



## Going Beyond a Cottage Food Product

### *Additional Information to guide you*

You have a fantastic new idea for a food product. Everyone who tastes it tells you that it's really great. Some even suggest that you should go into business for yourself. After giving it some careful thought you decide you will go into business and sell your product.

**But where do you go from here?**

### **Recommended Resource for Colorado:**

Colorado Dept. of Agriculture- *Farm to Market* website: <http://cofarmtomarket.com>

*This site was developed to familiarize Colorado food producers and food product manufacturers with federal, state and local food licensing regulations and to help ensure that the path food travels from farm to fork is safe.*

### **Technical Issues to Consider:**

#### **Product Development**

Consulting services can help with changes in product formulation or processing. The ingredients and procedure you are using to manufacture your product now work just fine in your kitchen, but how will you make 100 pounds at a time? Where will you buy the ingredients in the quantities you need, and how will you know that they will work the same way? The quality of a food product is influenced by the ingredients and the way they are combined. A product development consultant may be needed to assist you in the scale-up or modification of your initial recipe.

#### **Safety**

The most important technical issue in manufacturing a food product is SAFETY. If a product doesn't taste good or look right the consumer may not buy it again, but if you cause a case of food poisoning you could be prosecuted, go to JAIL and lose your whole business! Many different types of pathogenic bacteria exist, and they can make people very sick or even kill them. Such organisms as *Salmonella enteritidis* or *Clostridium botulinum* are only two of many types to be concerned about. You must know with absolute certainty that your food product is completely free from risk due to these deadly pathogens. The knowledge and expertise of a food microbiologist are needed to evaluate a food products safety. expensive testing may also be required.

#### **Preservatives**

If your product needs preservative chemicals to achieve the desired shelf-life, you must decide upon which preservative to use and at what concentration. Again testing may be required to find the best conditions for preservative use.



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### **Packaging**

The package used to hold a food product is very important. You must select a package that is tamper resistant, inert, strong, light-weight, and attractive to the consumer. Matching package characteristics to product needs requires knowledge and experience you may not have. Again, the recommendations of a knowledgeable consultant may help you make the best choice of packaging material.

### **Shelf-Life**

What is the shelf-life of your product? Consumers won't try your product again if it is spoiled. Then again, your vendors may require a certain shelf life if they are to carry your product. A long shelf life gives you the best opportunity to sell the product. The only reliable way to determine the shelf life of a new food product is by laboratory testing.

### **Production Facilities**

If you want to make a food product for retail sale you will NOT be able to make it in your home. This means you will have to either build your own facility and buy your own equipment, rent existing facilities and equipment, or contract with an existing food processor to "copack" your product for you. A copacker will do all the work of mixing, processing, and packaging your product for you and put your label on the product.

### **Ingredient Suppliers**

Factors to consider in selecting a supplier include: Cost, reputation, customer service, location (shipping costs, time to get supplies) as well as safety standards or third party audit certifications. Also special requirements of ingredients (i.e. kosher, organic, gluten-free, etc.)

### **Co-Packers**

The Colorado Co-Pack Directory was prepared by the Colorado Department of Agriculture to encourage the growth of existing businesses and the establishment of start-up businesses. The directory lists commercial kitchens to rent as well as professional co-packing companies willing to contract manufacture food products. Available at:

[http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite/ag\\_Markets/CBON/1251624537524](http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite/ag_Markets/CBON/1251624537524)

### **Legal Issues**

Making a food product for retail sale can be a risky business. You will need liability insurance for your own protection, and if others are manufacturing or selling your product for you, they may require that you have liability insurance. For help in finding insurance, see the Resources section. You will also have local, state, and federal laws you must obey to avoid prosecution, jail, and/or heavy fines. These laws are concerned with the production facilities, the ingredients in the food, the processing conditions of the food, and the label on the food product. Business permits are also required.

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### **Marketing Issues**

To be successful, you must sell product. Usually this means your product must appear on a market shelf somewhere. Competition for shelf space in supermarkets is very intense, and many new products are introduced each year by established companies, so you may find it difficult to even get your foot in the door. Managers at many chain stores do not have the authority to accept your product, and those who have the authority may charge a high fee for shelf space. Several alternatives are available. Smaller gourmet or health food stores may be interested in your product. A food broker may also have the leverage you need to get your product in the door.

### ***Product Testing Is required!***

#### **Colorado Labs that Perform Food Product Testing**

Industrial Laboratories, (303) 287-9691; Available at: <http://www.industriallabs.net/>

Warren Analytical Laboratory; (970) 351-6648; Available at:

<http://www.warrenlab.com/nutritionallabeling.html>

Colorado State University Food Processing Support Laboratory; consulting and analytical services; (970) 491-3874; Available at: <http://www.fshn.chhs.colostate.edu/outreach/food-support.aspx>

### ***Additional Services and Trainings***

***Better Process Control School-for Acidified Foods.*** All pH control acidified food products must be produced under supervision of a person who has attended an FDA approved 'Better Process Control School' as specified in 21 CFR 114.10.

**Process authorities** are trained in proper food processing technique and can help in the evaluation of your process.

### **Reference:**

Excerpts taken from Rutgers University- So You Want to be a Food Manufacturer? Available at:

<http://university.uog.edu/cals/people/pubs/valuadd/soyou.pdf>

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