

Starting a Food Business in Connecticut: Resources and Information

Thinking of Starting a Food Business?

Starting or growing a food business is just like any other small business. Consider these questions as you develop your food product and business.

- What is your reason for starting a food business?
- What impact will a home-based business have on your life?
- Do you have the necessary capital to fund this new business?
- What are your strengths and where will you need help?
- Will you need additional outside help?
- What is your product?
- Where will you make your product?
- What local, state and federal regulations apply?
- Where will you sell your product?
- How will you promote your product?
- How will you price your product?

Read this first

♦ Northeast Center for Food Entrepreneurship

[Pros and Cons of Starting a Specialty Food Business and Steps to Start a Specialty Food Business](#)

<http://www.nysaes.cornell.edu/necfe/basics/basics.html#proscons>

The food business start-up steps outlined include: the product, business planning, labels, market decisions, and production.

♦ North Central Regional Extension Publication

[Selling Food Products: A Business From Your Home \(pdf\)](#)

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/NCR259.pdf>

Outlines what you need to consider when starting a food business with particular emphasis on food safety.

♦ Western Massachusetts Food Processing Center

[Getting Started: A Checklist for Launching Your Food Venture](#)

<http://www.mass.gov/agr/markets/specfood/Intro%20Packet%20Jan05.pdf>

What to consider when starting a food business.

Food Safety and Regulation: Connecticut

♦ CT Department of Consumer Protection

www.ct.gov/dcp

Food and Standards Division

www.ct.gov/dcp/cwp/view.asp?a=1621&q=434780

Phone: 860-713-6160

Email: food.standards@ct.gov

The Department of Consumer Protection regulates all persons and businesses that manufacture or sell food products in the State in order to detect and prevent the distribution of adulterated, contaminated, or unsanitary food products.

The Foods Program is responsible for inspecting retail and wholesale food manufacturers that operate, transport or store food in Connecticut; overseeing licensees under the Bakery, Non-alcoholic Beverage/Cider, wholesale and retail frozen desserts and food vending machine statutes and regulations; and conducting and maintaining food manufacturing inspections under the United States Food & Drug Administration (FDA) contracts.

CHAPTER 418*
UNIFORM FOOD, DRUG AND COSMETIC ACT
<http://www.cga.ct.gov/2009/pub/chap418.htm>

♦ **CT Department of Public Health**

www.ct.gov/dph

Food Protection Program:

http://www.ct.gov/dph/cwp/view.asp?a=3140&q=387486&dphNav_GID=1828

Phone: (860) 509-7297

The Food Protection Program's overall mission is to reduce the risk of foodborne disease by ensuring reasonable protection from contaminated food and improving the sanitary condition of food establishments. This is accomplished by enforcement of regulations, training and education, technical consultation, special investigations, and food safety promotion. The program works with local health departments responsible for inspecting restaurants, institutional food service, school foodservice, temporary food events, and related venues. The Department of health also investigates foodborne illness outbreaks.

To find the Local Health Department for your town, city or region:

https://www.han.ct.gov/local_health/localmap.asp

Food Safety and Regulation: Federal

♦ **US Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS)**

www.fsis.usda.gov

Albany District Office

Mr. Haroon Mian, District Manager

230 Washington Ave. Extension

Albany, NY 12203-5369

Phone: (518) 452-6870

USDA/FSIS is responsible for ensuring that the nation's commercial supply of meat, poultry, and egg products is safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled and packaged, as required by the Federal Meat Inspection Act, the Poultry Products Inspection Act, and the Egg Products Inspection Act. The web site includes general information about HACCP as well as model plans for a variety of meat and poultry products. This is also the source for explanation of labeling terminology, requirements and applications. The State of Connecticut does not allow meat and poultry products to be sold to retailers (restaurants, grocery stores, foodservice, etc.) unless the products have been processed under USDA/FSIS inspection.

♦ **U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)**

www.fda.gov

**Food and Drug Administration
Northeast Regional Office**

One Montvale Ave.

Stoneham , MA 02180

Phone: 781-596-7788

The FDA is responsible for assuring that foods sold in the United States are safe, wholesome and properly labeled. This applies to foods produced domestically, as well as foods from foreign countries. The Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (FD&C Act) and the Fair Packaging and Labeling Act are the Federal laws governing food products under FDA's jurisdiction, which includes all foods not covered by USDA/FSIS. Local, state, tribal and federal regulators use the FDA Model Food Code as a model to develop and/or update their food safety regulations and to be consistent with national food regulatory policy. In addition, the site will direct you to Current Good Manufacturing Practices (CGMPs) for food and regulations regarding acidified and low acid canned foods, including establishment registration and process filing. Guidelines and information are available regarding Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) programs for seafood, fresh juice (including cider) and other products.

Information and Resources

Comprehensive University Programs

♦ **The Northeast Center for Food Entrepreneurship At the New York State Food Venture Center**

<http://www.nysaes.cornell.edu/necfe/index.html>

Phone: 315-787-2273

Email: necfe@nysaes.cornell.edu

New York State Food Venture Center

Cornell University/NYSAES

Food Research Lab

630 W. North Street

Geneva, NY 14456

Food Entrepreneur Resource Center

http://www.nysaes.cornell.edu/necfe/resource_main.html

This outstanding educational website provides information on both business and technical aspects of food processing. It also details services provided by the Center and links to trade groups and agencies.

♦ **University of Maine Pilot Plant**

www.umaine.edu/fsnpilotplant/services.htm

Phone: 207-581-3139

Email: pilotplant@maine.edu

The Staff at the Dr. Matthew Highlands Pilot Plant along with the professionals at the University of Maine can be the bridge between kitchen recipes and the science of developing a product into your own business. The Food Science & Human Nutrition Department together with The University of Maine Cooperative Extension also offer the following services to the Food Industry: Better Process Control School, Food Product and Process Review, Consumer Sensory Testing, Grant Writing Support, Food Processing Workshops, Analytical Consulting, Assistance in developing new food products, Applied research for trouble-shooting issues, Commercial Kitchen Facilities

♦ **Penn State Food Ventures**

The Pennsylvania State University

<http://pafoodventures.psu.edu/>

Resource for food entrepreneurs

PA Food Ventures is your one stop information source for small and medium-sized food businesses....and those who are thinking about starting a new food business. This is a gateway site to many web-based resources for specialty food processors.

♦ **Rutgers Food Innovation Center**

<http://www.foodinnovation.rutgers.edu/>

Phone: (856) 459-1900

Email: foodinnovation@aesop.rutgers.edu

450 East Broad Street (Rt 49)

Bridgeton, NJ 08302

A business incubation and economic development accelerator program, which provides business and technology expertise to startup and established food companies in the mid-Atlantic region. The Food Innovation Center team provides assistance in business development, market research, product and process development, workforce development and training, regulations and compliance support, and quality assurance and food safety systems.

The Center offers an online course, **Food Business Basics**, a series of three self-guided, online professional development courses. Each course is self-paced, with no instructor. This allows you to go through the material at a time that is convenient for you, and to take the time you need to fully review all the information and reference materials that are provided.

♦ **Vermont Food Venture Center (non-university program)**

Economic Development Council of Northern Vermont

http://www.edcnv.org/programs/northern_enterprises/food_venture/

Phone: (802) 849-2000

Email: brian@edcnv.org

Mailing Address:

Vermont Food Venture Center

PO Box 138

Fairfax, VT 05454

The Vermont Food Venture Center is a shared-use kitchen incubator for value-added and specialty food producers who can rent the kitchen on an hourly basis or arrange for co-packing at the facility. Staff provides a wide array of food and agricultural business consulting services to aspiring entrepreneurs, existing food businesses and organizations looking to promote food businesses as an economic development tool.

Specialty Food Assistance in Connecticut

♦ **Connecticut Specialty Food Association (CSFA)**

www.connecticutspecialtyfood.com/

195 Farmington Ave. Suite 200

Farmington, CT 06032

Phone: 860-677-8097

The purpose of the CSFA is to bring together small food manufacturers, assist in marketing their products, bring recognition to these businesses and create public interest and consumer awareness.

◆ Connecticut Department of Agriculture

www.ct.gov/doag

<http://www.ct.gov/doag/cwp/view.asp?a=3260&q=398992>

Email: Linda.Piotrowicz@ct.gov

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture provides marketing assistance and information to food businesses. The Department maintains a list of specialty food businesses in the state, which is posted on its website as a resource for consumers.

Starting a business

◆ State of Connecticut

www.ct.gov

Go to: "Doing Business"

- Business Resources
- Doing Business with the State
- Registration, Licensing and Permits
- Business Regulation
- Taxation

◆ Smart Start for Business

Your Guide Through the Business Registration Process:

http://www.ct-clic.com/Content/Smart_Start_for_Business.asp

Phone: 1-800-392-2122

The first step for business start-ups

Whether you are starting, purchasing, expanding or relocating a business in Connecticut, we want to make it easy for you to navigate through the various licensing and registration requirements. The easy-to-use system will guide you step-by-step through the process leading you to the appropriate agencies, necessary forms and additional information sources. You can get details on and fill out the necessary forms for a state tax identification number, as well as an employer ID number for unemployment compensation and various occupational licenses. **There's no charge for Smart Start services**, but agency fees still apply. Reach Smart Start by calling the Connecticut Business Response Center **1-800-392-2122** or **from the page you can complete a form to email with your questions.**

◆ Department of Economic Development

www.ct.gov/ecd

DECD is your #1 resource for business assistance and industry development and provides all the information you need to know about successfully doing business in Connecticut.

◆ Connecticut Licensing Center

<http://www.ct-clic.com/>

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| ▪ Bakery | ▪ Frozen Dessert Wholesaler | ▪ Manufacturer Liquor Permit |
| ▪ Apple Juice and Cider | ▪ Manufacturer Beer Permit | ▪ Small Winery Certificate |
| ▪ Cheese Dealer's License | ▪ Manufacturer Cider Liquor Permit | |
| ▪ Eggnog Plant | | |
| ▪ Farm Winery Retail/Wholesale | | |
| ▪ Frozen Dessert Retailer | | |

Insurance

Make sure you, your business and your employees are **protected with proper insurance coverage**. Only you, the business owner can decide what coverage is adequate. As a business owner, consider your willingness to risk losses as well as your ability to write off any losses. It is best to discuss your needs and consider recommendations with a licensed insurance agent. Some examples you may wish to consider include:

- Business Interruption
- Liability
- Umbrella Policy
- Crime
- Workers Compensation
- Product Related
- Professional
- Directors and Officers
- Equipment
- Auto
- Inventory
- Property
- Loss of Income

The **SMALL BUSINESS INSURANCE & RISK MANAGEMENT GUIDE** from the [Small Business Administration \(SBA\)](#) can help you to assess the insurance needs for your business or at:

www.sba.gov/idc/groups/public/documents/sba_homepage/serv_pub_mplan_mp28eng.doc

Listed below are some of the organizations that offer group insurance for small businesses contact:

- Connecticut Small Business Federation Farmington Insurance Service Center
Phone: 1-800-527-5504 or 860-677-2000
- Connecticut Business & Industry Association (CBIA)
<http://www.cbia.com/home.php>
Phone: 860-244-1900
- [National Association for the Self Employed \(Non-Profit\)](#)
<http://www.nase.org/Home.aspx>
Phone: 1-800-649-6273 (7:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. CST)
Mail: P.O. Box 241, Annapolis Junction, MD 20701-0241
- **Local Chambers of Commerce** help local businesses work to protect and promote their interests. Go to <http://www.2chambers.com/connecti2.htm> to search for your local chamber.
- [Manufacturing Alliance of Connecticut](#) (MAC) <http://www.mact.org/> provides employee benefit services for Blue Cross/ Blue Shield Health, plus an array of other health plan benefits.
Phone: 203-596-1900

Business Information, Counseling and Workshops

- **Connecticut Women in Agriculture Network** (CT WAgN), www.ctwagn.com, a network focused on helping women succeed at starting, sustaining, and supporting agricultural related endeavors, including businesses. Check out the power point presentation, **Doing Market Research**.
- The **Small Business Administration** (SBA), www.sba.gov, provides financial, technical and management assistance to help new or established businesses. FREE one-on-one counseling services, workshops and seminars (for a small fee) are provided through the resources listed below. Visit the SBA Publications Table of Contents at www.sba.gov.

To reach SBA by Mail:
US Small Business Administration
409 3rd Street, SW
Washington, DC 20416

To reach SBA by phone or e-mail:
SBA Answer Desk
1-800-U-ASK-SBA (1-800-827-5722)
Send e-mails to: answerdesk@sba.gov

- **Connecticut SBA Business Information Center**
www.sba.gov/localresources/district/ct/index.html
- **The Entrepreneurial Center**, www.hartford.edu/ec/index.html, at the University of Hartford provides training courses on how to run your own business.
- **SBA Office of Women's Business Ownership**,
<http://uhaweb.hartford.edu/entrectr/SBAOWBO.html>, provides individual business counseling and access to SBA programs and services.
Phone: 860-768-5663
- **Connecticut Business and Industry Association**, www.cbja.com/home.php, serves as a business advocacy organization, provides group health insurance programs, and many other programs.
- **SCORE**, http://www.sba.gov/localresources/district/ct/CT_CTDOSCOR.html, Counselors to America's Small Business. **SCORE** counselors provide you with in-depth, industry-specific business assistance to help evaluate a business idea or plan, stimulate business growth and ensure long-term stability.
- **Connecticut Community Investment Corporation**, <http://www.ctcic.org/>, provides business consulting services and business plan assistance.
Phone: 866-776-6172.

Additional resources

- **Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service**

Developing a Business Plan for Value-Added Agricultural Products (pdf)

<http://pods.dasnr.okstate.edu/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-981/AGEC-909web.pdf>

A four-page summary of business plans.

- **University of Maine Cooperative Extension**

Capital Sources for Your Business

<http://www.umext.maine.edu/onlinepubs/htmlpubs/3008.htm>

Fact sheet that describes the 5 C's of credit, types of capital, and ten sources of capital.

- **University of Nebraska Food Allergy Research and Resource Program (FARRP)**

<http://www.farrp.org/>

Information for businesses regarding allergen labeling and sanitation programs.