

The Starting Block Kitchen Incubator Application Guide

Guidelines for using The Starting Block Kitchen Incubator:

1. Food products are produced for re-sale.
2. Acidified foods, i.e. marinara sauce, salsa, pickled asparagus, are best processed as refrigerated products. For shelf-stable acidified products, a scheduled process approval must be obtained and followed. We suggest contacting Dr. Kirk Dolan, Process Authority at MSU, 517-355-8474 x 119, dolank@msu.edu. The process authority reviews the recipe and classifies the product as low acid, acidified, formulated acid, or natural acid. This needs to be done with all pickled items, sauces, vegetables, salsas, etc... (anything canned that the maker wishes to be shelf stable). Kirk will provide a letter as to the nature of the product. Lab tests for shelf life and finished product pH will be needed. This can be done at a private laboratory. Summit Lab does not have a process authority, but can test for pH. All producers of acidified foods must first attend Better Process Control School for low-acid and acidified foods.
3. Beef, Pork, Poultry, and Juice products must follow an approved HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point) Plan in order to meet inspection requirements. A guideline for creating a HACCP plan is available.
4. Other foods that can be produced include such products as: baked goods, candies, frozen foods, dry salts/seasonings, dried herbs/teas, and catered foods.

To become a user of The Starting Block Kitchen, you or your company must complete the following:

1. Label – Click on the ‘MDA Food Labeling Guide’ on our ‘Get Started’ website page or go to <http://www.michigan.gov>, enter ‘food labeling guide’ in the search box. Contact Mike Lally (1-800-292-3939 or lallym@michigan.gov), the label review specialist for MDA in this region, for label information. He reviews the labels, not approves them. Mail label for review to MDA Food & Dairy Division, Attn: Mike Lally, PO Box 30017, Lansing, MI 48909. Northern Label is a local labeling company in Hesperia, 231-854-6301.
2. Food and equipment safety and sanitation introduction at The Starting Block including:
 - U.S. Dept. of Ag video: “Food Safety is No Mystery”
 - Safety and Sanitation instruction, including: policies and procedures, kitchen rules, standard operating procedures, and equipment operation and cleaning instructions
 - Review & Sign: License Application, Intake Application, Kitchen Lease, Waiver of Liability, Confidentiality Agreement, Sanitation & Safety Rules, and Storage Agreement
 - Kitchen/Pre-licensing Orientation with Kitchen Manager: Schedule at least 2 kitchen sessions with Kitchen Manager, reviewing safety and sanitation, date coding, record keeping, and production steps. Payment for kitchen use is due day kitchen is used.
3. Obtain a MI Department of Agriculture Food Establishment License after completing steps 1 & 2. Contact Cathy Martin, food safety inspector, 1-800-292-3939. Schedule date and time with Cathy and with The Starting Block. You will review your ingredients and label (referring all labeling questions to Mike Lally) and demonstrate making your product in The Starting Block kitchen. Payment for kitchen use is due on the day kitchen is used.
4. Complete the on-line FDA Registration of Food Facilities at <http://www.access.fda.gov>, click on “Food Facility Registration Module,” click on ‘New Account’ and complete.
5. Proof of product liability insurance coverage with a minimum of 1 million dollars per occurrence and 2 million dollars aggregate, with The Starting Block as additional insured. Contact your own insurance company or Van Wyk Insurance Co., <http://www.vanwykcorp.com>, 616-942-5070. Mike Rothermel, 616-726-1069, is a Van Wyk agent familiar with The Starting Block.
6. Key deposits of \$10 per key for kitchen, cabinet, and storage

Once you are licensed and complete these steps, you can schedule to use the kitchen and begin making your product, starting with small batches.