

BEST PRACTICES FOR SHIPPING FOOD SAMPLES



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INTRODUCTION

As a food business owner, you may have the need to send food samples to a laboratory for analysis, to a customer or to a retailer. You need to ensure that the samples are packed appropriately and that the package arrives intact and on time. This guide summarizes key steps to take while shipping food samples.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- Confirm that the samples are allowed to be shipped via your selected service. For example, the United States Postal Service does not allow the shipping of alcohol. [1,2,3]
- Determine if your sample must remain refrigerated or frozen. This will require additional care to ensure the sample arrives in the appropriate condition.

BEST PRACTICES

- If your samples require refrigeration, ice pack(s) or dry ice may be needed for shipping. Using loose ice is not recommended – melted ice may contaminate the sample or leak out of the shipping container (resulting in the carrier likely throwing the container away). Dry ice (sometimes available at your local grocery store, such as the Fresh Thyme in Plymouth, MN or specialty stores) requires declaration with the shipping service and may restrict you to ground shipping. [4,5]
- Shipping refrigerated or frozen samples requires an insulated shipping container, typically a Styrofoam container inside a corrugated box. Insulated shipping kits can be sourced from Grainger Industrial Supply [4] or ULINE [5].
- Two layers of packaging around the sample (i.e., “double bagging”) prevent leakage or spillage during shipping. If using an envelope, place the sample inside another rigid container or sealable bag. If shipping in a box, another box, sealable bag, or rigid container, such as an insulated styrofoam carrier, should be used. If you are shipping a liquid, be sure to use a leakproof outer container, preferably plastic.
- When packaging samples, make sure that they are in a tight and secure container. Secure loose lids with packing tape to ensure that the sample is not compromised during shipping.
- Ensure the product and shipping container are roughly similar in size. For example, a significantly oversized container will require additional packing material to protect the product from excessive movement during transport, and an undersized container may not provide adequate protection. This is especially important when using an insulated Styrofoam container. Styrofoam containers are subject to breakage during shipping, placing the package and sample at risk of being discarded by the shipping service or exposing the product to higher temperatures than desired. [4,5]
- Additional packing material is recommended to protect glass or brittle packaging, or to secure the sample from excessive movement in an oversized shipping container. If a shipping container is compromised, it may be discarded by the delivery service, or the product will arrive in suboptimal condition. [4,5]

- Ensure the package is properly and legibly labeled with the recipient's name and address, as well as your own. Incorrectly or illegibly labeled packages may be returned and/or are more likely to be lost en route to their intended destination. [1,2,3]

SHIPPING SAMPLES TO THE AURI LAB

- Your AURI contact will collect information from you regarding your samples and will send you a copy of the Sample Request Form.
- Make sure that each sample is legibly labeled according to the sample type/description on the sample request form to ensure the results are reported correctly.
- If a sample has special handling instructions, clearly identify those on the packages (i.e. KEEP REFRIGERATED/FROZEN, etc.).
- Before shipping, please inform your AURI contact that the sample is on its way to ensure that someone is present to receive the package and catalog it upon arrival. If you plan on dropping off a package in person, please make arrangements with the AURI lab manager before arriving.
- The address for the Marshall Analytical Lab is:

ATTN: AURI
1501 State St.
Marshall, MN 56258
- If shipping to the Marshall Lab please make sure "AURI" is legibly displayed on the "ATTENTION:" line. The Marshall lab is housed on the Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU) campus, and this will ensure that the package is delivered.
- Send the package tracking number to your AURI contact immediately upon shipping.
- To assist with identifying samples, include a copy of the sample request form inside the package, which you can request from your AURI contact.

REFERENCES:

1. <https://www.usps.com/ship/packages.htm>
2. <https://www.ups.com/us/en/shipping/how-to-ship-package.page>
3. <https://www.fedex.com/en-us/shipping/how-to-ship.html#>
4. <https://www.grainger.com/category/group/packaging-shippin>
5. <https://www.uline.com>