

Ministry of Health

A Guide to Starting a Home-based Food Business

(December 2020)

This is a step-by-step guide to starting a home-based food business. It also provides you with a brief overview of public health requirements.

Starting a Home-based Food Business

Step 1: Deciding what food you want to sell.

Home-based food businesses (e.g. private chefs, farmer's market vendors) are allowed to sell food in keeping with the [Health Protection and Promotion Act \(HPPA\)](#) and the [Food Premises Regulation](#). Changes to the Food Premises Regulation that took effect on January 1, 2020 makes it easier for individuals and businesses to sell low-risk, home-prepared foods.

What Are Low-Risk Food Items?

Low-risk food items are generally considered non-hazardous and do not require time and temperature control. Some examples of low-risk foods include:

- Most breads and buns (without meat, cream filling, etc.);
- Most baked goods (with no custard);
- Chocolate, hard candies and brittles;
- Coffee beans and tea leaves;
- Fudge and toffees;
- Pickles, jams and preserves;
- Granola, trail mix, nuts and seeds;
- Cakes (icing that doesn't require refrigeration), brownies, muffins and cookies.

Step 2: Application process

You are required to contact your [local public health unit](#) where your home-based food business will be located to let them know you are a new food operator by completing an application form, which is often located on the public health unit's website. Your local public health unit and its staff will provide guidance on food safety measures to consider depending on the food you are planning to prepare (i.e., food preparation activities, safe operational practices, etc.)

Step 3: Review public health requirements

All food premises, including home-based food businesses, are subject to the requirements of the [Health Protection and Promotion Act \(HPPA\)](#), the [Food Premises Regulation](#) and periodic inspection by inspectors from their local public health unit.

Please note: Home-based food businesses that prepare only low-risk foods are exempt from certain regulatory requirements, such as:

- Specified handwashing stations in food premises;
- Compliance with commercial dishwashing requirements; and
- Food handling training certification.

For more information on compliance with the [Food Premises Regulation](#), you can review the following Ministry of Health resource for the full list of public health requirements and best practices to help guide you: [Food Premises Reference Document](#).

For additional helpful resources to assist with food labelling, declaring allergens and food safety measures, please review the [Reference Document for Safe Food Donation](#) and [Food Donation Supplemental Materials](#). These documents offer information about the recent regulatory changes and best practices.

Step 4: Open your business!

Contact

For any questions about public health requirements in the [Health Protection and Promotion Act](#) or the [Food Premises Regulation](#), please contact the local health unit where your home-based food business is located and speak with a public health inspector.

For a list of local health units and their contact information, please visit the following link: <http://health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/locations.aspx>

Additional Resources

For information and support about running your home-based food business such as funding, business and legal advice, etc., please visit the [Small Business Access](#) website.

Disclaimer: This guide is not intended to provide legal advice on the requirements of the [Health Protection and Promotion Act \(HPPA\)](#) or the [Food Premises Regulation](#) (O. Reg. 493/17) under the HPPA and is for information purposes only. In the event of any conflict between this guidance and the regulation, the requirements under the regulation prevails.

It is also recommended to review any zoning by-laws, municipal permits and licensing requirements that pertain to your region.