

Guidelines for Serving or Selling Home-Prepared Foods



Potluck dinners are a staple program for many civic organizations. Selling jam or jelly made from Grandma's favorite recipe can boost sales at a church bazaar. And packages of home-made sweet rolls can find eager buyers at a society fund-raising event. But before you decide to serve or sell home-prepared foods, remember that there are several rules you must follow.

Licensing. In general, if you sell processed foods such as cheese or other dairy products, fresh eggs, bakery foods, or meat products, you must be licensed as a **retail food establishment**. These licenses are obtained from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. **But** churches; religious, fraternal, youth or patriotic organizations; and service clubs and civic organizations that prepare, serve or sell food **only occasionally to the general public (less than 12 days per year)** are **not** defined as a retail food establishment and are exempt from licensing.

Guidelines. But even if you don't need to obtain a retail food license, you should still follow some common-sense guidelines in offering food to the public.

- ◆ Use only high quality ingredients from approved sources. This is no time to use up those tomatoes that you canned at home 20 years ago, or the flour that you rescued from the mice last winter.
- ◆ Follow safe food handling recommendations:
 - *Wash hands often, always before handling food and after eating;*
 - *Clean surfaces, utensils and countertops with warm, soapy water to prevent cross contamination;*
 - *Separate perishable foods like raw meat from ready-to-eat foods like baked goods;*
 - *Cook foods to proper temperatures.*
 - *Hold food at proper temperatures:*
 - *Keep hot dishes hot – at, or above, 140°F.*
 - *Keep cold foods cold – at, or below, 40°F.*
 - *Refrigerate leftovers promptly.*
- ◆ Process home-canned food using research-tested recipes. Such recipes can be found in the booklets of the **Wisconsin Safe Food Preservation Series** <http://cecommerce.uwex.edu/> or through the **USDA Complete Guide to Home Canning** http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/publications/publications_home.html
- ◆ Wisconsin guidelines state that foods that require refrigeration should **not** be sold: cream, meringue, custard or pumpkin pie, or pastries. However, many organizations persist in offering these items for sale, so if you do sell pumpkin or cream pies, cheesecake, cream-filled pastries, cakes with cream cheese frosting, and other perishable items, refrigerate these items on ice at the point of sale. Provide instructions on the label to 'Keep Refrigerated'.

Following a few simple guidelines can mean that the food served or sold by your organization will receive high marks for both quality and safety.

For more information, contact your county University of Wisconsin - Extension office, your local public health office, or, for licensing information, the area office of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection <http://datcp.state.wi.us/index.jsp>.