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Food Safety Best Practices for Local Food Entrepreneurs

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The purpose of this publication is to provide information about best practices to maintain safety standards for products sold by local food entrepreneurs. Regulations vary in each state, so be aware of your location's specific requirements.



1. Establishing Health and Hygiene Policies

Keep yourself and your workers, interns, volunteers and visitors safe and healthy, which keeps your products safe and healthful, by doing the following:

- ▶ Create a health and hygiene policy for all workers of any level, including family members, to sign and keep for your records.
- ▶ Conduct health and safety training for all workers.
- ▶ Provide training for visitors at “pick-your-own” operations.
- ▶ Maintain records of health practices, such as handwashing and restroom cleaning.
- ▶ Supervise children so they follow the same health and hygiene practices.



2. Maintaining Safe Personal Hygiene

Practice good personal hygiene to protect your product integrity, the safety of your customers and the reputation of the local foods industry:

- ▶ Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before handling any product, and after you've been to the toilet or have had contact with other contaminants, such as animals, soil, or unclean surfaces or objects.
 - » Remember: Hand sanitizers are not meant to clean hands. Use them only after you and others have properly washed your hands.
- ▶ Use only the toilet (not the field!) for relieving yourself. Make a toilet available approximately every one-fourth mile of your operations (or five-minute walk).
- ▶ Put a handwashing station outside of the toilet facility.
 - » See instructions about setting up a **portable handwashing station** from the University of Minnesota. Your own state's land-grant university also might have directions.
- ▶ Stay home if you are sick. Do not return to work for at least 24 hours after you do not feel ill anymore or according to the public health guidance of your location.



3. Bringing Your Product to Market

Regardless of how you are selling your product, be sure to maintain all safety protocols. If you are selling at a farmers market, be sure to do the following on market day:

- ▶ When handling food or providing samples of your product, be sure your hands are washed properly.
- ▶ Do not handle money or shake hands while providing samples. If you handle money, you must wash your hands again before handling food.
- ▶ If you are at an organized farmers market, find out where the closest handwashing station is. If it is not close enough for convenience, be sure you utilize your own portable handwashing station. Note that some local regulations may require that you have a handwashing station in your booth if you are providing samples.
- ▶ Be sure to secure hair and wear clean clothing for product safety.
- ▶ Wear a mask when recommended, or if you think you might sneeze or cough. Sneeze or cough into your sleeve if you are not wearing a mask.



4. Sampling Your Product Safely

Consider these safety tips for sampling your product at market:

- ▶ Use individual portions and/or serve in individual cups spaced apart on a cleaned and sanitized tray. This helps ensure that a customer's hands do not come in contact with another sample.
- ▶ Keep perishable food, such as cut produce, cold by serving in larger containers nested in ice or in refrigerator units or coolers. Replenish the ice as needed to ensure that perishable foods are not being held between 40 F and 140 F for more than two hours (one hour if it is more than 90 F).
- ▶ Have a garbage can close by for collecting trash.
- ▶ Do not allow customers to hover over the samples; leave enough room so that others may come and go. This helps avoid contamination risk from accidental coughs or sneezes.
- ▶ Monitor children around food samples to keep them from touching multiple items.
- ▶ Consider distributing the samples one at a time as customers pass by your booth.
- ▶ Try to sample only when you have sufficient customer traffic so that samples do not sit out, especially on warm days.
- ▶ Do not handle money or other unsanitary items while serving samples to customers.
 - » If you must handle money and serve, be sure to wash your hands properly before resuming sampling.
- ▶ When possible, have a co-worker take care of sales while you sample product.



5. Food Safety 101: Cleaning and Sanitizing

The FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) provides science-based minimum standards for the safe growing, harvesting, packing and holding of fruits and vegetables grown for human consumption, as well as for value-added processing of foods. Although many small farms may be exempt from the FSMA Produce Safety Rules (PSR) based on their current average three-year income (less than \$25,000/year) or other exemptions, the key principles can help ensure safety for any-sized operation. The FSMA PSR covers agricultural water (including testing), biological soil amendments (such as manure), wildlife and domestic animals, worker health and hygiene, and cleaning procedures.

Cleaning and sanitizing surfaces

Follow these steps when cleaning areas and surfaces where fresh produce and other products and ingredients will be processed and packaged:

- ▶ Remove all dirt and debris from the area.
- ▶ Scrub surfaces with soap and water.
- ▶ Rinse with fresh, clean water.
- ▶ Sanitize with a product that has been approved for food contact surfaces.

Cleaning and sanitizing equipment

Be sure to know proper cleaning and sanitizing protocols for equipment that comes in contact with your food products:

- ▶ Set up one basin for washing, one for rinsing and one for sanitizing.
- ▶ Use a proper detergent and warm water for washing equipment, clean water for rinsing and an approved sanitizing solution for sanitizing.
 - » Prepare the sanitizing solution according to the directions from the manufacturer.
 - » A typical sanitizing solution is 1 tablespoon of unscented, chlorine-based bleach per gallon of water.
 - » Note: Do not use soap on fresh produce or other food.
- ▶ Use the appropriate test strip to test your sanitizing solution. Proper sanitizing will not occur if the solution is too strong or too weak. Prepare using the water temperature recommended.
 - » Sanitizer test strips are widely available next to sanitizing products.
- ▶ Have a draining rack near and allow items to air dry.



6. Monitoring Time and Temperature for Safety

Know your products, and know which ones are potentially hazardous and need extra care in handling. “Potentially hazardous foods” is a legal phrase used by food regulators that now generally is called “Time and Temperature Controlled for Safety,” or TCS for short.

The following food products fall into the TCS category, so be sure to look up your state/local laws for more detailed requirements:

- ▶ Animal products: meat, poultry, eggs, fish
- ▶ Dairy and other high-moisture foods such as tofu or baked goods containing dairy or eggs
- ▶ Cut or peeled fresh produce, particularly those that will likely be eaten raw, such as salad greens, tomatoes or melons
- ▶ Some foods are not considered potentially hazardous or TCS. Examples of foods that do not require refrigeration include popcorn, home-fried tortilla chips, dehydrated fruits and vegetables, candy, granola, dried herbs, coated and uncoated nuts, and baked goods such as cookies and bread that do not require refrigeration.
- ▶ Rules vary on the sale of preserved foods, such as jams, jellies and pickled products. Check your local guidance for regulations in your area.



7. Producing Value-added Food Products

Generally, these are the products you make from produce and raw ingredients you buy or grow. They could be products that are preserved (canned, dried, frozen) or combined or crafted with other items for sale. Examples include salsa made from fresh garden produce, sausage made from your raised livestock, or baked goods. Follow these tips for safety and quality:

- ▶ Check your state guidelines for current requirements and recommendations.
- ▶ If your product involves food preservation, such as canning, drying, freezing or fermenting, be sure to follow safe food handling practices regarding sanitation, and a best practice is to utilize a recipe that is tried and tested by Extension.



8. Food Safety for Growing and Selling Food at a Farmers Market

The following tips will help you keep your fresh fruit and vegetables clean and fresh for sale, and help prevent contamination:

- ▶ Take measures to keep cats, dogs or other pets or wildlife out of your growing area.
- ▶ Do not allow workers who are ill or injured to be in direct contact with ready-to-harvest produce.
- ▶ Package produce in new (unused) food-grade packaging or properly cleaned and sanitized food-grade re-usable packaging.
- ▶ Display produce safely. Here are three potential methods:
 - » Use a large plastic-lined basket (but don't reuse the plastic liner).
 - » Use a stainless steel container that has been washed and sanitized.
 - » Use a food-grade plastic container that has been washed and sanitized.
- ▶ If displaying your produce in one large bunch, select the produce yourself using clean hands; don't allow customers to rummage through the vegetables.



9. Storing Fresh Produce

Follow these guidelines when storing your fresh produce before and during market days:

- ▶ Clean and sanitize processing and handling surfaces before bringing in your freshly harvested produce.
- ▶ Avoid cross-contamination. Keep areas for harvesting, processing and storing separate from equipment repair areas and animals.
- ▶ Keep in mind that many fresh produce items will be eaten raw (uncooked) and can be contaminated easily by the time they get to your customer.
- ▶ Make sure your personal hygiene, clothing, work areas, buildings, and other workers and volunteers are clean, healthy and safe.
- ▶ Make sure water sources for any post-harvest uses are potable.
- ▶ Keep your work area organized. An organized space is a safe space.
- ▶ Cover, wrap and refrigerate produce that has been cut. Note that many states will require licensing for selling cut produce. Check with your local regulations.



10. Labeling for Sale

Food labeling requirements vary from location to location. In some cases, only minimal product labeling is required.

Why label? This helps your customers compare products and know what they are buying. Many customers enjoy buying local, homemade foods.

Some best practices based on guidance from the Food and Drug Administration to inform your customers, especially those with special dietary needs, are listed below. Abide by your local regulations for labeling.

- ▶ List the product name, your company name and address, and any other contact information you wish to disclose, such as a phone number or website.
- ▶ The quantity of food that you are selling (could be one loaf or 1 pound, etc.)
- ▶ For products with more than one ingredient, list all of your ingredients in descending order by weight.
- ▶ Label all allergens as required by law. Nine allergens must be listed, so identify which ones may be in your product, may have come in contact with your product or were made in a kitchen that is not dedicated as allergen-free.
- ▶ For individually wrapped small items sold at a farmers market, such as cookies, you don't have to have a separate label for each one (although you may if you like); rather, you can make a large sign with the ingredients and allergen information to put next to your smaller items.
- ▶ Be open to discussing your ingredients and how your product was prepared. Your customers are sincerely interested in your product.
- ▶ You might want to list terms such as "vegan" or "grain-free" if applicable to your product." Note these terms are not legally defined but can help your customers quickly identify their needs.
- ▶ "Nutrition Facts," as you see on many commercial products, do not have to be listed on your label (for example, calories, fat, sodium, etc.) unless you reach a certain level of sales or make health claims on the label. See your state's guidelines if your sales are relatively large or reaching commercial levels.
- ▶ Don't forget about adding an appealing design, such as images, color, graphics or fonts.

11. Know Your Resources

These are the resources used by Extension personnel in the North Central Region of the U.S.

IL	<p>From Garden Gates to Dinner Plates-IL Cottage Food: https://web.extension.illinois.edu/cottage/index.cfm</p> <p>Commercial Labs: https://web.extension.illinois.edu/cottage/taskforce.cfm</p> <p>National Center for Home Food Preservation: https://nchfp.uga.edu/</p> <p>Extension Search Engine for reliable information based on the consumers question: https://impact.extension.org/search/</p>
IN	<p>Home-based vendors: Handling and Sanitation: https://mdc.itap.purdue.edu/item.asp?Item_Number=FS-71-W</p> <p>Indiana Home-Based Vendor Food Product Labeling Overview: https://mdc.itap.purdue.edu/item.asp?Item_Number=FS-35-W&_ga=2.186546089.169651433.1618929586-758083409.1554137236</p> <p>Indiana Home-Based Vendor Food Product Labeling Overview (PDF): www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/FS/FS-35-W.pdf?_ga=2.186546089.169651433.1618929586-758083409.1554137236</p>
IA	<p>Iowa Department of Inspection and Appeals (IDIA): https://dia.iowa.gov -> Menu -> Iowa Code and Administrative Rules -> Click "Administrative Rules"</p> <p>*Under Administrative Rules</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chapter 31 - Food Establishment and Food Processing Plant Inspections• Chapter 34 - Home Bakeries• Chapter 30- Food Consumer and Safety <p>Home-based Food Operators: Regulations and Food Safety Course: www.extension.iastate.edu/humansciences/home-food-operations</p> <p>Regulations and Licensing - Home Food Operations and Home Bakeries: https://store.extension.iastate.edu/product/15225</p> <p>Understanding the Standard of Identity and Requirements for Fruit Jams, Fruit Jellies, and Fruit Butters - The Science Behind the Standards: https://store.extension.iastate.edu/product/15540</p> <p>Marketing Local Foods in Iowa Series</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whole Fruits and Vegetables: https://store.extension.iastate.edu/product/15334• Cut Fruits and Vegetables: https://store.extension.iastate.edu/product/15333• Fruit and Vegetable Juice: https://store.extension.iastate.edu/product/15332• Jams, Jellies, and Preserves: https://store.extension.iastate.edu/product/15331• Low Acid or Fermented Foods: https://store.extension.iastate.edu/product/15330• Eggs: https://store.extension.iastate.edu/product/15329• Seafood: https://store.extension.iastate.edu/product/15328• Dairy: https://store.extension.iastate.edu/product/15327• Poultry: https://store.extension.iastate.edu/product/15326• Red Meat: https://store.extension.iastate.edu/product/15325• Honey and Maple Syrup: https://store.extension.iastate.edu/product/15335
KS	<p>Kansas Value-Added Foods Lab: www.ksre.k-state.edu/kvaf/</p> <p>Food Safety at Farmers Markets and Direct to Consumer Sales: www.ksre.k-state.edu/foodsafety/topics/market.html</p> <p>FDA CFR – Code of Federal Regulations Title 21: www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cdrh/cfdocs/cfcfr/cfrsearch.cfm</p>
MI	<p>Michigan Cottage Foods Information: www.michigan.gov/mdard/0,4610,7-125-50772_45851-240577--,00.html</p> <p>Michigan Extension Cottage Food Law: www.canr.msu.edu/cottage_food_law/index</p> <p>Michigan Extension Product Center: www.canr.msu.edu/productcenter/</p> <p>Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development: www.michigan.gov/mdard</p> <p>Online Michigan Cottage Food Law Course: www.canr.msu.edu/cottage_food_law/online-michigan-cottage-food-law</p>

MN	<p>Food for Entrepreneurs: https://extension.umn.edu/food-safety/food-entrepreneurs</p> <p>Cottage Food Q & A: https://blog-cottage-food.extension.umn.edu/</p> <p>Cottage Food Law Guidance: www.mda.state.mn.us/food-feed/cottage-food-law-guidance</p> <p>Minnesota Cottage Food Producer's Association: www.mncfpa.org/</p> <p>The Foodpreneur Institute: https://foodpreneurinstitute.com/</p> <p>Cottage Food Laws: https://forrager.com/laws/</p>
MO-KS	<p>Food Safety Newsletters and Fact Sheets: http://missourifamilies.org/foodsafety/newsletters/</p> <p>Food Safety: https://extension.missouri.edu/programs/food-safety</p> <p>Kansas Value Added Foods Lab: www.ksre.k-state.edu/kvaf/</p> <p>FDA Registration of Food Facilities and Other Submissions: www.fda.gov/food/guidance-regulation-food-and-dietary-supplements/registration-food-facilities-and-other-submissions</p>
NE	<p>Nebraska Regional Food Systems Initiative: Cottage Food Law: https://foodsystems.unl.edu/cottage-food-law</p> <p>Nebraska Pure Food Act §81-2,280 - "Cottage Food" Registration Nebraska Department of Agriculture: https://nda.nebraska.gov/fscp/foods/cottagefood.html</p> <p>National Center for Home Food Preservation: https://nchfp.uga.edu/</p>
ND	<p>Food Entrepreneur: Your Resource Guide to the Food Industry: www.ag.ndsu.edu/food/food-entrepreneurship</p> <p>FDA Guidance for Industry: Food Labeling Guide: www.fda.gov/regulatory-information/search-fda-guidance-documents/guidance-industry-food-labeling-guide</p>
OH	<p>Cottage Foods: https://agri.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/oda/divisions/food-safety/resources/cottage-food</p> <p>The Wilbur A. Gould Food Industries Center: https://foodindustries.osu.edu/</p>
SD	<p>Requirements for Food Entrepreneurs Selling Food in South Dakota: https://extension.sdstate.edu/requirements-food-entrepreneurs-selling-food-south-dakota</p>
WI	<p>Wisconsin Food Processing and Food Sales Requirements Food Safety & Licensing Guide: https://datcp.wi.gov/Documents/WIFoodProcessingFoodSalesRequirements.pdf</p> <p>Quick Guide to Wisconsin Food Licensing Regulations: https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/safepreserving/files/2019/04/Quickguide_WIfoodlicensing.pdf</p>

These are the laws, regulations, licensing and other recommendations in the North Central Region of the U.S.

Illinois	www.ilstewards.org/policy-work/illinois-cottage-food-law/
Indiana	www.in.gov/isdh/21652.htm
Iowa	www.extension.iastate.edu/ffed/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Home-Based-Food-Business_Coleman_9-21-17.pdf
Kansas	https://agriculture.ks.gov/faqs/food-safety-faq
Michigan	www.michigan.gov/mdard/0,4610,7-125-50772_45851-240577--,00.html
Minnesota	www.mda.state.mn.us/food-feed/cottage-food-law-guidance
Missouri	https://health.mo.gov/safety/foodsafety/consumer/faqs.php#2
Nebraska	https://nda.nebraska.gov/fscp/foods/cottagefood.html
North Dakota	www.health.nd.gov/regulation-licensure/food-and-lodging/cottage-food
Ohio	https://agri.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/oda/divisions/food-safety/resources/cottage-food
South Dakota	https://extension.sdstate.edu/requirements-food-entrepreneurs-selling-food-south-dakota
Wisconsin	https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Licenses_Permits/HomeBakers.aspx

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