



TOURISM FOR A BETTER WORLD

## Mastering Safety Strategies for Tasting Foods and Drinks during a Community Based Tour

Food and drink tasting is often the highlight of a Community Based Tourism Organization (CBTO) tour, offering the most authentic cultural immersion. However, it also carries the highest safety risk. For your CBTO to achieve sustainable growth and earn positive reviews through platforms like **Equera**, mastering food safety is non-negotiable.

This lesson, from the **Kitara Foundation** provides clear, practical strategies to ensure every tasting experience is safe, hygienic, and memorable.

### 1. 🟡 Prioritize Allergen Management (The Pre-Arrival Check)

Food allergies are a major safety concern for international travelers. Effective management starts before the guest even arrives.

#### A. Digital Pre-Screening

- **Action:** When a guest books (via **Equera** or other channels), the booking form or the automated pre-arrival communication must include a mandatory question: "**Do you or anyone in your group have any food allergies, intolerances, or dietary restrictions?**"
- **Language:** Keep translation cards or digital tools handy to confirm the exact allergen (e.g., peanut, dairy, gluten) if the guest's language is different.

#### B. Internal Communication and Isolation

- **Action:** The CBTO management must immediately communicate any identified allergies to **all hosts and guides** involved in the tour.
- **Strategy:** For serious allergies, designate a separate, clean preparation area and use separate utensils. **Avoid cross-contamination**—even a tiny amount of an allergen (like peanut dust) can be dangerous.

- **Example:** If a guest has a severe nut allergy, the host must ensure the tasting sample is prepared with utensils that have **never touched nuts** and is stored separately.

## 2. Controlling the "Danger Zone" (Handling and Storage)

The primary cause of foodborne illness is food held too long at unsafe temperatures. CBTOs must strictly follow the "**Clean, Separate, Cook, Chill**" rules, even for small tastings.

### A. Temperature Control (The Critical Limits)

- **Hot Foods:** Must be kept **hot (above 140F or 60C)**. Use chafing dishes or slow cookers to hold temperature.
- **Cold Foods:** Must be kept **cold (below 40F or 4.4C)**. Use clean coolers with ice or ice packs.
- **The Two-Hour Rule:** **Never** leave perishable food (cooked dishes, cut fruit, dairy) at room temperature for more than **two hours** (and only **one hour** if the ambient temperature is above 90F or 32C. Toss out any food left out past this limit.

### B. Preventing Cross-Contamination (The Separation Rule)

- **Action:** Use separate cutting boards and utensils for **raw foods** (especially raw meat, fish, or unwashed vegetables) and **ready-to-eat foods**.
- **Storage:** Keep raw ingredients physically separate from cooked or ready-to-eat tasting samples in the refrigerator or cooler.

## 3. Hygiene and Preparation Standards (The Cleanliness Rule)

Simple, effective hygiene practices are the most powerful defense against contamination.

### A. Handwashing is Essential

- **Action:** All food handlers and hosts must wash their hands with **soap and clean, running water for at least 20 seconds** before and after handling food, and after using the restroom or handling money.
- **Utensil Use:** Use **clean serving utensils** (tongs, spoons) to dispense tasting samples. **Never** allow guests or hosts to use bare hands for serving.

### B. Cleanliness of Produce and Water

- **Water Safety:** Use only **potable (safe drinking) water** for washing produce, preparing drinks (tea, juice), and cooking. If the local water source is questionable, use boiled or commercially bottled water.

- **Produce Washing:** Rinse all fresh fruits and vegetables (even those with rinds you won't eat) under **clean, running water**.

### C. Safe Serving Practices

- **Pre-Portioning:** Whenever possible, **pre-portion small samples** into individual, disposable cups or plates before the guests arrive. This prevents multiple hands from touching the shared food and reduces contamination risk.
- **Sneeze Guards/Covers:** Cover food samples when they are not actively being served.

## 4. 🚑 Emergency Preparedness and Documentation

Even with the best preparation, accidents can happen. Your CBTO must be ready to respond.

### A. Local Emergency Plan

- **Action:** Have a clear, written **Emergency Protocol** that includes:
  - The nearest clinic/hospital name and address.
  - The local emergency phone number.
  - Designated transport (who has a reliable vehicle to take an emergency case).
- **Training:** All guides must be trained on **basic first aid** and how to recognize the symptoms of a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) or food poisoning.

### B. Documentation and Traceability

- **Action:** Keep a simple, dated **log of all food sources** for the tasting: *Example: "Coffee beans from Farmer Moses, Milk from Mama Agnes, Spices from Local Market on [Date]."* This allows you to quickly identify the source if a guest falls ill, protecting your community's reputation.
- **Action:** Use digital communication (facilitated by **Equera**) to follow up with guests after the tour. Prompt, professional follow-up helps catch minor issues before they become public negative reviews, demonstrating the CBTO's commitment to safety and quality.

By embedding these stringent food safety rules into your daily operations, your CBTO fulfills the ethical obligations championed by the **Kitara Foundation** and strengthens the reputation of your product in the global market.