



## The unregulated city

Who needs laws when you can just legalize everything?

Illegal food vendors have been a major health issue not just in Los Angeles, but in cities throughout the nation. I remember years ago when people in Los Angeles died from eating cheese made in dirty bathtubs.



Now there is a push to legalize street food vendors, but with less stringent requirements that are placed on brick and mortar restaurants. That's not fair.

Many brick-and-mortar businesses feel that illegal food vendors negatively affect their businesses. As small businesses, they are required to pay overhead for utilities, insurance and to pay their workers the minimum wage. The Los Angeles County Public Health website lists the concerns associated with street vending, many of which pose significant health concerns to the consumer. These include the lack of potable water to wash hands and/or utensils, food held at unsafe temperatures, unsanitary conditions, the lack of restroom facilities for food handlers and food prepared in an unsafe manner. We all check the “Letter Grade” of restaurants we patronize. The requirements are very stringent, and for good reason.



Of course, the proponents will insist that the vendors will be licensed and brought “out of the shadows.” What is not clear is the criteria for obtaining the permit and how they will be enforced. Back in 2014, the L.A. County Director of Environmental Health, who oversees restaurant and food truck inspections, confirmed an *L.A. Times* report that approximately 60 percent of businesses were ever inspected. In addition, those that were inspected were checked less frequently than the guidelines required. Now we’re going to add in thousands of street vendors and hope that they’ll be inspected? We can’t even keep up with licensed food trucks that at least have water and food storage capability. But let’s eliminate the truck altogether and hope for the best.

Quality of life issues should be of major concern to our City leaders. Los Angeles is already the homeless capital of California. In Los Angeles, the homeless population has increased 20 percent over the last year and sits somewhere near 34,000 people living on the street.

As for the homeless encampments, they are the definition of blight on a society. The inhumane living conditions and health issues alone should make us all take note. Now, let’s add food preparation to the mix, and we really have a recipe for disaster. Remember when protestors were camping out across from City Hall? They established their encampment at City Hall East, with no restroom facilities, directly adjacent to the Thursday Farmer’s Market where a lot of folks go

to eat. I won't get into the unpleasant graphic details, just suffice it to say the two efforts were somewhat incompatible.



It is important that everyone follow the law. For those who don't, there should be consequences. Holding street vendors to the same standards as brick and mortar restaurants is the fair and equitable resolution to this problem and will ensure a safe and sanitary food vendor program.

Watch your back and be safe.

# California health department warns against illegally made cheese

---

by Amanda Ota

Tuesday, March 22nd 2016



If you have any questions, feel free to email me at [JamieMcBride@lappl.org](mailto:JamieMcBride@lappl.org) or contact me at (805) 208-3103.