

SETTING UP FOOD PREMISES, WHAT SHOULD BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION?

When planning a food premises business (e.g. restaurants, cafés, grocery stores and kiosks), you should be aware of the notification obligation under the Food Act and the requirements for food premises. This guide brings together matters related to setting up food premises, mainly from the point of view of food safety legislation. The guide is intended for food premises located in Helsinki.

Acquiring food premises

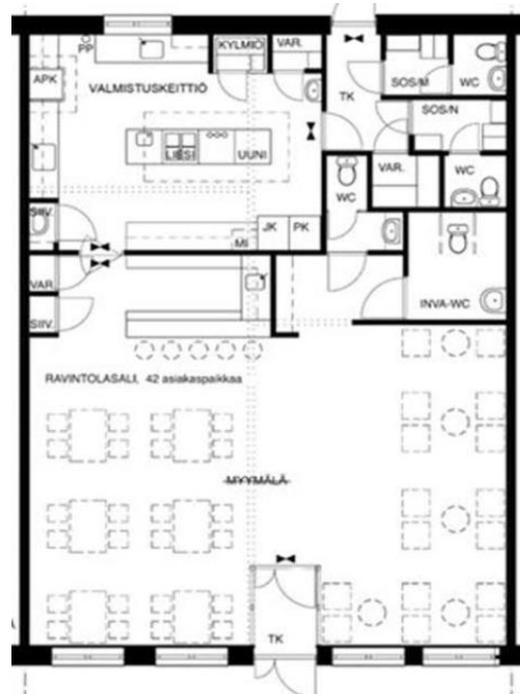
Before making a decision to purchase food premises, you should contact at least the following parties:

City of Helsinki's Food Safety Unit

- If there was previously food premises in the location: You will find out in more detail about the type of activities that have previously been pursued in the premises and whether any deficiencies related to suitability have been detected in food premises from the point of view of food legislation.
- If you are planning to set up completely new food premises or make major changes to the premises and/or operations of existing food premises: You can send the plans (floor plan and description of operations) to the Food Safety Unit for comments. The draft floor plan (see example below) should indicate the layout and furniture of the premises. Among others, include the following aspects in the description: whether you sell packaged or non-packaged food, what kind of food you will prepare, what raw materials you will handle (e.g. vegetables, raw meat/fish) and how you will handle the raw materials (e.g. washing vegetables, cutting vegetables/meat).

City of Helsinki's Building Control Services:

You can find out from the Building Control Services whether your activity needs their permission and whether the use of the premises corresponds to the planned activity. You should also check the situation with existing food premises. You can also get more information from the Building Control Services about adequacy and suitability of ventilation, target exhausts for kitchen equipment (e.g. cooking preparation equipment and dishwashers) and the need for a grease trap.



Housing company: You should check from the housing company whether the activity you are planning needs their consent. Even if the activity suited the housing company, always contact the authorities to make sure it is appropriate.

General requirements for food premises

Common requirements for food preparation areas in food premises include:

- Sufficient space and table space for hygienic food handling.
- Sufficient number of water points for the activity
 - For example, there are generally three separate water points in the food preparation area: one for food preparation (washing vegetables, etc.), one for washing/pre-washing dishes and one for washing hands. The water point for food preparation should be large enough. Hand washing stations should be located in the work area, as hands should be washed between different work stages to ensure hygienic food handling. Water points should be easily accessible and should not be installed in worktop corners, for example.
 - In addition to preparation area, the sales/bar counter should have a water point for washing hands when dispensing drinks or handling non-packaged food.

- The final need for water points depends on the versatility of food processing, the layout of the premises and placement of different functions.
- Adequate cold storage and freezer storage and other storage space for dry food products and packaging materials, for example.
- Adequate space for proper cleaning, drying and storage of dishes.
- Surfaces must be easy to keep clean and disinfect, where necessary. This requires the use of waterproof, liquid-repellent, washable and non-toxic materials and for wall surfaces a smooth surface extending to a height suitable for the various functions. Untreated wood, chipboard or other porous materials are not easy-to-clean materials.
- For the regular cooling of food, there must be enough suitable refrigeration equipment (e.g. cooling cabinet /chiller)
- Adequate separation of food preparation areas from customer areas and customer access routes (e.g. customers should not be able to go near unprotected workstations or pass through food preparation-/dishwashing areas to toilet facilities).
- Staff access routes and goods transport routes: Passage through preparation and processing areas should be minimised. In addition, a hygienic transport route must be provided for incoming food.
- A floor drain if the activity requires water to wash the premises.
- It is recommended to furnish the food preparation area with a vestibule or similar if the kitchen has an outside entrance door.

Space for the storage and maintenance of cleaning equipment

- As a rule, the space should have a water point, a sink, a radiator, a floor drain, racks and shelves as well as adequate ventilation.
- If there is only one space for cleaning equipment in the premises, it is important to ensure that it is of adequate size. When assessing adequacy, it should be noted that the food preparation area should have its own cleaning equipment, which should be stored separately (e.g. separate shelves/holders) from cleaning equipment intended for other areas.
- If the space for cleaning equipment is located away from the food preparation area or its immediate vicinity, a hygienic place must be designated from the food preparation area for cleaning equipment and detergents in regular use.
- Cleaning equipment may not be stored in toilet seating areas.

Staff toilets and break rooms

- The staff must have their own toilet(s) with hand-washing facilities. The toilet seating area must not open directly onto areas where non-packaged food is handled.
- Staff must have changing area(s) and appropriate storage for clothing and personal belongings (e.g. lockers). The toilet seating area must not be used for storing work clothes and for changing clothes.
- The toilet and social facilities should be located as close as possible to the food premises, so that their use is possible during the working day.

Other facilities and their requirements

- Surface materials in warehouses must be easy to clean.
- Waste collection and storage must be properly organised so that waste does not cause a nuisance or attract pests.
- Dirty roll containers etc. should be stored in a canopy or similar. The best place to store clean roll containers etc. is indoors. When stored outside, it must be ensured that pests cannot get them dirty.
- Food legislation does not address the issue of customer toilets or their number. There is an indicative recommendation for the number of toilets.

The suitable number of toilets depends on the nature of the activity. It is a good idea to have more toilet facilities for a bar/nightclub than for a food restaurant, for example. About half of the customer seats on the terrace should be taken into account in the number of toilets. If there are 25 or more seats, at least one of the toilets should be accessible, i.e. designed and furnished for people with reduced mobility; for more information, please contact Building Control Services.

Recommendation for minimum amount of customer toilets in cafes and restaurants		
Customer seats	Toilets for women (toiletseats)	Toilets for men (Toiletseats + urinals)
Over 6, under 25	one shared toilet	
25-50	1	1
51-100	3	1+1
101-150	4	1+2
151-200	4	2+2
201-250	5	2+3
251-300	5	2+4
301-400	6	3+4
Over 400	case-by-case discretion	

Registering a food business

You must submit your notification of food premises four weeks before you start the activity at the latest.

- We recommend that you submit the notification primarily through the e-service: <https://ilppa.fi/ilmoitus-aloitus>
- Word and PDF notification forms can be obtained from the [City of Helsinki's website](#).

A floor plan of the food premises is a mandatory attachment to the notification. The floor plan must indicate all spaces in the food premises (e.g. kitchens, sales/bar counters, storage rooms, break rooms, toilets, space for cleaning equipment, customer areas) and their purpose of use, as well as the location of equipment and furniture (e.g. water points, worktops, refrigeration equipment, lockers).

We will review the notification you submitted and contact you during the processing of the notification if necessary. You will receive a certificate of the processing of the notification in a separate e-mail. The certificate is an indication that you have submitted a notification of food business and that the food premises have been entered in the supervisory authority's monitoring database.

Inspections

We carry out the first inspection within 1, 3 or 6 months of the date of opening according to the risk rating of the activity. The information is marked on the certificate. The first inspection of entirely new food premises is agreed in advance and the inspection of other premises is usually carried out unannounced.

The inspections are Oiva inspections. You can view the Oiva inspections and their content at <https://www.oivahymy.fi/en/front-page/>. The first inspection checks, among other things, the suitability and appropriateness of the premises for the activity.

After the first inspection, Oiva inspections are carried out at regular intervals (every three years – two times a year), depending on the risk classification of the activity. Inspections are also carried out in case of complaints, for example. These inspections are mainly conducted unannounced.

In-house control

As a food business operator, you must have a system in place to identify and manage the hazards associated with the activity and ensure that the activity meets the requirements set out in food regulations (= in-house control). You can draw up an in-house control system of your own or use the in-house control plan models prepared by the City of Helsinki's Food Safety Unit. The in-house control plan should be drawn up at the beginning of the activity. Inspections include in-house control plan and related records.

Control fees

Activities according to food legislation involve various types of [fees](#). The processing of notifications in accordance with the Food Act is subject to a fee, as are the inspections to be carried out. In addition, operators are charged a basic control fee, which is €150 per year for sites in our register at the beginning of the year.

Additional information:

City of Helsinki's Environmental Services, Food Safety Unit's advisory service: kymp.elintarviketurvallisuus@hel.fi

For further information on setting up and requirements for food premises, see the following websites, for example:

- [Setting up a food business - Finnish Food Authority](#) (ruokavirasto.fi)
- [Ohje rekisteröidyn elintarviketoiminnan elintarvikehygieniasta – Ruokavirasto](#)
- [The ABC of the restaurant industry – How to start a restaurant or café business](#)
- [Registering a food business | City of Helsinki](#)
- [Terrace instructions – Helsinki](#)
- [Ravintolan tai kahvilan perustaminen](#), Helsinki

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