

Alaska Cottage Food Listening Session
June 29th, 2021
10-11:30 AM

- Anchorage vs State differences/ similarities
 - Everything is the same except Anchorage muni expects the testing up front and requires a permit
 - Caps are the same, all other regulations are the same as state standards
 - Eggs—\$25 permit for the year, wherever you want to sell eggs. No restriction on sale location anymore
- <https://dec.alaska.gov/eh/fss/food/retail/cottage-food/>
- Code says all sales have to be in person, transaction of me to you in person, but how money is collected is not relevant (for online sales)

I see honey... that product brings questions to me from folks re the diff between raw honey and honey that has flavors added to it. Specific direction about that might be helpful.

- Specific restrictions for honey, must be raw honey without added flavors or too much altering
- What kind of information do you put out on your website about raw and flavor added honeys? Maybe include a fact sheet on the DEC website that explains the difference
- Natural honey vs sugar made honey
- Honey as a cottage food, guidance from Florida
 - <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/IN918#:~:text=Honey%20processors%20whose%20gross%20sales%20exceed%20%2450%2C000%20annually,under%20cottage%20food%20operations%20%28Section%20500.80%20Florida%20Statutes%29>
 - It is technically not a cottage food in Alaska. It is exempt from permitting altogether if it is raw honey.
 - Honey has been exempt from permitting in AK since at least 1998 - probably prior to that.

Discussion structured by 7 rules:

Made the food in AK

- Everyone loves made in Alaska!

Documentation of recipe and formulation

- not sure I should be in this so a question I make herbal tinctures is this discussion relevant to me, if so I have a question about the formula documentation
 - Each tincture I make is individualized for the client, I do not make general formulas for general population and do not sale other than to clients

- Falls under cottage foods, as long as you aren't making separate claims like drug claims on the product
 - The alcohol content could put them under the alcohol/tobacco regs but they are often exempt from those too
- Ingredients and process, back and forth making sure the process is being documented. We would have a few examples of the ideal way to document that and what needs to be included so their producers had something to go off of to minimize the back and forth
 - <http://www.muni.org/Departments/health/Admin/environment/FSS/Pages/CottageFoods.aspx>

Detailed knowledge

- Selling through a third party like a grocery store or co-op, if the store has all the information then why can't they do it? Gray area in small communities
- Variants for food hubs since they are operating as consignment or as a market

Labeled packaged food with business license or address

- Business license on there OR name, physical address, and telephone number
- Homer Farmers Market will have a list of ingredients and information on storage on items. Not required but it helps mitigate some situations, like exploding kimchi because someone didn't know it was meant to be refrigerated. Weight is also good to include
- Placards and pamphlets can be utilized in addition to labeling

Displays "these products are not subject to state inspection"

- Homer Farmers Market has placards for people so they have the exact verbiage down to be compliant

Direct to consumer in Alaska

- No internet, no mail order, no consignment
- Alaska food hu will launch a working group with arctic harvest, salt and soil, kodiak, can we leverage the infrastructure we already have to create new food hubs or connect them together
 - Should create an Alaska Food Hub manual!
 - <https://www.akfoodpolicycouncil.org/food-hubs>
- Sell online but deliver in person rather than mailing it out. If your base is large enough to mail out all over the place, you're going to reach the cap quickly and be scaled up beyond the home kitchen to a commercial kitchen size which requires different permits

Sales of less than \$25k a year

- An intermediate category could be helpful both for online distribution and the ability to scale up. An intermediate category could require more education/certification, the cost of that balanced by the ability to sell more products. And raise the cap for that intermediate category?

- Maybe this could be called a “micro-producer” or “the growing food business”
- If we raise this number, what do we base it on?
 - We should look at other states who have done this well and have a structure we like
- \$25K in gross sales do not reflect the actual costs of processing, going to markets, etc. but it might be fine as a "hobby" or "side biz"
- What is the burden of getting a permit? Is it the cost? Or time involved for the permit review? Is there a way to address the real or perceived burden, to make the permitting process easier, without changing the \$25,000 cap?
 - Cottage foods are required to work from their home kitchens. If they move to another kitchen they need to be permitted. (in Anchorage)
 - Much of the burden comes from the high overhead (permitting + cost of rental space + cost of equipment/packaging/labeling) of moving from home to inspected kitchens

Polling 1: Opening questions



Edit

Polling is closed

13 voted

1. What is your experience with Cottage Food sales?

Current Cottage Food Producer	(0) 0%
Potential Cottage Food Producer	(4) 31%
Past Cottage Food Producer (not currently selling)	(0) 0%
None of the above- just here for the information	(9) 69%

2. What sector of the food system do you represent? (check all that apply) (Multiple choice)

Farmers market vendor	(0/13) 0%
Farmers market operator	(1/13) 8%
Food Hub Vendor	(0/13) 0%
Food Hub operator	(3/13) 23%
Home baker/ cottage food maker	(3/13) 23%
Commercial Food Producer	(1/13) 8%
Academic/ research	(3/13) 23%
Government Agency	(5/13) 38%
Other	(3/13) 23%

3. Are the caps on cottage food sales (\$25,000) manageable?

Too high (caps should be lowered)	(0) 0%
Too low (caps should be raised)	(4) 31%
Just right (caps are fine where they are currently set)	(9) 69%

Attendees are now viewing the poll results

1. If you answered too high or too low, what do you think the appropriate cap should be?

