



A STARTER GUIDE TO:
OPENING A POP-UP FOOD STALL



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Introduction

For centuries, market trading has played a big part in British culture. Even now, in a world of online shopping and e-retail, us Brits love nothing more than to rummage for a bargain or tuck into a portion of tasty street food at our local market.

While traditional street markets have died out in some small towns and villages in the UK, they're thriving in big cities. London for instance has a very active street market culture, as do many other cities across the country, including Manchester, Birmingham and Edinburgh.

For those looking to make baby steps into the world of owning their own business, manning a market stall is a great way to get a feel for what works — not to mention the perfect platform in which to pander your wares to the public. That said opening your own market stall isn't as simple as turning up with a table, awning and boot full of homemade produce. Starting a stall takes careful planning, and there are several legal matters to consider, too.

If you're interested in opening your own pop-up food stall, this handy guide is here to help. Packed with useful tips and advice - including information on food safety obligations and hints about effectively marketing your business - our food stall start-up guide ought to be the first port of call for those looking to strike out into the street food biz.

Chapter 1

Legal Obligations and Food Safety



Looking to start your own successful street food stall? The first thing you'll need to do is get savvy with food safety laws. In order to protect the public from the risks associated with undercooked, badly prepared or generally dodgy grub, the FSA (Food Standards Agency) and the Environmental Health Office (EHO) enforce a number of laws to regulate all fare served up by street food vendors.

Before you even think about investing in equipment or stocking up on ingredients, cast your eye over these nuggets of legislation to make sure your business is legal and above board from the word go.

All food preparation premises must be registered with the EHO

That's right - if you want to open your own food stall, you'll need to get the seal of approval from the government's EHO beforehand. Wherever food is sold, cooked, prepared, handled or distributed - be it at a market stall or in the back of a van - a license is required before said food can be served to the public. If you intend to serve meat or any other foodstuff which comes from an animal, your local council may need to make further inspections before granting the food business license. It's also worth noting that you must register your food stall at least 28 days before commencing any of the above food operations.

To apply for a food business license, visit www.gov.uk/food-business-registration.

Those coming into contact with food must have official hygiene training

Regardless of how well you know your way around a kitchen, the EHO requires all those handling food for public consumption to have hygiene training.

The level of hygiene training required will vary depending on the type of food preparation you will partake in when manning your stall. For instance, basic level 1 hygiene training is intended for those who don't generally come into contact with the food, while level 2 hygiene training is for people who handle and prepare open foods. Acquiring the right hygiene training is relatively inexpensive, and doing so will ensure your pop-up food business is fully compliant.

Street food vendors must implement a food hygiene management system

Sadly, even those running a small food stall at their local market can't escape the drudgery of paperwork. For your business to retain its legality, the EHO requires you to implement a food hygiene management system, which you must keep updated with any changes to your food safety mandate.

As EHO inspectors review food hygiene management systems with great scrutiny, yours must be kept up-to-date and audited on a regular basis. The EHO pays particularly close attention to hazard analysis & critical control points (HACCP), so make sure your hygiene management system covers these bases.

Food stall proprietors must carry out regular health & safety risk assessments

No matter what the sector, all businesses, however big or small, require regular risk assessment. Whether you carry out the risk assessment yourself or call in a professional to do it for you; EHO's inspectors will want to see evidence of regular health and safety checks should they ever come to visit. .

Employ someone? Make sure you've got employers' liability insurance

If you need an extra pair of hands to help out behind the food counter, you'll need to invest in employers' liability insurance - even if that person happens to be a friend or family member who is just lending a hand for the day. Once you've got the right insurance, print off the certificate and display it somewhere visible for eagle-eyed officials to see.

If you take on 5 or more staff members, you'll need to write a Health & Safety Policy Document

Should your street food stall flourish and you need to take on more staff, you must draw up a Health & Safety Policy Document. The document should describe how you intend to manage health & safety in your business, and highlight to staff your commitment to their safety.

If you're not sure how to get started on a Health & Safety Policy Document, the HSE (Health & Safety Executive) offers a number of useful resources, including a simple template you can use as a framework for your document. To access these resources, simply visit:

www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/write.htm

In the not so unlikely event that you don't have time to write a Health & Safety Policy Document, it is possible to outsource it to a company that deals in food safety compliance.



**YOU ARE
HERE**

Chapter 2

Location

Now that you've covered all the bases in terms of food safety compliance, it's time to consider where and when to set up your exciting new street food stall. Whilst we'd love to tell you it's possible to pop your stall up anywhere, local authorities have strict rules on the erection of stalls in certain areas, and these rules tend to vary from council to council, and location to location.

To help you pick a pitch which conforms to local council guidelines whilst providing enough footfall to keep your stall profitable, here are few tips on choosing the perfect location for your pop-up stall.

Local Authority By-Laws

All local authorities in the UK have a street-trading rubric in place to prevent traders setting up shop in no-go areas. Without these guidelines, pop-up stalls placed incorrectly could obstruct traffic or cause health and safety issues for the public. The laws also make it easier for the council to clamp down on those flouting food safety laws, as well as those shying away from paying licensing or pitch rental fees.

As touched on above, different councils have different rules governing street trade in their constituency. For instance, some authorities require a hawker's license (street trading license in England and Wales), whilst others have already abolished them. Talk to your local council for information on any legal certification they require, as well as any guidance on where's best to set up a pop-up street food stall in your local area.

Maximising the Profitability and Exposure of Your Pop-Up

It's all well and good cooking up something tasty for the general public, but where you choose to set up your street food stall could effectively make or break your new business venture.

For a food stall to be successful, it needs to be pitched in a good area with plenty of passing footfall - be it a market, special event or in the centre of town (provided you've got permission to be there, of course). Other areas that will maximise the exposure of your pop up food stall include:

- **Business Parks:** Setting up your pop-up within easy reach of a business park could prove lucrative, given the number of hungry 9 to 5ers attracted by your culinary creations. Just make sure you get permission to be there.
- **Lay-Bys:** For hungry motorists, the allure of some freshly cooked grub is sure to draw them off the road and into the queue at your stall. The council can provide information on the lay-bys which are OK to set up shop in.
- **Organised Events:** Although setting up your pop-up at a special event will likely cost a fee, the potential for profit will likely far outweigh any down payments you've paid for the pitch. From local fetes to national festivals, the sky is the limit when it comes to setting up your stall at organised events.

Other Location Considerations

Assuming your local council is fairly flexible on where it allows traders to set up shop, there are a couple of other things to consider before committing to a space for your stall:

- **Accessibility:** To reap the maximum amount of trade from passers-by, it's important to choose a pitch that's easily accessible — either from a footpath or main road. Think about how easy it is for any potential customers to access your stall, too, including those that may be in a wheelchair.
- **Public Transport Links:** Siting your food stall near good transport links is a sure fire way to gain additional custom, possibly from commuters feeling peckish on their way to and from work. The likelihood is your stall will attract more on-foot custom than those in cars, so setting up your stall near public transport links is a great way to go.
- **Parking:** Of course you want to capture as many potential customers as possible, so setting up your stall within easy reach of car parking is a good idea, too. Indeed, some of the most successful street food stalls are located in car parks themselves — tempting hungry shoppers after a hard day of retail therapy. Remember; always get permission before setting up your pop-up food stall.



Chapter 3

Market Research

Unlike goods and crafts vendors, street food traders can erect their pop-up just about anywhere and receive a decent amount of custom. That said, by doing some market and consumer research before settling on a site for your stall, you stand to make more of a profit compared to other trading locations.

To help get your pop-up street food stall moving in the right direction, we'd recommend finding the answers to the following questions:

- Are there any local events, markets or festivals where pop up stalls have been particularly successful?
- Which days of the week are the busiest shopping days at your local market?
- Is any specific demographic not being catered for in your area? If so, how can you accommodate that niche?
- What are rival traders doing successfully, and what could they improve upon?
- What equipment, infrastructure and method of transportation do rival traders use?
- Who do you think your customers are, and what will they like about your product? Also, are the customers you hope to target in your location?
- Are there any products/services you require that can be sourced cheaply online, and are there any other ways you can increase your overall profit margin?

If you're interested in carrying out more research into the potential success of your food stall, there are a number of online forums you can visit to find answers to common queries and chat to other market traders. We'd recommend The Wholesale Forums (www.thewholesaleforums.co.uk) - an independent network of market traders and retail specialists.

Chapter 4

Marketing & Promotion



Marketing and promoting your pop-up food stall might sound like a lot of hard work on top of your already hectic schedule, but doing so could help to drive your business forward by exposing it to a whole new demographic of potential customers.

In this chapter, we'll cover some of the easy, DIY marketing and promotional activities you can employ to help grow the reach of your pop-up street food stall.

Launch a Website

While market trading purists would doubtless frown on promotion via the WWW, in today's tech-orientated modern world, hosting your own website has a number of benefits - from promoting your business to keeping customers in the loop on the price of your products and where your pop-up stall is heading next. Plus, launching your own website is incredibly cheap - so what have you really got to lose?

Take to Social Media

A pop-up food stall with its own Twitter and Facebook pages might sound ludicrous, but social media is a great way to connect with potential new customers, as well as keep in touch with your regulars. By regularly posting updates across various social media channels, it's easy to keep your followers in the loop on any updates and information relating to your fledgling food business.

Print Flyers on the Cheap

Sure, printing your own promotional flyers can be costly, but there are a number of ways to do it on the cheap. Head online for instance, and you'll find a number of cheap flyer suppliers who can knock you up a batch of inexpensive leaflets for as little as a tenner. Alternatively, switch your home printer to grey-scale only and produce a stack of black and white flyers yourself - before dishing them out to the public on market day.

Shieldyourself is the UK's leading food safety, fire safety and health & safety specialists - helping businesses across the hospitality sector achieve complete compliance.

To find out more, visit shieldyourself.co.uk