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Food & Drug Protection Division

Food Program

Starting a home-based food business

The following steps will guide you through the "Application for Home Processor Inspection"

- [Application for Home Processor Inspection](#) writable PDF
- [Application for Home Processor Inspection](#) Microsoft Word
- [Request a printed Application via mail](#) (application and inspection appointment may take longer)

Step 1. Verify that your product can be manufactured at home.

Low-risk packaged foods are the only products allowed to be produced at home. These can include:

- baked goods
- jams and jellies
- candies
- dried mixes
- spices
- *some* sauces and liquids

Certain products must be evaluated to determine if they are low-risk or high-risk. After completing the "Application for Home Processing Inspection," an NCDA&CS Food and Drug Protection Division inspector will determine if testing is required.

N.C. State University's Food Science Department will analyze products for risk. For more information, go to: http://ncsu.edu/foodscience/extension_program/food_product_testing.html

All **high-risk products** must be produced in a **non-home based commercial facility** . These include, but are not limited to:

- refrigerated or frozen products
- canned goods
- dairy products
- seafood products
- bottled water

If you are starting a non-home based commercial food processing facility for high risk or low risk foods, click here for start-up information.

Step 2. Do you have a pet that comes in your home at any time (even if only at night)?

If so, you **cannot** manufacture foods in your home. This practice is a violation of the Good Manufacturing Practices.

Step 3. Check your home processing area to ensure it meets federal food safety requirements. Your home processing area must meet the standards set by:

- Code of Federal Regulations (21 CFR 110) also know as Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP)
- N.C. Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act.

Additional regulations are required for pickled (acidified) foods:

- Code of Federal Regulations (21 CFR 114) Acidified Foods
- Code of Federal Regulations (21 CFR 108) Emergency Permit Control

Key Requirements:

- Food contact surfaces must be smooth and easily cleanable.

- No pets in the home at any time.
- Restroom and hand washing facilities- must have hot and cold running water easily accessible from processing area. Kitchen sink is for food preparation only, hand washing must be done in a separate sink.
- Thermometer must be kept in refrigerator to monitor temperature.
- Waste must be carried away from the house in an acceptable fashion (sewer or septic system)
- All light bulbs in the kitchen must have protective shields or be shatter-proof.

Step 4. Check local license and zoning information

If you have determined that you qualify as a home-based business, check with your local government for compliance with local zoning laws. Also check your neighborhood organizations to be sure a home-based business is allowed in your neighborhood.

County government links: www.ncacc.org/countyinfo.htm

City or town government links: www.sog.unc.edu/library/cities.html

Step 5. Well water inspection

If your home has municipal/city water, you will need a copy of your most recent bill.

If your only water source is from a well, the water must be tested for coliform bacteria before an inspection is made. Test results within 1 year of your application and must be attached with your completed application. Water testing is available from private companies or your local health department.

Step 6. Develop your business plan

Provide a brief description of your business to be included with your application to become a home processor. The following items should be included:

- Ingredients used and the suppliers
- A plan for storage for supplies, equipment and finished product
- A general production flow - including procedures and equipment used
- How you will transport products
- List potential locations where you plan to sell your product (ex. farmers market, retail from home, local fairs, local businesses)

The NCDA&CS Marketing Division can provide additional help developing a business plan. Visit www.ncagr.gov/markets/agbizmarketing.htm

Step 7. Food product labels

Any products to be sold to consumers must be packaged to protect them from contamination. A label must be affixed to the package with:

- 1. Product name**
- 2. Manufacturers name and address**
- 3. Net weight of the product in ounces/pounds and the gram weight equivalent**
- 4. Complete list of ingredients in order of predominance by weight**

The label must declare all of the components of the ingredient you use [ie: for the ingredient self-rising flour you would see "enriched bleached wheat flour(contains bleached wheat flour, niacin, reduced iron, thiamin mononitrate, riboflavin and folic acid), salt, sodium bicarbonate, monocalcium phosphate, sodium aluminum phosphate, calcium sulfate.)"]. The easiest way is to copy directly from the ingredient package for each of the ingredients. Any duplications of an ingredient can be deleted after listing where it is most concentrated (ie: sugar may occur as sugar itself, and also in chocolate chips).

Any food individually packaged for self-service sale must be labeled and adequately packaged to protect them from contamination. Foods "custom made" or "on demand" for sale as a single unit (ie: wedding cake, cake for a restaurant to serve, or a dozen cookies in bulk package for a restaurant to serve) can be exempt from individual labels. Also, if the product is served on demand from a secure bulk container or display case when the customer asks you for it, you can be exempt. However the ingredient information must be available upon request by the consumer. If you do not make comparative nutrition claims (ex. low fat, sugar free) you may be exempt from including the nutrition facts panel information on your product as a small business.

More information on labeling requirements is available at:

- www.fda.gov/
- ncsu.edu/foodscience/extension_program/nutrition_labeling.html

Step 8: Complete the Application for Home Processing Inspection

Email the completed form to: homeprocessing@ncagr.gov	or	Mail the completed form to: Kaye J. Snipes 169 Boone Square Street, #168 Hillsborough, NC 27278
Complete the Application for Home Processor Inspection (link to PDF)		

Within two (2) weeks of sending your application, a Food Regulatory Specialist will contact you to arrange a home processing facility inspection. You will be sent a copy of all relevant federal and state regulations for your review and to prepare your facility for inspection.

After sending your completed application, please check your Email periodically for correspondence from our Regulatory Specialists. Inspection appointments are typically made over email. For applicants without email access, appointments will be made by phone.

Send questions regarding home processing to homeprocessing@ncagr.gov.

Product Testing

After receipt of your application the Food Regulatory Specialist may determine that product testing is required to ensure your product can be manufactured in a home kitchen.

The following products may need to have product testing:

- Acidified foods (ex Pickles): pH testing
- Dressings/sauces: pH
- “Moist” breads/cakes, and some pies: Aw (water activity) and pH
- Any questionable products: Aw and/or pH

Product testing is available through N.C. State University or other commercial labs

The inspection process:

Inspectors may require product testing (water activity and/or pH) BEFORE the inspection to ensure your product is safe for home processing.

A home-based kitchen inspection checks the kitchen to be sure it is clean, constructed of suitable materials and is free of any pest activity (insect or rodent). Remember that indoor pets would also be considered pests. No indoor pets or pests are allowed.

Standard household equipment and appliances are acceptable. The equipment and appliances can be used for both personal and commercial use. Standard household sinks are acceptable. The kitchen should be free of decorative materials which could collect dust. Running water at a suitable temperature and pressure is required. There is not a specific temperature requirement for hot water, as long as it is hot enough to accomplish cleaning and sanitizing of equipment and utensils.

Waste should be conveyed away from the house in an acceptable fashion (Sewer or Septic Tank)
 Any lights in the kitchen or any processing or packaging areas should be shielded against accidental breakage.

The inspection will be focused on the kitchen and other areas where processing and packaging of products may take place. Areas of the house in which materials, ingredients and equipment are stored will also be inspected. Inspectors may also walk around the exterior of the house to verify that the foundation is intact and will not allow for the entry of pests.

A permit is not issued, but inspectors will alert the homeowner to any possible violations of the N.C. Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act.

Other steps:

File for a tax number

There are several types of tax numbers. If a business is planning to have sales, a Sales & Use Tax number (AS/RP1 form) is required. Businesses having employees are required to obtain a Federal Employer Identification number (SS-4 form) along with a N.C. withholding tax number. The N.C. Business License Information Office can provide application forms to businesses for these numbers.

Register business name

The type of business structure determines where a business name (assumed name) should be registered. A Certificate of Assumed Name for sole proprietorships and partnerships must be filed with the Register of Deeds in the county or counties where businesses plan to operate.

Corporations or Limited Liability Companies must register their business names with the [N.C. Secretary of State, Corporations Division](#).

Apply for a UPC code

Many retailers now require a Uniform Product Code (UPC) for each product they carry. A UPC code allows automated checkout stands to read the name of the manufacturer and the specific product from the bar code.

The Uniform Code Council Inc. (UCC) is the central management and information center for manufacturers, distributors and retailers participating in the UPC system. This organization is not a government agency. It is an administrative council that exists specifically to develop standard product and shipping container codes, control the issuing of company identification codes, provide detailed information and to coordinate the efforts of all participants. Although membership in the UCC is voluntary, it is required to obtain a UPC identification number.

Uniform Code Council Inc.
Suite 300
7887 Washington Village Dr.
Dayton, OH 45459
(937) 435-3870 or (800) 543-8137
www.uc-council.org

Marketing assistance

Create your own free Web page at the NCDA&CS [General Store](#). The General Store is a one stop directory for finding North Carolina Agricultural goods and services.

Goodness Grows in North Carolina is an identification and promotional program designed to heighten awareness about North Carolina agriculture and boost sales by helping consumers retailers, and wholesalers to easily identify top-quality products that are grown, processed or manufactured in our state. To find out more, go to the [GGINC Web site](#).

Other resources

[NC State Food Science Department's Guide for Small Food Processors in North Carolina](#)

[Business ServiCenter by the N.C. Department of Commerce Office of Business & Entrepreneurial Services](#)

[N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Marketing Division Agribusiness Development Office](#)

[FDA Good Manufacturing Practice Guidelines](#)

[Blue Ridge Food Ventures](#) - a full-scale commercial kitchen operation for value-added food production in western North Carolina.

Food Program, Jim Melvin, Assistant Director of Regulatory Programs

Mailing Address: 1070 Mail Service Center, Raleigh NC 27699-1070

Physical Address: 4000 Reedy Creek Road, Raleigh NC 27607-6465

Phone: (919) 733-7366; **FAX:** (919) 733-6801

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Steve Troxler, Commissioner of Agriculture