

TOOL 8 - PRODUCT SAMPLING PROCEDURE

Purpose: This tool directs product sampling by the Food Establishment owner/operator/manager when appropriate. Food samples and test results can often be one of the most important pieces of information in a foodborne illness or outbreak investigation.

Instructions: If you plan to collect a sample and submit it for laboratory analysis, you should first discuss this with the Regulatory/Health Authority. This will help ensure that the authorities are aware that suspect food is available for sampling, that sufficient product may be available for split samples, and to minimize the chances of accidental contamination. **DO NOT DISCARD SUSPECT FOOD SAMPLES UNTIL YOU HAVE FIRST DISCUSSED THIS WITH REGULATORY/HEALTH AUTHORITIES.**

If the Regulatory/Health Authority comes into your store or contacts you asking to collect food samples, ask them where you should hold the product in the food establishment

- If not already frozen, **DO NOT FREEZE** unless directed to do so by the Regulatory/Health Authority.
- If the food is already frozen, **DO NOT THAW.**
- If product is intended to be held at room temperature, continue doing so unless directed differently by the Regulatory/Health Authority.

If you consider testing, it is strongly recommended that samples be collected from the same product container that the suspect meal came from, if still available. Often, if the Regulatory/Health Authority is collecting food samples, and there is sufficient quantity available, they can collect additional samples and provide them to the Food Establishment. This is termed 'split sampling.'

If the Regulatory/Health Authority does not plan to collect food samples, coordinate sampling and analysis with a private accredited laboratory or through your corporation (if applicable). If you are sampling your food to have it tested at a private accredited laboratory, it is important you follow the procedures below and complete the attached form to keep in your files. You may wish to verify these procedures with your lab to ensure that you are submitting an adequate amount of product in an acceptable container.

1. Product sampling standard operating procedures

- a. Clearly label suspect products “DO NOT USE” and set aside from regular inventory.
- b. Wash, rinse and sanitize the surface you will work on to collect the sample.
- c. Wash and sanitize hands, and put on a new pair of single-use gloves.
- d. Place the container of the product to be sampled on the sanitized surface.
- e. Get a new and clean food grade bag or plastic wrap.
- f. Using a cleaned and sanitized utensil, place the appropriate amount specified by the laboratory (or as much as you have if you don’t have enough left) of product in the bag or on the plastic wrap, being careful not to touch the product or the inside of the bag or wrap with your hands.
- g. Seal the bag (no staples) or wrap the plastic securely around the product.

2. Clearly label samples “DO NOT USE.”

3. Ask the Regulatory/Health Authority which tests should be run on the product and write these down:

Tests to be conducted:

4. Record the following information when collecting individual samples and keep on file.

- a. Name of product
- b. Product brand, if applicable
- c. Date product was prepared or handled at the Food Establishment, if possible

d. USDA establishment number, if applicable

e. Direct Supplier identification information

f. Use by date(s) (including lot numbers, if applicable)

g. Sample number(s), (sample A, B, C or 1, 2, 3, etc.)

h. Date and time sample was collected

i. Where sample was collected from (e.g., freezer, cooler, make table, salad bar, etc.)

j. Name of the person who collected the sample

5. Record the following information and include with the samples submitted to the laboratory:

a. Name of product

b. Product brand, if applicable

c. Date and time sample was collected

d. Where product was collected from (e.g., freezer, cooler, make table, salad bar, etc.)

e. Name of the person who collected the sample

6. Label remaining suspect product “DO NOT USE” and place in the walk-in cooler (if it is a refrigerated product) or freezer (if it is a frozen product).

7. Submit the samples in accordance with the laboratory instructions.