

Food Safety Plan for Acidified and Fermented Foods

Before getting started, review the following information.

When is a food safety plan required?

A food safety plan is required if you are making acidified or fermented foods and are not following a recipe approved by the [U. S. Department of Agriculture's \(USDA\) National Center for Home Food Preservation](#) or any state cooperative extension office. A food safety plan is not required for canned tomatoes or canned tomato products because the producer must follow exactly an approved recipe from the USDA National Center for Home Food Preservation or any cooperative extension office OR provide a lab-certified pH test for the recipe and any variations on the recipe.

How many food safety plans do I need?

A completed food safety plan is required for each acidified or fermented product that undergoes a different production process. The food safety plan is focused on “processes” and not individual recipes. It is not required for every variation of a recipe. For example, if you make sweet pickles and sour pickles using the same pickling process, only one food safety plan is needed. If you make kimchi and pickles, two food safety plans are needed.

Is a pH test from a laboratory required as part of my food safety plan?

Yes. You must submit lab-tested pH results with your food safety plan as evidence that your plan is safe. Your food safety plan may cover several recipe variations; however, you are only required to submit your pH test lab results for one recipe.

How often must I complete a food safety plan?

The food safety plan must be re-submitted every three years to your local health department with your cottage food registration. In addition, your local health department should be notified of any updates to your plan within that three-year span. The addition of any new products also requires the submission of a new food safety plan. For example, if you have registered your cottage food operation to make kimchi but want to add sauerkraut to your product line half way through the year, you must notify your local health department and complete a food safety plan for the sauerkraut.

What are critical control points?

A step at which control can be applied and is essential to prevent or to eliminate a food safety hazard or to reduce it to an acceptable level.

What are critical limits?

Critical limits are the acceptable levels in which your critical control points must function. Critical limits must be measurable. For example, the critical limit for the final pH of your product is 4.6 or below.

When critical limits are not met, your final product is at risk. A plan must be in place for corrective action. For example, what will you do when the refrigerated product is held at a temperature above 41 degrees F? What if the final product tests above 4.6 pH?†

Do I need to train friends, family, and employees that help me prepare my products?

Yes. Anyone who prepares and packages food on your behalf must be trained to follow the food safety plan you outline below.

COTTAGE FOOD SAFETY PLAN

Complete the questions below to create your food safety plan. This plan is to be focused on processes and not individual recipes. Complete a food safety plan for each acidified and fermented food with a different production process.

1. Your Name

2. Your Cottage Food Business Name

3. What category of products will this food safety plan be for? A separate food safety plan is needed for each category of product with a different process.

4. Include a list of all ingredients in your recipe and possible variations (quantities, measurements, and varieties are not required). Indicate if ingredients are fresh or otherwise processed (e.g., dried, pickled, etc.).

- a. If using a processed food product as an ingredient (e.g., jam, pickled peppers, etc.), only include the name of the product and not the individual ingredients that make up that product.

5. Do you intend the product to be shelf stable, or to be refrigerated or frozen?

- ☐ Shelf stable
☐ Refrigerated
☐ Frozen

6. Select the equipment to be used in the production process.

Monitoring Devices

- ☐ Thermometer
☐ Digital pH meter
☐ pH strips

Additional: _____

Utensils

- ☐ Large metal pots
- ☐ Canner
- ☐ Metal spoons
- ☐ Funnel
- ☐ Strainer
- ☐ Measuring devices
- ☐ Knife
- ☐ Non-wooden cutting board
- ☐ Mandolin
- ☐ Vegetable peeler
- ☐ Blender

Additional: _____

7. Describe the process for cleaning cooking equipment.

8. Describe the production process with a flow diagram. See example below.

Sample Acidified Food Flow for Pickles	Include your flow diagram here
<p>Receive whole vegetables</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Prepare equipment</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Wash, cut, refrigerated</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Pack in jars</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Cover with a hot brine</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Process jars</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Cool</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Measure equilibrium pH</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Label</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Store</p>	

↓ Sell product	
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9. Describe how and where your products will be stored.

10. Describe how your products will be transported (if applicable).

HAZARD ANALYSIS

Complete the attached chart. A sample detailed chart is attached.

VERIFICATION

☐ I agree to follow the food safety plan described above and to inform my local health department in advance via written notice of any significant changes in the process or ingredients that may affect the accuracy or effectiveness of the plan, and to update my food safety plan accordingly.

☐ I have included a copy of pH test lab results for at least one recipe that follows the production plan outlined above.

☐ I certify that I will train persons that are making food to follow the food safety plan described above.

Signature: _____ Date: _____