

# ALBEMARLE COUNTY

## MOBILE FOOD VENDOR INFORMATION SHEET

A **mobile food vendor** is a self-contained **food** service operation, located in a readily movable motorized wheeled or towed vehicle, used to store, prepare, display or serve **food** intended for individual portion service

Q: I'm interested in operating as a mobile food vendor in Albemarle County. What kind of permits do I need?

A: Before beginning or operating a mobile food vending business in Albemarle County, vendors must obtain the necessary zoning, health department, and business license approvals. Please review the following chart to see what licenses or permits apply to you.

Vending Location/Property	Zoning Clearance	Site Plan Compliance	Health Department	Business License
Commercial/Industrial Site (>2 hrs)	X	X	X	X
Commercial/Industrial Site (<2 hrs)				
Vendor based in Albemarle	X		X	X
Vendor based outside Albemarle at a site for <2 hrs			X	X
County Park	x**		X	X
Farm Winery	x**		X	X
Farm Brewery	x**		X	X
Farm Distillery	x**		X	X
Special Event or Temporary Event			X	X

\*\*See the question below for "Where can I operate?"

### Zoning Clearance

All mobile food vendors who are based in Albemarle County or operating at a property for more than two (2) hours at a time must apply for a [Mobile Food Vendor Zoning Clearance](#). Mobile food vendors associated with an approved restaurant or at a permitted Special Event or Temporary Event use do not require a Zoning Clearance.

Mobile food vendors who operate their business from a home address and/or store the mobile food unit at home when it is not in operation are also subject to compliance with the County's home occupation regulations ([Section 5.2 & 5.2A](#)). A mobile food unit may be stored at home provided that it is parked off-street. For zoning permits, contact Rebecca Ragsdale at (434) 296-5832 x3226/ [rragsdale@albemarle.org](mailto:rragsdale@albemarle.org).

### Site Plan Compliance

The operation of a mobile food unit on private property for any time requires the property owner's permission. Regular operation on private commercial/industrial property for more than two (2) hours is subject to compliance with a site plan. The property owner will need to update the site plan to show the use's location by completing a [Letter of Revision](#), or in some cases, a [Site Plan Amendment](#) before a Zoning Clearance can be issued. If no site plan is required for a use or does not exist in the County records, then only a [Mobile Food Vendor Zoning Clearance](#) will be required.

### Health Department

No zoning permits will be issued without prior approval from the Virginia Department of Health. To download their mobile unit guidelines and application form, go to the local Health Department site for [Applying for Food Service Operation Permits here](#). For more information, contact Eric Myers at the Blue Ridge Health District (Virginia Department of Health) at [eric.myers@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:eric.myers@vdh.virginia.gov).

### Business License

All mobile food vendors who operate in Albemarle County are required to apply for a [business license](#). Contact the Albemarle County Business License Department at (434) 296-5852 for more information.

Q: My business is based outside of Albemarle County. Do I still need a zoning clearance to operate in Albemarle County?

A: Mobile food vendors based outside of Albemarle County **do not** need to apply for a [Mobile Food Vendor Zoning Clearance](#) to operate at a County location for less than two (2) hours at a time. If operating at a County location for more than two (2) hours at a time, a [Mobile Food Vendor Zoning Clearance](#) is required, and compliance with a site plan may be required. Contact Rebecca Ragsdale at (434) 296-5832 x3226 [rragsdale@albemarle.org](mailto:rragsdale@albemarle.org).

Q: Can I store or prepare food in my home kitchen?

A: No. Virginia Health Department regulations require that all food is stored and prepared either onboard the unit or in a permitted commissary facility. Contact the Virginia Health Department for more information about regulations on food preparation and storage.

Q: Where can I operate?

A: Mobile food vendors may operate at a variety of locations in Albemarle County; however, there are specific requirements for different types of vending sites you should be aware of:

### Commercial/Industrial Sites

Mobile food vendors may operate by right in any commercial/industrial zoning district with the property owner's permission. Operation on a commercial or industrial property for more than two (2) hours at a time is subject to compliance with a site plan (see above regarding Site Plan Compliance) and a [Mobile Food Vendor Zoning Clearance](#). Mobile food units must be no closer than 30 feet to any public right-of-way and 50 feet from any Residential or Rural Areas zoning district. Visit the County's [Zoning Map online](#) to determine the zoning of a particular parcel of interest.

### County Parks

Mobile food vendors may operate at a County park with written permission from the Parks Department. For more information, contact the Department Parks & Recreation at (434) 296-5844. Operation at a park for more than two (2) hours at a time may be approved after first obtaining a [Mobile Food Vendor Zoning Clearance](#).

### Farm Winery/Farm Brewery/Farm Distillery

Mobile food vendors may operate at a farm winery, farm brewery, or farm distillery with the owner's permission. Operation at one of these establishments for more than two (2) hours at a time may be approved after first obtaining a [Mobile Food Vendor Zoning Clearance](#).

### Special Events and Temporary Events

Mobile food vendors may operate at a site with an approved special use permit for Special Events subject to the special use permit conditions or at a Temporary Event that has been issued a Zoning Clearance for the event; no Mobile Food Vendor Zoning Clearance is required.

Q: When can I operate?

A: Hours of operation are not currently regulated; however, mobile food vendors are expected to comply with noise regulations outlined in [Section 4.18.04](#) of the zoning ordinance.