



Cornell University
New York State Agricultural Experiment Station

Basic Standards for Home and Commercial Kitchens

Fact Sheets for the
Small Scale Food Entrepreneur

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Basic Standards for Home and Commercial Kitchens

The Federal government, individual states, cities and municipalities govern the operation of food processing facilities whether home kitchens or commercial facilities. Regulations differ from state to state and are determined by the type of the food product being prepared and the processing methods used. When considering starting up a home or commercial kitchen, it is important to research which agencies regulate licensing of the product, inspection of the facility, foods allowed and not allowed to be produced in each facility, local zoning laws governing the use of the building, and building codes.

Potentially Hazardous Foods

Some types of foods may not be produced in a home kitchen, as mandated by Federal regulations. These foods are considered potentially hazardous:

- Low acid and acidified foods, i.e. potentially hazardous, packed in hermetically sealed containers must be registered with the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA).
- Meat products with more than 3% raw or less than 2% cooked ingredients in a completed product is regulated by the US Department of Agriculture and Markets (USDA).

At the state level, contact the state Department of Health and/or the state Department of Agriculture and Markets for regulations governing home and commercial kitchens and the foods processed in them.

Many states allow non-hazardous foods such as candy, cakes not requiring refrigeration, cookies, brownies, two-crust fruit pies, breads and rolls, fruit jams and jellies, dried spices and herbs, and snack items to be produced in home kitchens. It is the producer's responsibility to contact the state regulatory agencies where the food is being produced for the rules governing home kitchen production.

Local municipal zoning and planning boards determine the scale of operations permitted in an establishment. They regulate number of employees allowed on premise and whether a second separate kitchen facility is allowed to operate on site.

Check with local building inspectors to determine what operations can take place in the kitchen chosen for food production. There are local building codes which govern volume of business in a building and egress from building, drainage issues such as back flow protection and grease traps. Commercial equipment must comply with fire codes.

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