

# Operating Guidelines for Farmers' Markets



Northeastern  
**PUBLIC HEALTH**  
**SANTÉ PUBLIQUE**  
du Nord-Est

If you are planning to operate a farmers' market in the Northeastern Public Health area, the following guideline must be followed.

This guideline is divided into three sections:

## **SECTION 1: MARKET ORGANIZER**

## **SECTION 2: ALL FOOD BOOTHS**

## **SECTION 3: FOOD BOOTHS WITH ON-SITE**

## **PREPARATION, SERVICE OR SAMPLING**

## **SECTION 1: MARKET ORGANIZER**

All persons and/or organizations planning to operate a farmers' market must:

1. Submit a Farmers' Market Organizer Application Form.
  - New markets - please submit 60 days prior to the beginning of the market season.
  - Re-occurring markets - please submit 15 days prior to the beginning of the market season.
2. Supply all food vendors with a copy of this guideline and provide instructions for submitting the completed Farmers' Market Food Vendor Application Form to the Porcupine Health Unit at least 15 days prior to attending the market.
3. Each market will be assessed seasonally by the Porcupine Health Unit to determine if it meets the requirements for exemption as a Farmers' Market under *Ontario Regulation 493/17 - Food Premises*. To help determine market exemption, please provide the following:
  - Full list of vendors, including vendors who will not be selling food products. Include each vendor's name, address, telephone number and email address.
  - Vendor list based on the following 2 seasons:
    - May 1st to October 31st
    - November 1st to April 30th

4. A public health inspector will count the total number of farmers selling their own farm products and insert the numbers into the following equation:

Total number of farmers selling their own farm products	$\square$	$\times 100 =$	_____	%
Total number of vendors (including non-food vendors)				

If the percentage is 51% or higher, the market will be considered an exempt farmers' market. Food vendors at this market will be exempt from the requirements of *Ontario Regulation 493/17 – Food Premises*.

If the percentage is below 51%, the market does not meet the exemption requirements under *Ontario Regulation 493/17*. This market will be considered a non-exempt farmers' market, and food vendors must meet the requirements of *Ontario Regulation 493/17 – Food Premises*.

Your local public health inspector will provide you with further direction after identifying whether the market will be considered a true farmers' market or not.

Market Organizers are to provide adequate washroom facilities and a central hand-washing station equipped with liquid soap in a pump dispenser and paper towel.

Food vendor information for Farmers' Market Coordinators

### **What is the definition of a food vendor at a farmers' market?**

"Food vendor" in the context of a farmers' market means the operator of a stall or other food premise that is selling food items at the market. This includes individuals selling prepackaged food items, ready-to-eat food items, fruits and vegetables, etc. Individuals operating food trucks and other mobile food service vehicles or trailers at the market are also considered to be food vendors and must be included in the total.

### **What is a Farm Product?**

"Farm products" means products that are grown, raised, or produced on a farm and intended for use as food. These include, but are not restricted to: fruits and vegetables, mushrooms, meat and meat products, dairy products, honey products, maple products, fish, grains and seeds, and grain and seed products.

## If the market is not considered an exempt market, what vendors are allowed to sell their food products?

At a non-exempt farmers' market, all food vendors must meet the requirements of the *Ontario Regulation 493/17 - Food Premises*. This means any prepared food that will be sold at the event must be prepared in a kitchen space that is inspected and approved by the Porcupine Health Unit.

## If the market is considered an exempt market, what vendors are allowed to sell their food products?

At an exempt farmers' market, the only products that are required to come from an inspected facility are products that are federally or provincially inspected, such as meat, milk, and eggs. Home-prepared food items are allowed at exempt farmers' markets; however, a health hazard assessment on the food items will be completed by a public health inspector.

It is recommended that vendors selling home-prepared food items stick to low-risk food items.

- fresh fruits and vegetables
- brownies
- bread and buns (with no dairy/cheese filling)
- butter tarts
- cakes (icing sugar only; no whipped cream)
- dry cereal products
- chocolate
- cinnamon buns
- commercially prepared pickles
- dry noodles
- cookies dried fruits
- fruit pies and pastry
- fudge
- hard candy
- honey
- Commercially prepared jams and jellies
- muffins
- popcorn
- toffee
- maple syrup

*(Source: ASPHIO Common Approaches for Farmers' markets and Special Events, 2012)*

A health hazard assessment completed on high-risk food items may determine a food item cannot be safely prepared, stored, and transported from a home kitchen. It is recommended that vendors selling home-prepared foods avoid high-risk food items. If a vendor from an exempt market wishes to sell a high-risk home-prepared

food item, a written food safety plan will need to be submitted to the health unit for review.

- antipasto
- processed beans, including baked, refried, bean salad
- herb and flavoured oils
- cabbage rolls
- chop suey
- creamed corn dairy products
- food containing eggs as ingredients (custard/salad)
- fresh shell eggs (graded)
- pesto, garlic spreads
- guacamole, salsa, hummus
- juice (fruit and vegetable)
- perogies
- fresh or processed meat, fish
- cakes/pastries filled with whipped cream, cheese, or cream

*(Source: ASPHIO Common Approaches for Farmers' markets and Special Events, 2012)*

## **What are the options for someone who would like to become a vendor at a non-exempt market but does not have an approved kitchen?**

If the vendor wishes to have a kitchen approved, the vendor should contact the Porcupine Health Unit for a Home-Based Food Business kitchen consultation. This consultation will assist the vendor in determining any work required for the kitchen to meet the standards of the *Food Premises Regulation*.

If the consultation results in the vendor no longer wishing to have the kitchen approved, the vendor may rent an approved kitchen to use for preparing and storing food items. Examples of approved kitchens may be church kitchens or community hall kitchens that are inspected by the local health authority and available to rent.

If the vendor is not able to find an inspected/approved space to prepare food items, they will not be permitted to sell their food items at a non-exempt market.

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**PREPARATION, SERVICE OR SAMPLING**

## **SECTION 2: ALL FOOD BOOTHS**

### **Food Source:**

1. All foods must be obtained from approved sources and/or prepared at an approved food premises.
2. The sale of grade C and/or upgraded eggs is prohibited. Eggs must be graded at an approved egg grading station prior to being offered for sale. Proof of grading must be available. Eggs are to be stored and sold at 4oC (40oF) or less.
3. The sale of uninspected meat is prohibited. Meat and meat products must be inspected by Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) or Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA). Proof of inspection/grading must be available. Meat and meat products must be stored and sold at 4oC (40oF) or less or if frozen, maintained in frozen state.
4. For regulations and specifications regarding the sale of other farm fresh foods, such as, but not limited to honey, maple syrup and apple cider, contact OMAFRA at 1- 888-466-2372 ([www.omafra.gov.on.ca](http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca)).
5. All canned/preserved foods (jams, jellies, pickles, etc.) must be packaged in new jars and must be sealed with vacuum lids.
  - Due to the risk of botulism, the only home canned products allowed for sale at a Farmers' Market are jams, jellies and pickles. All home canned food items must be listed on the application form and must be approved by a Public Health Inspector.
  - Additional requirements regarding home canning (see Appendix A)
6. No food sampling or service unless additional conditions are met (see Section 3).

## Labelling:

All home packaged foods must be labelled with the following information:

- Source – vendor name and phone number
- Common name of food
- Ingredients
- Date the food was prepared

For more information on labelling requirements, please visit [www.inspection.gc.ca](http://www.inspection.gc.ca) and look up “Food Labelling for Industry”.

## Transportation and Storage:

1. Transport foods quickly from place to place. Use thermal insulated containers with cold/ice packs to maintain cold foods at an internal temperature of 4oC (40oF). Use thermal insulated containers with heat packs to maintain hot foods at an internal temperature of 60oC (140oF).
2. Foods are to be covered during transportation to protect them from dust, dirt, insects and other foreign objects.
3. Food is to be transported and stored in food-grade containers that are not used for any other purpose.
4. Foods must be stored on shelves located at least 15 cm (6”) off the floor.
5. Ensure you have a probe thermometer and 70% isopropyl alcohol swabs (that are not expired). The probe thermometer must be wiped down with an alcohol swab before each use
6. The internal temperature of cold food must be maintained at 4oC (40oF) or lower. Probe thermometers must be used to check food temperatures. High risk foods cannot be left out at room temperature (this includes eggs and meat/meat products that are left sitting on display)
7. Frozen food must be kept frozen solid at –18oC (0oF)
8. Raw foods must be displayed and handled separately from cooked and ready-to-eat foods and produce in order to avoid cross-contamination.
9. Food must be protected from contamination through the use of protective barriers (i.e. plastic wrap, foil, mesh covers, enclosed in cabinets)

## Handwashing and Washroom Facilities:

1. Individual booths that have food preparation or sampling must have a temporary handwashing station within their booth.
2. Market operators are to provide a central hand-washing station equipped with liquid soap in a pump dispenser and paper towel.
3. Market operators are to provide adequate washroom facilities.

## Personal Hygiene:

1. Food handlers are to be clean and wear clean outer garments.
2. Food handlers' hair is to be confined when preparing, handling and serving food.
3. Food handlers are to wash their hands frequently. Wash hands before handling or preparing foods, after using the restroom, sneezing, coughing, blowing the nose or handling money and after any other possible point of contamination (see Appendix B).
4. Food handlers must be free from infectious agents that may be spread through food or water.
5. When serving/dispensing food, use tools such as tongs, ladles, lifters and spoons whenever possible. Never serve with your fingers.
6. Do not dip fingers into food or lick fingers for any reason.
7. No double-dipping of utensils when tasting food. Ladle a small amount of food into a dish and taste the food from the dish with a spoon. Do not reuse the spoon.
8. Do not touch hair, face or other parts of the body with your hands and then handle food.
9. Wear non-latex based gloves if you have a cut or burn on your hands. Do not handle food directly while wearing a bandage.
10. Keep fingernails short, clean and never wear nail polish to work.
11. Avoid wearing jewellery and items that could physically contaminate the food.
12. Do not chew gum, smoke or eat while working.
13. Pets must be excluded from home kitchens during the time food is prepared.
14. Do not prepare food if you are ill or someone in your household is ill.

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**PREPARATION, SERVICE OR SAMPLING**

## **SECTION 3: FOOD BOOTHS WITH ON-SITE PREPARATION, SERVICE OR SAMPLING**

### **Food Preparation:**

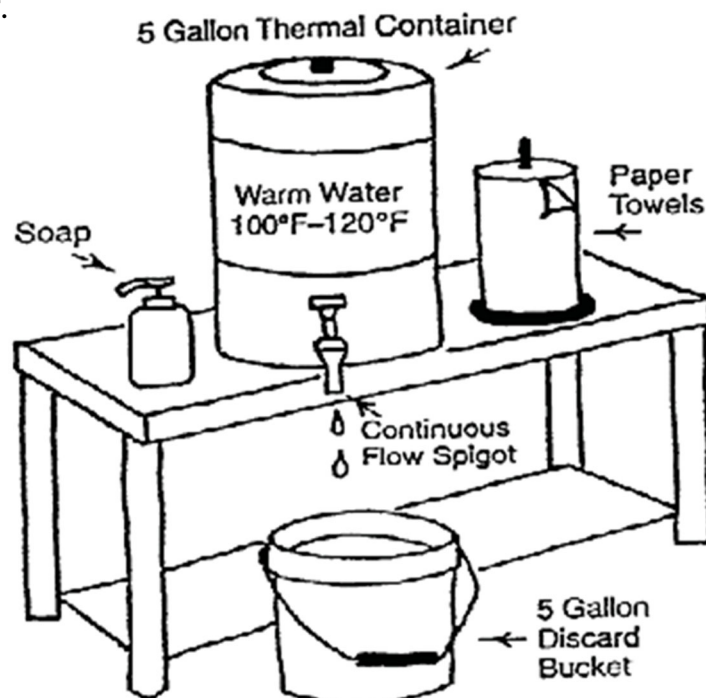
1. Prepare all foods as close to serving time as possible.
2. Never thaw foods at room temperature. See **Appendix C** for safe thawing methods.
3. Use your probe thermometer to verify cooking, cooling, hot holding and cold holding temperatures.
4. Refer to the chart in **Appendix D** to ensure that the minimum internal cooking temperatures are reached.
5. Hot foods must be cooled to 40C (40oF) within 4 hours. See **Appendix C** for safe cooling practices.
6. Microwaves are to be used only to reheat individual food portions that will be served immediately after reheating.
7. Never reheat leftovers more than once. No second chance for leftovers.
8. Work surfaces for food preparation must be cleaned after each use. Wash work surfaces with hot soapy water, rinse with water, and then sanitize by spraying with a sanitizing solution. Sanitizing solutions may be made with chlorine (bleach), iodine, quats (quaternary ammonium) or any other agent that is non-toxic and sanitizes effectively. See **Appendix E and F**.
9. Provide adequate supply of extra utensils (enough to last the day) stored in a clean container OR wash on-site according to **Appendix E and F**. Change serving utensils every 2 hours and whenever they become contaminated.
10. Customer samples must be protected from contamination (i.e. individual toothpicks/serving spoons).

## Cleaning and Maintenance:

1. If facilities are available, utensils and equipment used to handle foods are to be washed, rinsed and sanitized on- site.
2. If facilities are not available, utensils and equipment are to be taken to an approved home or other approved food premises for cleaning. Refer to **Appendix E and F** for specific directions regarding dishwashing.
3. Cloths used for cleaning must be stored in a container of sanitizing solution. The solution is to be changed frequently, and cloths laundered when they become soiled.
4. All garbage and waste is to be disposed of in containers made of durable, leak proof and non-absorbent material. Garbage is to be removed as often as necessary.

## Temporary Handwashing Station Setup:

1. Food booths that are preparing, serving, sampling on-site must have a temporary hand wash station set-up. It must be accessible without leaving the vendor's side of the booth. Each vendor is responsible for providing their own temporary hand washing station.
2. Set-up a water jug (equipped with a spigot that allows the water to run free, without having to hold open) and a five-gallon receiving bucket. Fill the water jug with hot water, set it on a chair or on a counter, and then set the bucket directly beneath the spigot.
3. Supply with liquid soap and paper towel. Do not use reusable cloths or towels to dry hands.
4. Empty receiving bucket, as needed, into a washroom; NOT onto ground or into the storm sewer.



## Appendix A – Home Canning Requirements

### Appendix A – Home Canning Requirements

Botulism is a serious illness that can result from eating improperly prepared canned or bottled foods. Botulism is caused by a bacterium – called *Clostridium botulinum* – that naturally produces toxins as part of its normal life cycle. These bacteria exist worldwide either as spores or vegetative cells. The spores can survive harmlessly in soil and water for many years. When conditions are just right, the spores produce vegetative cells which multiply rapidly and may produce a deadly toxin.

The toxin that causes botulism is colourless, odourless, tasteless and invisible to the naked eye and is not necessarily destroyed by cooking, so preventing the toxin from forming is essential.

Symptoms of botulism range from nausea, vomiting, fatigue, dizziness, headache, double vision and dryness in the throat and nose, to respiratory failure, paralysis and, in some cases, death. The onset of symptoms is generally from 12 to 36 hours after ingesting the toxin. The duration of illness may be 2 hours to 14 days, although some symptoms may linger much longer.

It is estimated that there are approximately 11 million cases of food-related illnesses of all types in Canada every year. Many of these illnesses could be prevented by following proper food handling and preparation techniques. Washing fresh foods reduces the number of these spores slightly. The vital controls are following lab validated recipes when preparing home canned products (From: <http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/recall-alert-rappel-avis/hc-sc/2013/35219a-eng.php> and "USDA: Complete Guide to Home Canning Guide 1: Principles of Home Canning").

Due to the risk of botulism, the only home canned products allowed for sale at a Farmers' Market are jams, jellies and pickles.

These food items are less likely to allow the growth of *Clostridium botulinum* bacteria that causes botulism.

## The following must be followed if preparing and selling home canned food items:

- All home canned food items must be approved by a Public Health Inspector before they can be brought to a Farmers' Market.
- Vendors must follow up-to-date lab validated recipes for home canned items.
- Third party lab testing will be required for home canned items that are not made using a lab validated recipe.
- Only proper sealing jars (i.e. Mason-type) must be used.
- Jars may be refilled only if they are in good condition and cleaned properly (wash jars, lids and screw rings in clean soapy water and rinse well).
- Do not reuse sealing rings and lids. New rings and lids must be used.
- Jams, jellies and pickled vegetables should be processed in boiling water according to the recipe. The seal must be air tight to prevent the entry of spoilage organisms.
- Up-to-date, lab validated recipes must be followed exactly. Do not substitute ingredients or their volume or the jar size indicated in the recipe. This can cause the time or pressure needed during pressure canning or boiling water canning to change. This can lead to bacteria remaining in the food. Always process to the recommended temperature, time and pressure.

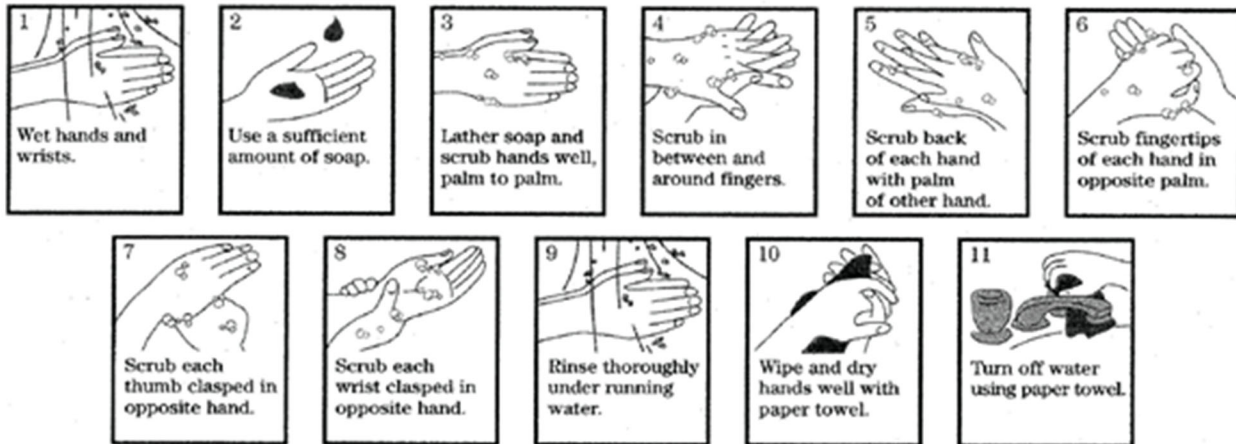
## APPENDIX B – Home Handwashing

### Handwashing

To wash hands properly, rub all parts of the hands and wrists with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Wash hands for at least 15 second or more. Pay special attention to the areas of the hand most frequently missed.

- Keep nails short.
- Avoid wearing rings.
- Avoid artificial nails or nail varnish.
- Remove watches and bracelets.
- Wash wrists and forearms if they are likely to have been contaminated.
- Make sure that sleeves are rolled up and do not get wet during washing.

#### Handwashing with soap and water



#### Cleaning with alcohol sanitizers



## APPENDIX C – Safe Thawing/Safe Cooling

### SAFE THAWING TECHNIQUES

*NEVER DEFROST POULTRY, SEAFOOD OR MEATS AT ROOM TEMPERATURE.*

#### Refrigerator Method:

- The safest way to thaw foods is to place them in a refrigerator.
- Place food in its wrapping on a drip-proof tray or plate or in a container.
- Store raw foods on lowest shelves to prevent them from dripping or splashing other foods.
- Allow 6–9 hours per pound (14–20 hours/kg) to defrost.

#### Cold Water Method:

- Unwrap the frozen meat, poultry, or fish and place in a container.
- Place this container in a clean and sanitized sink under the water tap.
- Pour cold RUNNING water on the food in the container.
- Let the cold water run constantly or add ice to the water (and change this water often) to make sure that the water stays cold.
- Ensure the sink is cleaned and sanitized after thawing is completed.
- Allow 30 minutes per pound (1 hour/kg) to defrost.

#### Microwave Method:

- Thawing uncooked frozen meat in a microwave is only recommended if the food is to be cooked immediately after thawing.
- Microwave heat is often uneven and the outside portions of foods should be removed as they thaw. This will keep the outside from starting to cook before the inside thaws (refrigerate the removed portions until food is cooked).

### SAFE COOLING TECHNIQUES

Hot food must be cooled rapidly to reduce the time it spends in the temperature danger zone between 4°C (40°F) and 60°C (140°F).

NEVER PUT EXTREMELY HOT FOODS IN A REFRIGERATOR. Ensure that foods cool from 60°C (140°F) to 4°C (40°F) within 4 hours.

When cooling large batches or pieces of food:

- Break or cut the food up into smaller pieces.
- Divide large batches into several smaller ones.
- Stir the foods as they cool.
- Place food in shallow pans and/or an ice water bath.

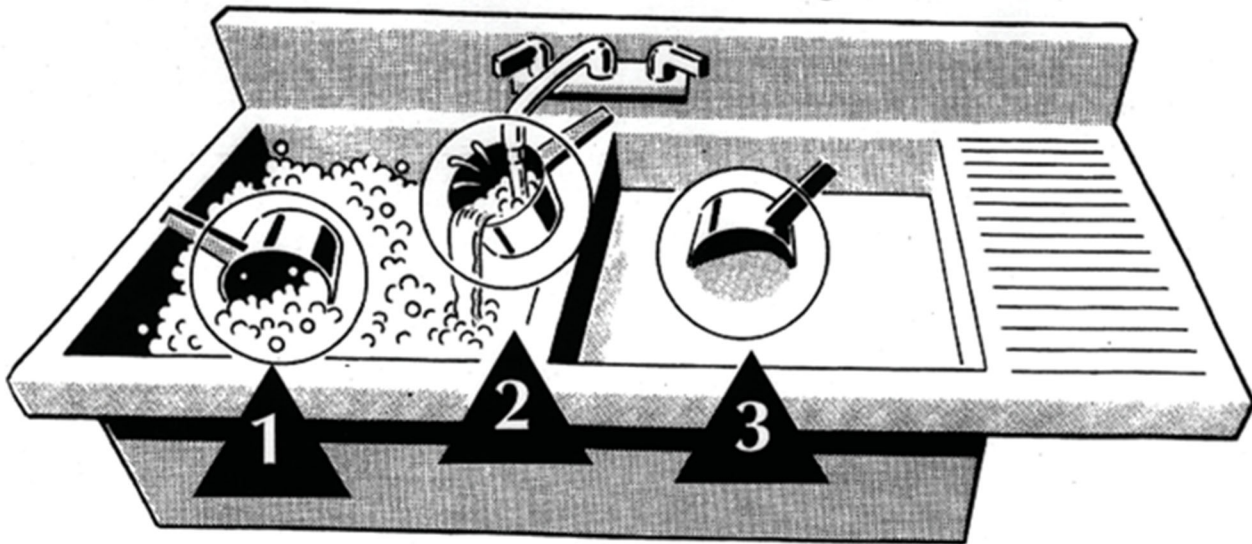
## APPENDIX D – Final Internal Cooking Temperatures

### FINAL INTERNAL COOKING TEMPERATURES (USING A PROBE THERMOMETER)

**Temperatures must be maintained for at least 15 seconds.**

FOOD PRODUCT	CELCIUS	FAR ENH EIT
<b>Poultry</b>		
Whole Poultry	82°	180°
Individual Pieces/Ground	74°	165°
<b>Mixtures</b>		
Containing poultry, egg, meat, fish or other hazardous food	74°	165°
<b>Beef and Veal</b>		
Hamburger, deboned and rolled	71°	160°
Roasts		
<b>Pork</b> All Products	71°	160°
<b>Lamb</b>		
Ground, deboned and rolled	71°	160°
Roasts		
<b>Fish</b>		
All Products	70°	158°
<b>Eggs</b>	63°	145°

## Utensil Washing



1



### WASH

- use detergent and warm water

2



### RINSE

- under the tap using water hotter than 43°C (110°F)

3



### Sanitize

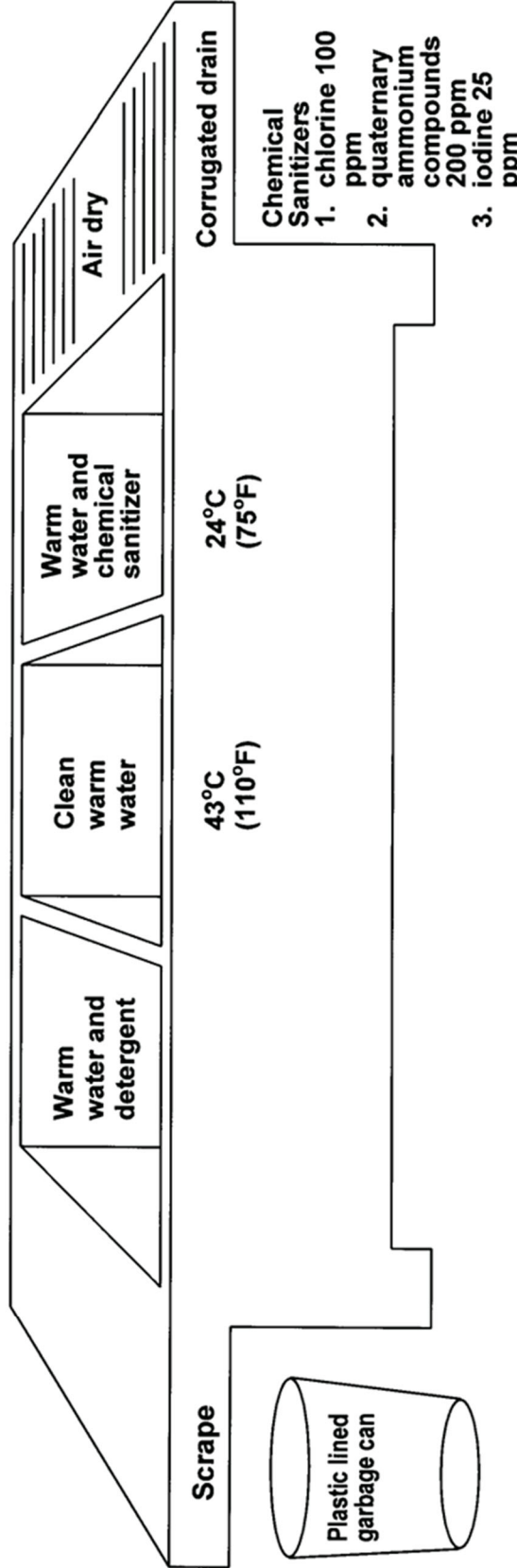
- for 45 seconds in water no colder than 25°C (75°F) with:
  - a) 100 ppm chlorine\*
  - b) 200 ppm quaternary ammonia or
  - c) 25 ppm iodine

\* 1 ounce of chlorine to 1 gallon of water

# THREE-SINK DISHWASHING METHOD



WASH RINSE SANITIZE



For more information, contact your local health inspector or call 1-800-461-1818.



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## APPENDIX G – Definitions

**Approved source/food premises** – the food and/or establishment has been inspected by an official government agency i.e. Porcupine Health Unit.

**Cleaning** – the physical removal of dirt, soil and grease, typically carried out with soap/detergent, water and a scrubbing action.

**Cross-contamination** – the transfer of disease-causing micro-organisms to food, i.e. chicken blood dripping onto cold cuts in the refrigerator.

**Exempted Farmers' market**– majority of persons operating the stalls are producers of farm products who are primarily selling or offering for sale their own products (51% or more) note that the Health Protection and Promotion Act is still in effect.

**Farm products** – products that are grown, raised, or produced on a farm and intended for use as food and include without being restricted to: fruits and vegetables, mushrooms, meat, and meat products, dairy products, honey products, maple products, fish, grains, and seeds and grain and seed products.

**Farm** – ordinary meaning of farm (rural area with barn, silo, fields, etc and a full-time farmer) and includes a hobby farm (rural area with fields and farmer on a part-time basis) but would not include urban properties with a garden.

**Farmers' Market** – a food premise and is not considered to be an extension of the farm gate. Food grade – corrosion-resistant, non-toxic, non-absorbent containers safe for storing food in. Food premises – any place where food is prepared, sold or served or eaten.

**Food Premises Regulation** – the provincial regulation that outlines the requirements for a food premises.

**High risk food item** – any food that is capable of supporting the growth or survival of disease causing micro-organisms or their toxins. Any food that consists in whole or in part of milk or milk products, eggs, meat, poultry, fish, shellfish (edible mollusca and crustacean), or any other ingredients, in a form capable of supporting the growth of infectious and/or toxigenic microorganisms. This does not include foods which have a pH level of 4.6 or below and foods which have a water activity of 0.85 or less.

**Internal temperature** – internal (inside) temperature of food.

**Low risk food item** – any food that it is not normally capable of supporting the growth or survival of illness- causing micro- organisms or their toxins.

**Micro-organism** – very small life forms that may only be seen with a microscope; can be found in soil, dust, water, air, in and on humans and animals (i.e. viruses & bacteria). Note: some micro-organisms can cause life threatening diseases i.e. salmonella bacteria in chicken.

**Probe thermometer** – An instant read thermometer that can be easily inserted into foods to verify cold & hot food preparation and storage temperatures. Available as either a digital or bimetallic stem. Does not include oven or fridge or candy thermometer, or “meat” thermometer that only measures high temperatures.

Pre-packaged food – food that is packaged at an approved food premises other than the premises where it is offered for sale.

**Utensil** – any article used in the preparation or handling of food.

**Sanitize (sanitized, sanitizing)** – the reduction in number of disease-causing microorganisms, typically carried out with a chlorine and water solution (1 part chlorine to 10 parts of water).