



OPEN-AIR DINING RESTAURANT CONVERSION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is outdoor dining?

Outdoor dining are areas provided for on-site dining that are not within the floors, walls, and ceiling of the permanent food facility. They do not have solid doors or walls which are closeable after business hours. While food may be consumed or served in outdoor dining facilities, bars and server stations are not allowed. Outdoor dining is not regulated by the Environmental Health Division.

2. What is open-air dining?

Open-air dining differs from outdoor dining in the following.

- Open-air dining areas have permanent roofs and at least one permanent wall.
- Open-air dining areas share a wall with the food preparation area or a fully enclosed dining area.
- Open-air dining areas have solid doors, closeable windows and walls which fully enclose the facility when it is not in operation to preclude vermin and insect entry.
- Open-air dining areas may have open windows or doors without screens when the facility is in operation.

3. I want to convert my restaurant's dining to open-air. What changes will I need to make?

Conversion to open-air dining will require that plans specified in the Plan Check Guide for Food Facilities be approved by the Environmental Health Division (and other city or County agencies) before work begins. Generally, conversion requires the following changes to the restaurant.

- The food preparation area (kitchen) must be fully enclosed.
- The open-air dining area must have doors, walls and/or closing windows which will fully enclose the area when the restaurant is not in operation.
- Bar areas may need to be relocated or redesigned.

4. Can I keep my customer self-service food areas in the open-air dining area?

No. Customer self-service food areas such as salsa bars, buffet lines and salad bars cannot stay in the open-air dining area and will need to be relocated to a fully

enclosed part of the facility. One exception to this is customer self-serve beverage/ice machines.

5. Can I have server stations in the open-air dining area?

Yes. Server stations are allowed in the open-air dining area, but are limited to ice, non-potentially hazardous beverages (such as water, iced tea, etc.) in closed pitchers, condiments in closed containers and dining utensils. Other items such as chips, salads, etc. must be served from the kitchen area. Bulk beverage/ice dispensing machines may be allowed.

6. Can I keep my bar in the open-air dining area?

Yes. Bar areas are allowed in open-air dining areas with certain restrictions. Except for drink preparation, no food preparation may be conducted at the bar. Pre-sliced limes, lemons, cherries and other drink condiments may be dispensed from closed containers at the bar.

7. How should I handle rodent, vermin and insect problems in the open-air dining area?

The control of rodent, vermin and insect problems in an open-air dining area is the responsibility of the restaurant owner. Obviously, removing walls, doors and screens present significant challenges in controlling the entry of vermin and insects. The owner should consult with a licensed pest control operator to develop a plan for the open-air dining area.

Please refer to the Ventura County Environmental Health Division Plan Check Guide for Food Facilities and the Open-Air Dining Addendum for complete information about the requirements.