



Selling home-canned foods: *Make it safe, make it legal*

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, TRADE & CONSUMER PROTECTION ■ DIVISION OF FOOD SAFETY

Photo by Ron Derge

You may sell some home-canned foods without a license only under certain limited circumstances. This exception to licensing requirements is explained below. It is important to remember that you are legally liable for what you sell, regardless of whether you are licensed. Please note that this is a narrow exception to the law, and you still need a commercial kitchen and a license to produce most foods for sale in Wisconsin.

Canned products you may sell without a license

- ✓ **Fruits and vegetables** that are either:
 - Naturally acidic, or
 - Acidified by pickling or fermenting
- ✓ The products must have an equilibrium pH of 4.6 or lower. This is a measure of acidity. The lower the pH value, the more acidic the food.
- ✓ Examples of products allowed if they meet the pH requirement:
 - Pickled fruits and vegetables (**not** refrigerator pickles)
 - Sauerkraut
 - Salsas
 - Chutneys
 - Jams and jellies
 - Applesauce

Sales

- ✓ No more than \$5,000 in sales per year
- ✓ Retail only (direct from producer to consumer)
- ✓ Only at community or social events, such as bazaars, or at farmers' markets

Signs and labels required

- ✓ Sign at the point of sale, stating, "These canned goods are homemade and not subject to state inspection."
- ✓ Product labels must include:
 - Name and address of the person who did the canning
 - Date of canning
 - Statement – "This product was made in a private home not subject to state licensing or inspection."
 - All ingredients in descending order of prominence, including the common name for any ingredient that originates from milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat or soybeans
These are ingredients that can cause severe allergic reactions in some people, who must be able to recognize when they are present.

Testing pH suggested

- ✓ It's best to use a pH meter, properly calibrated on the day used.
- ✓ University of Wisconsin-Extension information about pH and choosing a pH meter:
http://www.foodsafety.wisc.edu/assets/pdf_Files/What_is_pH.pdf
- ✓ Short-range paper pH test strips, commonly known as litmus paper, may be used instead, **IF** the product normally has a pH of 4.0 or lower and the paper's range includes a pH of 4.6.

Training and recipes

You are urged to educate yourself about proper food safety procedures. Some good sources:

- ✓ *The Ball Blue Book* (current edition, available in bookstores and online)
- ✓ *The Ball Complete Book of Home Preserving* (**current** edition, available in bookstores and from online vendors)
- ✓ The Ball web site
www.freshpreserving.com
- ✓ The National Center for Home Food Preservation web site
www.uga.edu/nchfp
- ✓ The University of Wisconsin-Extension
<http://www.foodsafety.wisc.edu/preservation.html>
- ✓ Or use recipes and processes reviewed by a person who is recognized by the Division of Food Safety as an authority on preparing and canning food.

Record-keeping suggested

- ✓ Written record of every batch of product made for sale, including:
 - Recipe, including procedures and ingredients
 - Amount canned and sold
 - Canning date
 - Sale dates and locations
 - Gross sales receipts
 - Results of any pH test

Sanitation

- ✓ Inspection is not required, but customers expect good sanitation. Here are some factors you should consider:
 - Use clean equipment that has been effectively sanitized prior to use
 - Clean work surfaces and then sanitize with bleach water before and after use
 - Keep ingredients separate from other unprocessed foods
 - Keep household pets out of the work area
 - Keep walls and floors clean
 - Have adequate lighting
 - Keep window and door screens in good repair to keep insects out
 - Wash hands frequently while working
 - Consider annual testing of water if using a private well

Questions?

- ✓ About legal requirements:
 - Wisconsin Dept. of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection, Division of Food Safety
 - Call **608-224-4682**
 - Email **food@wi.gov**
- ✓ About canning processes and recipes:
 - University of Wisconsin-Extension county offices – find yours at
<http://www.uwex.edu/about/cooperative.html>