



Taste of Chicago

July 8-12
Grant Park

**APPLICATIONS
DUE APRIL 20th**

2026 FOOD VENDOR – Application Info Packet

This July, Taste of Chicago returns to the iconic Grant Park for five full days of unforgettable food, music, and community celebration. As one of the nation’s premier food festivals, Taste of Chicago brings together an incredible variety of culinary experiences, unique beverage offerings, exciting live musical performances, and plenty of family-friendly fun.

Produced by the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE), this beloved event attracts thousands of residents and visitors from across the country, creating an unparalleled opportunity for businesses to showcase their brand. Through DCASE’s extensive marketing reach, media partnerships, and citywide promotion, participating vendors gain high-impact visibility and direct engagement with a large and diverse audience.

Joining Taste of Chicago means more than just serving great food—it’s a chance to introduce new customers to your business, build brand recognition, and be part of one of Chicago’s most celebrated summer traditions.

This year’s event will take place from Wednesday, July 8 through Sunday, July 12, 2026.



FOOD VENDOR PARTICIPATION – ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Food vendor opportunities include participation as: **5-Day Food Vendors, Pop-up Food Vendors, or Food Trucks**

Participants must be located in the City of Chicago.

Preference will be given to those participants:

- who exemplify the culinary treasures of the City and/or are a part of Chicago’s exciting culinary scene
- who propose to serve unique menu items
- who represent ethnic and culinary diversity

Publicly held, Chicago-based corporations will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Applicants will be selected based on meeting the requirements listed in this application. Taste management has the discretion to accept applications after the deadline if the participant will enhance the quality of the event.



LICENSE AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS

ALL food vendors selected to participate in Taste of Chicago must obtain a Special Event food Vendor License from the City of Chicago’s Business Affairs & Consumer Protection division by **Tuesday June 9, 2026** to be eligible to participate. 5-Day Food Vendors MUST OBTAIN the “180 Day Special Event Booth License”.

Additionally, applicants must:

- Have all necessary City of Chicago and State of Illinois operation licenses and permits
- Be listed as the d/b/a, if applicable, on their City of Chicago License
- Not have any outstanding debts with the City of Chicago or the Illinois Department of Revenue
- Not have any pending cases with the City of Chicago Liquor Commission
- Have completed City of Chicago Economic Disclosure Statement before acceptance into Taste of Chicago
- Obtain a Summer Festival Food Vendor Sanitation Certificate

INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS

Applicants will be required to provide an original Certificate of Insurance evidencing the following insurance minimums for the dates of June 27–July 19, 2026:

- Workers Compensation and Employers Liability
- minimum of \$500,000 each accident, illness or disease
- Commercial General Liability – minimum \$1,000,000 per occurrence. \$2,000,000 aggregate Umbrella excess Commercial General Liability
- Automobile Liability – minimum of \$1,000,000 per occurrence



- Property coverage (Contractor is responsible for loss or damage to city property at full preplacement cost)
- Cyber Liability – minimum \$1,000,000 per occurrence*
- Certificate Holder MUST list: City of Chicago, 78 E. Washington, Chicago, IL 60602

Final acceptance is contingent on applicant naming the City of Chicago, The Chicago Park District, the Illinois Restaurant Association, their employees, agents, and officials as additionally insured. Applicants must also submit a copy of the endorsement using ISO form CG 2026 CG2010 10 01 and CB+G 2037 10 01 or equivalent. Applicant's certificate of insurance must also evidence a waiver of subrogation for any loss arising from or related to the agreement.

Notwithstanding any provisions in the Agreement to the contrary, the City, Department of Finance, Risk Management Division maintains the right to modify, delete, alter, or change these requirements.

SKILLS NEEDED

Taste of Chicago is looking for participants that can prove they have the availability to sustain both Taste and their home base operations. It is critical to have participants that can produce at a high volume and withstand production in an outdoor environment under very restrictive conditions.

Participants applying for Taste are expected to effectively maintain (both outdoors on event grounds and at their home bases) the highest possible standard in terms of sanitation, proper food handling, professionalism, and personnel training.

Since the majority of food preparation and cooking for Taste should take place at the participant's normal place of business, each participant will need to make sure they have the proper arrangements in place to cook, transport and store the food in compliance with standard food sanitation practices. A careful and detailed plan and schedule should be assembled by all participants to ensure that all of the deadlines can be met pre-event. Equipment rental, refrigeration rental and commissary prep should be scheduled as soon as your business has been accepted into the event. Also, participants will need to make their suppliers aware of delivery restrictions on Taste grounds for the duration of the event.



MENU ITEMS

To best showcase your food, all menu items must be consistent with the character of your establishment and a copy of your menu offerings is required in the application process. As you plan your menu, we encourage you to serve more "Taste of" items! You may submit a list of (2) to (6) total menu items that best represent your establishment.

There should be no more than (6) items on your menu:

- If you have (6, 5, 4, or 3) menu items, at a minimum (2) must be "Taste of" portions
- If you have (2) menu items, at a minimum (1) must be a "Taste of" portion

"Taste of" portions should not be priced higher than \$6.00

There are no other portion/pricing requirements! Historically, many vendors have found the majority of items sold onsite are "Taste of" portions so if you would like to serve a menu of all "Taste of" portions, that would be welcomed.

IT'S UP TO YOU!

ALL SALES ARE CREDIT CARD ONLY. There are no Taste food or beverage tickets

All vendors will be required to use the City's centralized POS system to manage food sales. Vendors are not allowed to accept cash at the booth. **NEW! Sales tax and 5% consumer event fee will be added to the consumer purchase after the food sale is totaled, vendors will not be required to incorporate tax into the price of menu items. The City will pay sales tax on behalf of the vendor post event.** Although maximum limits for main menu pricing will not be instituted, it's recommended that your pricing be consistent with an event which promotes "sampling" from multiple Taste vendors. The concept is to provide attendees with a sample of your product, not a full dinner portion. There will not be a limit on the average price per menu item. To be clear, it is perfectly acceptable to have a menu of all "Taste of" portions.

COSTS OF PARTICIPATING

The fee to participate in Taste of Chicago as a 5-Day Food Vendor is **\$2,000**.

The fee to participate in Taste of Chicago as a Pop-Up Food Vendor (1 or 2 days) is **\$400** per day.

The fee to participate in the Taste of Chicago as a Food Truck Vendor (all 5 days) is **\$1,000**.

Food Vendors will be invoiced for this amount upon acceptance, and the fee must be paid by the due date on the invoice.

- All sales taxes will be charged to the consumer. Sales tax collected will be paid by the City, post event
- There will be a 5% Consumer Event Fee charged to the consumer to support the festival's production costs

City Commission will be deducted from total food sales (after taxes & consumer event fee) as follows:

- 18% - for vendors with sales \$50,000 and below (after taxes & consumer event fee)
- 20% - for vendors with sales over \$50,001 (after taxes & consumer event fee)

Credit Card Processing fees will be deducted from final vendor payout (after taxes & consumer event fee): *Currently 2.6% + \$0.15 per transaction*

How does a participant receive their net cash?

After deductions have been taken, the City of Chicago will issue a check to the participant approximately 3-4 weeks **after** the settlement report is signed by both the vendor and DCASE. Participants will be notified when/where the checks may be picked up.

Electronic Funds Transfer is an option this year! Forms will be available upon acceptance to sign up for this expedited payment processing system.



5-DAY FOOD VENDOR PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING AS PART OF THE PARTICIPATION FEE:

- A 20'x20' tent canopy
 - Two menu signs
 - Basic electrical power (One (1) 40amp, 120volt circuit) per vendor
 - Virtual Taste of Chicago vendor training seminars to assist in making Taste beneficial for you
 - Propane
 - Ice
 - Refrigerated storage onsite
 - Up to (4) POS Devices
- *Any egregious or unnecessary overuse of these resources will result in an invoice being issued to the vendor.

POP-UP FOOD VENDOR PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING AS PART OF THE PARTICIPATION FEE:

- A 20'x20' Taste of Chicago pre-designed tent
 - Two menu signs
 - Basic electrical power (One (1) 40amp, 120volt circuit) per vendor
 - Virtual Taste of Chicago vendor training seminars to assist in making Taste beneficial for you
 - Propane
 - Ice
 - Refrigerated storage onsite
 - Up to (4) POS Devices
 - Booth outfitted with standard food vendor kitchen equipment
- *Any egregious or unnecessary overuse of these resources will result in an invoice being issued to the vendor.

FOOD TRUCK VENDOR PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING AS PART OF THE PARTICIPATION FEE:

- Two menu signs
 - Basic electrical power per vendor
 - Virtual Taste of Chicago vendor training seminars to assist in making Taste beneficial for you
 - Ice
 - Refrigerated storage on site
 - Up to (2) POS Devices
- *Any egregious or unnecessary overuse of these resources will result in an invoice being issued to the vendor.

Please Note: Participants are responsible for securing all necessary equipment for their operation. In addition, participants are responsible for providing all serving utensils, paper plates, serving containers and plastic cutlery. All equipment must meet City of Chicago safety and health standards. After acceptance, the Illinois Restaurant Association will work closely with each participant to advise them on the goods and services that will be needed on-site.



KEY RULES AND REGULATIONS

Rules and regulations, as well as other vital information, will be discussed at the Vendor Meeting to be held in early May 2026. This meeting is MANDATORY for each participant's key contact person and on-site event manager. It will be hosted virtually by the Department of Cultural Affairs & Special Events.

Attendance at all training seminars is MANDATORY for all key contact persons of each participant. There are no substitute or make-up sessions.

Choose your key contact person carefully as that person will need to be available at all times from the point of acceptance through the end of the Taste event.

Prior to the Vendor Meeting, all accepted participants will receive a contract packet detailing the information and documentation due by the Vendor meeting.

Participants and their employees must always maintain the highest degree of cleanliness and professionalism in their booths and on Taste grounds.

Extensive publicity and promotions are planned for this year's event. Taste vendors may be called upon to participate in pre-event promotions.

All 5-Day vendors are responsible for building/installing their own booths. The appearance of the event as a "whole" is extremely important, including the design of the food booths, so please provide a picture or a design of the booth which you plan to use for 2026.

If your booth does not meet the event appearance requirements, and your establishment is selected to participate in the event, the event will provide a uniform façade, menu board and counter for use. The participant will incur a rental set-up and take down fee. Under no circumstances will participants be allowed to use additional structures, signage, tents or booths unless reviewed and approved by event management in writing, prior to the event.

Menu prices or signs may not be altered during the event. Any alterations will result in your booth being closed down for the day.

Every participant is required to enter a contract with the City of Chicago and complete a City of Chicago Indebtedness Investigation Form and an Economic Disclosure Statement.

Participants may not sell beverages of any kind.

Recycling is a vital part of Taste. Use of recycled/recyclable products is highly recommended and encouraged.



READY TO APPLY?

Online applications for this year's Taste of Chicago can be completed using the link below:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2026Taste>

Don't forget to include:

- 1 – A copy of your City of Chicago Food Business License
- 2 – A copy of your State of Illinois Certificate of Registration
- 3 – A copy of your most recent City of Chicago Health Inspection
- 4 – Your establishment's menu
- 5 – A picture or rough design idea/plan for your booth space

All applications must be submitted by Monday, April 20, 2026

Any questions?

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