

Existing Food Facilities Planning to Can Fresh Foods for Sale or Service

Minnesota Department of Agriculture; Minnesota Department of Health; University of Minnesota Extension

Introduction

Does your menu include fresh food items canned in your facility or do you sell these items in your business? Are you planning to expand your menu or business to include fresh food items canned in your facility?

If so, there are a number of food safety and regulatory requirements to consider. Many of these requirements are the same whether the fresh foods come from your regular commercial sources, or from new sources of locally produced food. If you would like to sell your salsas, jams, or pickles as retail items as well as serving them, other regulations may apply.

This fact sheet provides a brief discussion of these food safety and regulatory issues, and links to websites for more information.

Regulation and Licensure

Before changing your menu or expanding your business by using new foods or methods, you should always check with the state or local regulatory authority that licenses and inspects your facility. They can help you to determine whether there are training, licensing, or permit requirements that you must follow before expanding your business or menu.

Find state and local licensing contacts at: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/food/license/locals.pdf>

Product, Facility, and Equipment

Based on the product(s) and the recipes you provide for those products, your licensing authority can also help you to determine whether you have the space for storage and production of those food items, and if you need additional commercial equipment for processing or storage.

Approved Source

The Minnesota Food Code requires that all food sold or served to the public must be obtained from an approved source. Produce for canning may be purchased from any approved supplier or directly from an unlicensed grower, if the food is grown on the seller's own or rented land. MN Food Code: Minnesota Rules, Chapter 4626: <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/?id=4626>

Note: Food prepared or stored in a private home or an unlicensed facility may not be served or sold in any food establishment, except as allowed by Minnesota Statutes, Sections 28A.15 and 157.22, clauses (6) and (7) which are specific farmers' market exclusions including the pickle bill.

Acid and Acidified Foods

Acidity may be natural, as in most fruits, or added, as in pickled food. Low-acid, canned foods are not acidic enough to prevent the growth of bacteria. Low-acid foods have pH values higher than 4.6 and include most vegetables. Acidity can be increased, or pH can be lowered (acidifying), by adding lemon juice, citric acid, or vinegar.

Naturally acid foods contain enough acid to block bacterial growth, or destroy them more rapidly when heated. Acid foods have a pH of 4.6 or lower and include most fruits.

Although tomatoes are a fruit and are usually considered an acid food, some varieties are now known to have pH values slightly above 4.6. Thus, extra precautions must be taken when processing tomato-based foods.

Adding vegetables to naturally acid foods will normally raise the pH above 4.6 and can make the canned product unsafe. For example, adding cilantro, corn, beans, or peppers to tomatoes can raise the pH of the salsa. One solution is to use a tested tomato salsa recipe and to add fresh ingredients for a particular day's service.

Reminders:

- Follow all relevant canning regulations.
- When canning a fruit or pickled food item, use a pH meter, calibrate it daily and measure the pH of each batch processed.
- Keep a record of measurements and calibrations.
- pH may change as the acids are absorbed throughout the canned foods. Check each batch two or three weeks after production.

Canning Advice

University of Minnesota Extension (<http://www.extension.umn.edu/foodsafety/components/foodpreservation.htm>) offers extensive food preservation advice on their website, including these basic reminders:

- Follow processing guidelines from a reliable source.
- Use tested recipes from a credible source. Note that any alteration of a recipe can cause food safety concerns.
- Use accurate, commercial-grade equipment in good working order.
- Store canned goods in a cool, dry, dark environment.
- Canning (for sale or service) of meats, fish, and most vegetables is normally not allowed in the retail setting. Prior to making or selling these items, the process must be filed with the FDA or USDA and have been approved by a processing authority. A firm producing these items must employ qualified staff who have met the canned food processing educational requirements by attending an approved process school and passing the course (21CFR 114.8). <http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cdrh/cfdocs/cfcfr/CFRSearch.cfm?CFRPart=113&showFR=1>

Standards of Identity

Canned fruit items must meet designated standards of identity. For example, the required soluble solids contents for fruit butter is not less than 43%; for jelly, jams and preserves, not less than 65%. These are measured using an instrument called a refractometer or through laboratory testing. (<http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cdrh/cfdocs/cfcfr/CFRSearch.cfm?CFRPart=150&showFR=1>)

Additional Resources for Cannors

So Easy to Preserve, University of Georgia, 1994 or newer. More than 185 tested canning, freezing and dehydrating recipes. <http://www.uga.edu/setp/>

- USDA Complete Guide to Home Canning, 2009 http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/publications/publications_usda.html
- National Center for Home Food Preservation website: <http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/> Current research-based recommendations for methods of home food preservation.
- Safe Home Canning, University of Minnesota Extension <http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/nutrition/components/DJ0516section1.html>
- Acidified Canned Foods Business, University of Wisconsin Extension website: <http://www.foodsafety.wisc.edu/acidifiedcanning.html>

Basic Food Safety Requirements

- Thoroughly wash fresh foods before preservation.
- Wash hands well and often.
- Make sure that work surfaces and equipment are cleaned and sanitized.
- Label and date all packages and jars.
- Discard: moldy canned goods and those with a broken seal, bruised or damaged foods and those that are not fresh, and dried-out or freezer-burned foods.

<http://www.mda.state.mn.us/food>

(651) 201-6027 • 1-800-967-AGRI

www.health.state.mn/divs/eh/food/fs/index.html

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