes.
8. Count opening stock and float. Test a payment, then cancel or refund the test correctly. Brief helpers and photograph the finished stall.

During trading

Replenish small quantities, keep the working surfaces clear and record the checks in your food plan. Note when a product sells out, because a sell-out at noon means something different from one five minutes before closing. Record repeated questions, declined prices and any queue delays. Those observations are often more useful than the day's total alone.

At close

Stop cooking at the planned time and deal with remaining food under the approved procedure. Count stock and cash before dismantling the display. Isolate damage and record waste. Pack glass in divided crates and move food back into suitable transport without a gap in temperature control. Clean the pitch, dispose of wastewater at the agreed point and take a final photograph if the event requests one.

Before driving away

Check that cylinders, water containers, counters and crates are secured for transport. Confirm the pitch is clear, helpers are accounted for and the next collection or storage step is ready.

Use the day to improve the next one

Count what happened while you can still remember the awkward bits.

Problem	Practical response
Plenty of browsers, few buyers	Check whether the product and price can be understood at a glance. Ask what shoppers were looking for.
Main product sells out early	Record the time and missed demand. Increase cautiously rather than doubling every line.
Gift boxes remain unsold	Check whether packaging cost pushed the price too far. Offer a simpler pack next time.
Queue stalls at payment	Move packing away from the terminal and simplify the menu. Rehearse a two-person handover.
Refrigeration or power fails	Stop affected sales and follow the agreed food-safety response. Do not rely on outdoor temperature.
A product safety concern appears	Stop sales, isolate the batch and follow the reporting or withdrawal process.

Calculate the real result

Reconcile cash, card receipts and refunds. Subtract direct cost of goods sold, fees and event costs, including your labour. Account for wasted ingredients and damaged or unsaleable stock. Sound stock that can legally and safely be sold later is different from a loss, although it still ties up cash. Note cash spent separately from the accounting cost of equipment used across several events.

Be firm about leftovers

Keep only food with a known safe history and remaining justified shelf life. Follow any rule requiring disposal at the end of a temporary event. Donate food only through a suitable route and under the same safety controls. Do not change a use-by date, turn uncontrolled leftovers into a new recipe or gift away food you would refuse to sell.

Choose one change for the next market

Keep the strongest products, remove a weak line and fix the largest service problem. Compare events by contribution, owner hours and repeat orders as well as revenue. A smaller market that pays you properly may be the better booking.

Cost one product or batch

Print a fresh copy for each recipe, design or pack size.

Product / size: _____ Recipe / design version: _____

Saleable yield: _____ Making hours: _____ Hourly labour rate: _____

Cost line	Batch amount
Ingredients / materials	
Packaging / labels	
Making labour: hours x rate	
Energy / consumables	
Production loss already allowed for?	
Direct batch cost	
Direct unit cost: batch cost / saleable yield	
Event overhead allocation per unit	
Full unit cost before payment fees	

Price check	Your figure
Percentage payment fee as a decimal	
Fixed fee allocated per unit	
Target margin as a decimal	
Calculated price	
Rounded selling price	
Contribution before event fixed costs	

Formula

Calculated price = (full unit cost + fixed fee per unit) / (1 - percentage fee - target margin).

Contribution = selling price - direct unit cost - variable selling fees. Use the correct tax and fee basis for your business.

Decision after checking the price: _____

Change to recipe, pack, process or event: _____

Record the day, not just the total

Use separate sheets for larger ranges or frequent temperature checks.

Event: _____ Date: _____ Person responsible: _____

Product / batch	Open	Added	Sold	Sample / waste	Close

Check: opening + added - sold - samples - waste = closing. Record transfers separately. Break down bundles into the products they contain.

Temperature / process check log

Approved limit and check frequency: _____

Probe check / calibration record: _____

Time	Product / batch	Reading	Action / recheck	Initials

Event result

Measure	Amount / note
Sales excluding tax collected	
Direct cost of goods sold and variable fees	
Event fixed costs, including selling labour	
Waste / damage not already counted	
Result before income tax	
Owner hours and strongest product	

Record failures as well as good readings

A temperature log should show the action taken when a limit is missed. If a product cannot be shown to be safe, stop its sale. Use the authority-approved procedure rather than inventing a limit on this sheet.

Permission record and load-out list

Complete the gaps before buying stock for the event.

Approval / confirmation	Reference, contact and renewal date
Market booking and permitted range	
Business / trading / tax registration	
Kitchen / food / sampling permission	
Product process, labels and shelf life	
Insurance and any additional insured wording	
Fire, canopy, gas and electrical checks	
Weights and measures / product safety	

Pack by working area

Area	Tick off before loading
Structure	☐ Canopy ☐ Specified weights / anchors ☐ Counters ☐ Joining bolts ☐ Approved flooring
Display	☐ Risers / trays ☐ Signs ☐ Prices ☐ Suitable lights ☐ Spare fixings ☐ Setup photo
Stock	☐ Counted products ☐ Batch details ☐ Labels ☐ Gift packs ☐ Carriers ☐ Preorders
Food service	☐ Approved equipment ☐ Probe ☐ Logs ☐ Handwash ☐ Potable water ☐ Wastewater container
Cleaning	☐ Soap / towels ☐ Sanitiser / test strips ☐ Clean utensils ☐ Waste bags ☐ Glass-breakage kit
Payment / people	☐ Reader ☐ Battery ☐ Float ☐ Receipts ☐ Warm clothes ☐ Drinking water ☐ Break cover
Documents	☐ Permissions ☐ Insurance ☐ Ingredient matrix ☐ Supplier records ☐ Emergency contacts

Ask the authority in one clear message

"I plan to sell [exact products] at [event and location]. They will be made or sourced at [premises], packed [where and when] and held [how]. I also plan [samples / hot service / alcohol]. Which permissions, label rules, equipment and records apply?"

Weather stop decision / contact: _____

One item still to resolve before opening: _____

Sources and local checks

Food permissions and selling routes

[1] FDA: How to Start a Food Business

Federal, state and local roles. [Open source at www.fda.gov](https://www.fda.gov)

[2] FDA: State Retail and Food Service Codes

Starting point for state-specific requirements. [Open source at www.fda.gov](https://www.fda.gov)

[3] Washington State Department of Agriculture: Cottage Food

Example of a state-specific permission route. [Open source at agr.wa.gov](https://agr.wa.gov)

[4] FSA / GOV.UK: Starting a food business

Registration and food-safety duties in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. [Open source at www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)

[5] GOV.UK: Market stall licence

Council market licensing and restrictions. [Open source at www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)

[6] FSA / GOV.UK: PPDS labelling guidance

Food packed by the same business before selection or order. [Open source at www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)

[7] FSA: Allergen guidance for food businesses

Allergen information for packaged and loose food. [Open source at www.food.gov.uk](https://www.food.gov.uk)

[8] GOV.UK: Temporary Events Notice

Licensable activity in England and Wales. [Open source at www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)

[9] FDA: Acidified and Low-Acid Canned Foods

Commercial establishment registration and process filing. [Open source at www.fda.gov](https://www.fda.gov)

[10] FDA: Safety of eggs and menu items made from raw eggs

Pasteurised eggs and egg-containing foods. [Open source at www.fda.gov](https://www.fda.gov)

[11] CPSC: Small Business Resources

US consumer-product safety checks and support. [Open source at www.cpsc.gov](https://www.cpsc.gov)

Sources and local checks

Product safety, food control and booth operation

[12] GOV.UK: Product safety, A to Z industry guidance

UK rules for specific consumer-product categories. [Open source at www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)

[13] FDA: Small Businesses and Homemade Cosmetics

Cosmetic duties and links to soap classification. [Open source at www.fda.gov](https://www.fda.gov)

[14] FDA: Food Labeling Guide

General label elements. Use current allergen guidance alongside this guide. [Open source at www.fda.gov](https://www.fda.gov)

[15] FDA: Food Allergies

Major-allergen declaration and control information. [Open source at www.fda.gov](https://www.fda.gov)

[16] FDA: Food Code 2026

Model code. See 3-403.11, 3-501.14 and 3-501.16. Confirm local adoption. [Open source at www.fda.gov](https://www.fda.gov)

[17] FSA: Chilled storage and display

Chilled-food business controls for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. [Open source at www.food.gov.uk](https://www.food.gov.uk)

[18] FSA: Hot holding

Hot-food business controls. [Open source at www.food.gov.uk](https://www.food.gov.uk)

[19] King County: Temporary Food Establishment Guidelines, January 2026

Local example of handwashing, protection, permits and end-of-day restrictions. [Open source at cdn.kingcounty.gov](https://cdn.kingcounty.gov)

[20] HSE: Electrical safety at events

Event power planning, equipment and cable protection. [Open source at www.hse.gov.uk](https://www.hse.gov.uk)

[21] CPSC: Carbon Monoxide Information Center

Generator and combustion-equipment hazards. [Open source at www.cpsc.gov](https://www.cpsc.gov)

[22] US Department of Justice: 2010 ADA Standards

Sales/service counters, accessible routes and clear floor space. [Open source at www.ada.gov](https://www.ada.gov)