

Tricks of the Trade

Here are 16 helpful suggestions which should help in the running of your hot dog cart business. Many of these points have already been touched upon in previous portions of our business guide. But as the old cliché goes, repetition is the mother of retention.

1. Always check with the local Health Department on what you are and are not allowed to sell off the cart. This will prevent unnecessary fines and penalties.
2. Bring some items to make yourself more comfortable while you are out there selling. Such as the following:
 - a. Coat or jacket for weather changes.
 - b. Chair
 - c. Radio
 - d. Hat and Latex gloves. This is a health department thing.
3. Make sure you have your displays looking professional and visible. This would include your menu and all signage.
4. Always carry a “keep the law off your back” book. This can be as simple as a three ring binder with plastic inserts that protect your business license, vendor permits, cart registration, local municipal codes and all other pertinent information. You don’t want to get caught without these documents
5. Always carry a good quality meat thermometer.
6. Ensure that you have a sufficient supply of coins and small bills, to be able to give correct change for the entire day.
7. Never open your umbrella until you are ready to start selling. It should be the last thing you do before you start your sales day.
8. Do a daily check-up of your hot dog cart. You would want to check the tire pressure, electrical wire, corrosion, propane tanks, etc... You want to take note of any items that need attention and respond immediately. Preventive maintenance guarantees the safety of you, any employees and your customers. It also saves you money in the long run.
9. If you are running late, fill the water in the steam table and trays prior to leaving. This can be a big time saver.
10. If business isn’t good at your location, don’t be afraid to move to another.
11. Keep your cart as level as possible. If you are set up on an uneven surface, remember to bring some 2 X 6 boards to level it.

12. Every customer you get should not be viewed as a one time guest. Concentrate your efforts on retention. Work on exceeding the customer's expectations during and after the sale.

13. Always remember to have ample napkins and plastic utensils for the condiments.

14. It would be good emphasis a specialty hot dog(s). This can set you apart from the competition and contribute to word of mouth advertising.

15. Sell the Combo! Don't just sell hot dogs. Sell it in a bundle (with a beverage and a side). Have daily bundles and offer it at a bit of a price reduction. Many successful food establishments employ this strategy.

16. Scout your territory prior to selling. Find out the best location even before you purchase your cart. Surveying possible locations is vital to the success of your hot dog vending business.