

Baking, Cooking, Processing and Pickling Produce from Your Farm Kitchen



Background:

In general Connecticut farmers are prevented from selling baked, cooked or prepared foods. There are a number of exceptions to this rule. First, if your farm has a commercial kitchen then you are allowed to process and sell a wide variety of baked and cooked foods. Second, state statute allows for the processing of jams, jellies and acidified foods in farm or home kitchens that are part of farms. Additionally, farms may make maple syrup, press cider, collect honey and produce wine with the proper state and local permitting.

Key Points:

- Some New England states allow farmers to produce pies and breads and sell them on their farm stands. Connecticut does not allow for this unless you have a commercial kitchen on your farm.
- Farmers may produce jams, jellies and acidified foods in their residential farm kitchen as long as they follow the specific guidelines. Please see our fact sheet titled [“Processing Acidified Foods in A Farm Kitchen”](#) for more detailed advice on this option.
- Farmers with commercial kitchens should work closely with the Department of Consumer Protection to design and monitor food preparation, production and sales.
- The processing/packing of any food for wholesale distribution requires a Connecticut Food Manufacturing Establishment license.
- In general, if you are considering selling ready-to-eat food products such as hotdogs, chips or sandwiches then you should contact your local health department to ensure that your food service area meets health codes.
- Maple sugar and honey require special permits and farmers must follow regulations unique to that commodity.
- Sweet cider requires a Connecticut Apple Juice/Cider registration.
- Alcoholic beverages are licensed by the Liquor Control Division of the Department of Consumer Protection.

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Statute:

The statutes governing food preparation are lengthy and detailed. The Department of Consumer protection provides an electronic version of the sanitary standards for food establishments on-line. More specifically, Connecticut's Department of Consumer Protection regulations generally require that food products be prepared in a licensed and inspected commercial kitchen – Connecticut has adopted the [FDA's Good Manufacturing Practices](#) as the Connecticut standards to follow. You may find these regulations on www.fda.gov and then look for the food tab. Under this tab look for the Guidance and Regulation section. Then look for the Current Good Manufacturing Practices section. Scroll down until you see a section called Additional Information. Open the link titled "[Full text of 21 CFR Part 110.](#)"

In addition, public health codes also prevent food preparation from being conducted in a room other than a kitchen – see Connecticut Agency Regulations 19-13-B40 (j), 19-13- B42(q) and 19-13-B49(q).

FAQs:

Q: My sister-in-law has a farm stand in Massachusetts and in blueberry season, she sells blueberry bread. Can I do this to use up excess blueberries that don't sell?

A: Unfortunately, Connecticut law does not allow for the sale of baked goods from home kitchens. If you would like to sell baked goods, you will need to install or rent space in a commercial kitchen. Processing baked goods is an endeavor requiring a significant investment of time and training. We strongly recommend training in not only safe food handling but also basic culinary skills. Unintentionally sickening customers because of poor sanitation or food storage will hurt your business and the reputation of other Connecticut farm businesses.

Q: I'm not ready to build a full commercial kitchen on the farm but I would like to rent space in one. Where can I find rentable commercial kitchen space?

A: Currently there is no central clearinghouse for commercial kitchen space in Connecticut. There are communities in Connecticut that are in the process of building commercial kitchen space that will be rented to farmers and food entrepreneurs. Many churches, synagogues and meeting halls are a good potential location for commercial kitchen rental space. Most already have inspected and licensed commercial kitchens that are un-used during much of the day and evening. We recommend that you check to make sure that the facility holds a current Food Service Establishment license from the local health department and that it meets requirements for food processing.

Q: My farm stand already has a commercial kitchen where we prepare baked goods, sandwiches and other ready-to-eat food products. My head baker graduated from college with a culinary degree. We would like to begin pickling beans for sale. Do we still need to take an approved training course to meet the state guidelines?

A: Most likely your staff already has passed the Qualified Food Operator exam which technically makes you eligible to process acidified foods. Despite your staff's significant knowledge, training and experience in food safety, we would still recommend training specific to acidified foods. Please see our tool kit insert on Processing Acidified Foods for more information on the specific types of training available.

Notes: