

Rules and Regulations – 2026

NC Watermelon Festival

P.O. Box 736

Murfreesboro, NC 27855



Dear Potential Food Vendor:

The 41st annual N.C. Watermelon Festival will be held in Murfreesboro on July 29 – August 1, 2026. The committee is once again extending the opportunity for food vendors to offer food for all four days of the festival. All types of food vendors are encouraged to apply. Throughout the festival there will be entertainment on the grounds with street dancing every night.

The festival will be held on the lawn of the Hertford Academy for the Arts in the Murfreesboro Historic district. Approved vendors may begin selling food on Wednesday, July 29th, 6 p.m. until 10 p.m. The same schedule will apply for Thursday, July 30th. Food sales will begin on Friday, July 31st at noon until 10:30 p.m. and on Saturday, August 1st at 9 a.m. until 10:30 p.m. Vendors may serve food until the conclusion of the events each evening.

FEES: FOOD VENDOR

\$425.00 per 15' x 25' space (Additional space would be an extra \$400)
(A \$25.00 town vendor permit fee is included in the original space fee)

Civic Organizations only - \$225.00 per 15' x 25' space (Additional space- \$200)
(A \$25.00 town vendor permit fee is included in the original space fee)

All vendors who PREPARE AND COOK food items will have to apply for a temporary food vendor permit from the Hertford County Public Health Authority with a \$75.00 fee payable to them. The link is listed here for your convenience. Food Permit application and \$75 fee are to be sent to the Hertford County Health Department, 828 S. Academy St., Ahoskie, NC 27910

All vendors serving food must be eligible for a Temporary Food Stand Permit. Permitted Mobile Food Units will not have to meet any of the above requirements. Specific details of the food service must be submitted along with the application.

The Watermelon Festival Committee must know exactly how your booth will be set up. Pictures of past event setups would be helpful. For example, you must tell us how you plan to cover your area, cover the ground, heat water for dishwashing, implement hand washing and how you plan to protect the food you are serving from the elements and people. Also tell us how you plan to keep cold foods cold (45 degrees F) and hot foods hot (140 degrees F). Attached is a copy of Rule .2635 **Requirements of Temporary Food Establishments and G.S.130-A-(7) Exemptions**. Any food vendor not complying with the above requirements will not receive a permit to operate and will be asked to leave the festival if arrangements cannot be made to comply. You are responsible for providing all of your set-ups such as tables, chairs, etc. All spaces will be 15' x 25'. If your unit, equipment, product, or canopy will not fit this space, you will need to reserve an additional space. All generators for food vendors on the driveway side must be kept across the ditch to prevent noise from interfering with your business of the vendor next to you.

Your vendor fee **does not include ANY electric. Electricity will be provided only to food vendors and at an additional cost of \$50.00.** This electric hook up is to be used for your vendor space and is **NOT** for plugging into an RV. For the \$50.00 for electric, you are guaranteed one 2 plug outlet box. If you need additional outlets you may purchase another providing that we have the extra electrical space available. Food vendors need to use heavy duty outdoor extension cords, at least 12-2 with ground wire. There will be a fire and sanitation inspection for any unsafe conditions prior to sale of food. **No food can be prepared for sale at your temporary food establishment before your booth has been inspected and is approved.**

All applicants will be screened by the NC Watermelon Festival 2026 Food Vendor Committee. Primary factors considered for acceptance are menu choice, previous years of participation and timeliness of application return. Secondary factors include variety and appeal of product, presentation of unit and prior compliance with festival regulations. The screening process, electrical requirements and/or generator usage, will be determinants of booth location.

Application with vendor fees and a photo of booth set-up must be received by June 15, 2026. Vendor fees may be deposited upon receipt, but **does not** mean acceptance as a vendor. If you are **not** selected to participate in the 2026 NC Watermelon Festival, we will return all fees you paid, in full. You will be notified of your application acceptance by July 1, 2026.

The Festival Committee reserves the right to accept a limited number of food vendors with similar products and to reject any application and return all fees. **The amusement ride company has exclusive rights on all COTTON CANDY, CANDY and CAMEL APPLES, POPCORN, KETTLE CORN, CAMEL CORN, SNO-CONES, and FUNNEL CAKES.** Food Vendors **ARE NOT ALLOWED** to sell these items. Please note that anyone found in violation of NC Watermelon Festival regulations **MUST LEAVE** the Festival and **WILL FORFEIT** their booth space and all fees.

For safety reasons, you will **NOT** be allowed to take down and leave your space before the festival is over. The large amount of foot traffic through the food area makes it too hazardous for vehicles to be allowed in. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter. We look forward to receiving your application and look forward to another great year.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

Lorrie Barnes
Food Chairperson
Enclosures