

# Starting and Operating a Food Business in Your Home

This guide provides key information about Alberta Health Services (AHS) requirements when starting and operating a home-based food business. You are responsible for reviewing all applicable legislation and contacting all the appropriate regulatory agencies for the most up-to-date information.

Home-based food processing operations are acceptable in private residences provided they meet the criteria below and have a valid Food Handling Permit.

## REQUIRED APPROVALS AND PERMITS

You must contact your local municipality to apply for:

- Appropriate municipal zoning and licensing approval
- Appropriate Safety Codes approval (Building, Electrical, etc.)

You must contact your local Environmental Health Officer/Public Health Inspector (EHO/PHI) to apply for:

- Food Handling Permit

Applications for a Food Handling Permit are available on the AHS EPH (Environmental Public Health) website [Information for Your Business and Community](#) under Food Facilities.

### *Public Health Act and Regulations*

You must comply with the Public Health Act and its regulations, in particular:

- Alberta Food Regulation
- Alberta Food Retail and Foodservices Code

Copies of the legislation is available on the AHS EPH website [Information for Your Business and Community](#) under Legislation.

## BASIC REQUIREMENTS FOR A FOOD HANDLING PERMIT

The food business must be physically separated from the rest of the house. All foods and equipment used in the food business must be stored in this area.

**You cannot use your household kitchen for your food business.**

You must allow the EHO/PHI to enter your food business to conduct inspections and to ensure that you comply with the Public Health Act.

The food business kitchen must meet these requirements:

### *Surfaces and Equipment*

- There must be sufficient space for the safe storage and preparation of food.
- Floors must be smooth and washable. Materials cannot absorb water or grease. Vinyl composite tiles or sealed concrete are examples of suitable flooring.
- Walls and ceiling must be smooth and washable. Materials cannot absorb water or grease. Painted drywall and acrylic paneling are examples of suitable walls and ceilings.
- An adequate supply of hot and cold water that is safe to drink (i.e. potable water) must be available.
- All light fixtures must be shatter-proof or have protective covers in the food preparation and storage areas.
- Cooking equipment must have an exhaust system to vent cooking fumes to the outside.
- Garbage containers must be water tight and in sufficient quantity to meet the needs of the business.

### *Handwashing and Hygiene*

- If handling unwrapped food, you must have a handwashing sink with liquid soap and single-use paper towels in a proper dispenser. This sink must only be used for handwashing.

### *Temperature Control*

- High-risk foods, like poultry or cooked rice, must be kept at either less than 4°C or greater than 60°C during storage and transportation.
- High-risk foods should not be kept at room temperature for more than two (2) hours.
- Coolers and refrigerators must maintain food at 4°C or colder. There must be a working thermometer in all coolers.
- Freezers must keep all foods frozen (-18°C or colder is recommended).
- There must be one working probe thermometer to monitor cooking and hot holding temperatures.

### *Cleaning and Sanitizing*

- A two or three compartment dishwashing sink and/or a sanitizing dishwasher may be required depending on the type of food handling. Dishwashers must meet EPH standards.
- Drain racks must be available to air dry dishes.
- Approved sanitizers and test strips must be available.
  - chlorine bleach at a concentration of 100 - 200 ppm  
(approximately one tablespoon of bleach in one gallon of potable water)
  - quaternary ammonium compound at a concentration of 200 ppm
  - other approved sanitizers

## *Food Safety Training*

- The person in care and control of the food business must be trained in food safety. Information on approved courses and registration can be found at [www.albertahealthservices.ca/3151.asp](http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/3151.asp).

## STEPS TO DEVELOPING A FOOD BUSINESS IN YOUR HOME

- Step 1** Decide what type of food business you want to operate.
- Step 2** Contact your municipality to discuss your proposed home business. Ensure your home is zoned for businesses.
- Step 3** Review the municipality and public health requirements.
- Step 4** Develop a kitchen layout (plan), if you are able to develop a home business.
- Step 5** Submit your kitchen plan to the municipality and your local EPH office.
- Step 6** Obtain a building permit, if necessary.
- Step 7** Register in an approved food safety training course if you are not already certified.
- Step 8** Apply for your Food Handling Permit. Obtain approval from your local Public Health Inspector prior to opening.
- Step 9** **Congratulations – you can open.**
- Step 10** Post your Food Handling Permit once you receive it.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### *Can I prepare low risk foods like candy or chocolate in my household kitchen to sell?*

All food prepared, served or sold to the public must be from an approved facility. The only exception is food sold at Alberta approved Farmers' Markets. Home-based businesses from which food will be sold in places other than an approved Farmers' Market, must comply with all of the requirements of the Food Regulation.

### *Why can't I use my household kitchen to make food to sell?*

Household kitchens cannot become approved food facilities. These kitchens may have unsuitable activities or foods that are not permitted in approved facilities. Examples include allowing children and pets in the kitchen, storing personal food items, and using ingredients like uninspected meat or ungraded eggs that are not allowed in approved food facilities.

***I would like to sell jams, pickles and /or baked goods at Alberta approved Farmers' Markets. What are the requirements?***

The requirements for selling food at Alberta approved Farmers' Markets are outlined in the document Farmers' Market Information Package, available at [Information for Your Business and Community](#) under Food Facilities. Please refer to Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development's website: [www.agric.gov.ab.ca](http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca) for a list of approved markets.

***Is there an alternative to building a separate kitchen?***

You can approach an approved food establishment such as a restaurant, community hall or church, to use their kitchen for storage and preparation of food. A "Permission to use an approved food establishment form" must be signed by the owner of the establishment. You are also required to get a food handling permit for your business.

***What are the requirements for caterers?***

The kitchen requirements are the same as any home-based food business. In addition, approval of transport and holding equipment would be required. Food must be adequately protected at all times.

***What are the requirements for cooks for hire / personal chefs?***

Cooks for hire (personal chefs) do not require a permit provided all food storage and preparation is done in the client's home.

***For more information, please contact your nearest Environmental Public Health office.***

Edmonton Main Office  
Calgary Main Office  
Lethbridge Main Office

780-735-1800  
403-943-2295  
403-388-6689

Grande Prairie Main Office  
Red Deer Main Office  
[www.albertahealthservices.ca/eph.asp](http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/eph.asp)

780-513-7517  
403-356-6366

2EPHF-14-003  
Created: Apr/14