What’s the Category? Introductory Guide for Food Service Establishments

Food service establishments fall into one of four categories based on the ingredients and processes they employ. Owners must understand how their establishment is classified because that classification affects facility and training requirements and inspection frequency.

**Category 1**
Temperature Control for Safety (TCS) foods are received commercially prepackaged and sold in the original packaging. Examples: Commercially packaged ice cream or deli meat.

**Category 2**
No raw animal products are used, hot foods are not cooled, and customer contact utensils are single use. Examples: Shaved ice, popcorn, hard cheese, dip ice cream, and lunch meats received fully cooked from a permitted facility.

**Category 3***
Raw animal products are used, food is cooled and reheated, or customer contact utensils are reused. Examples: Restaurants that use raw meat or eggs and bars that reuse cups.

**Category 4***
The operation falls under category 2 or 3 and performs operations that require a variance or HACCP plan. Examples: Establishments that produce raw sprouts or cure meats to prolong shelf life.

*Category 3 and 4 establishments are required to have someone who meets the requirements for Food Safety Manager Certification on-site at all times.*

**YOU MAY BE . . .**

**IF . . .**

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  - Temperature Control for Safety (TCS) foods are received commercially prepackaged and sold in the original packaging. Examples: Commercially packaged ice cream or deli meat.

- **Category 2**
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- **Category 3***
  - Raw animal products are used, food is cooled and reheated, or customer contact utensils are reused. Examples: Restaurants that use raw meat or eggs and bars that reuse cups.

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**Customer contact utensils =** Items, such as plates, bowls, silverware, etc., used by the consumer.

**TCS =** Food that requires time and/or temperature control for safety.

**Raw animal products =** Things such as uncooked meat, fish, poultry, seafood, eggs.