

Comparison of Food Operation Types in Illinois

Category	Definition	Licensing/Permit Required	Where Food Can Be Sold	Types of Food Allowed	Inspection Required
Cottage Food Operation	Home-based food production for direct sale to consumers	Yes – must register with local health department and follow Cottage Food Act	Farmers' markets, direct-to-consumer, online pre-order with pickup	Non-TCS* foods only (e.g., baked goods, jams, herbs); some TCS allowed with extra requirements	No – inspection when there is a complaint
Temporary Food Stand	Food establishment operating at a fixed location for a temporary event	Yes – temporary food permit from local health authority	Fairs, festivals, events (specific time-limited settings)	TCS and non-TCS foods; must comply with time/temp requirements	Yes – inspection often required
Mobile Food Truck	Vehicle-mounted food establishment capable of moving between locations	Yes – mobile unit license + local permits	Streets, events, private lots (based on local zoning laws)	TCS and non-TCS foods; full kitchen setup often required	Yes – regular inspection
Farmers' Market	Public market where local vendors sell food and farm products	Market organizers need a permit; individual vendors may too	Outdoor market locations as approved by local authorities	Varies – can include produce, cottage foods, pre-packaged items	Varies – cottage vendors exempt; others may need inspection

*Time/Temperature Control for Safety Food (TCS) – any food that requires time/temperature control for safety to limit pathogenic microorganism growth or toxin formation.