



COMMUNITY



4-H & YOUTH



ENVIRONMENT



AGRICULTURE



FOOD



Photo: Fat Toad Farm.

FOOD SAFETY EDUCATION SUPPORTS THE AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY

Vermont has an international reputation for high-quality specialty food products. When businesses expand product lines into larger markets, they must provide stringent proof to buyers that internationally accepted food safety practices are followed. Learning and adopting these practices is a daunting task for any small business.

UVM Extension's Food Safety Program for Facilities led by Food Safety Specialist Omar Oyarzabal ("Dr. Omar") helps food producers meet those requirements. Through partnerships with the Vermont Department of Health (VTDH), the VTDH Laboratory, the International HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) Alliance, the Food Safety Preventive Control Alliance and the Better Process Control Schools Network from the Grocery Manufacturers Association, UVM Extension offers necessary training and certification for food processors.

Over two years, Oyarzabal delivered 19 trainings (many with certification) to 258 people and provided direct consultations to businesses in ten Vermont counties. So far, 35 businesses have made improvements to their operations including completing or implementing food safety plans, thanks to Oyarzabal's training and guidance.

Visit go.uvm.edu/producer-food-safety for more information on UVM Extension food safety programs for commercial producers.

**OMAR UNDERSTANDS COMPANIES
OF OUR SIZE AND HOW WE CAN
APPROACH FOOD SAFETY.**

-Calley Hastings, Co-Founder, Fat Toad Farm



Ten years ago, Fat Toad Farm was a small-scale diversified farm making cheese and caramel on a dirt road in Brookfield, Vermont. The business now sells its award-winning goat's milk caramel sauces nationwide. Food safety has always been a priority, but the world of national distribution pushed them to the next level. They took advantage of Omar Oyarzabal's expertise to comply with the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), and to guide them as they look toward expansion. Improvements like these better position Fat Toad Farm to capture a national retail market, ultimately supporting local business and Vermont agriculture.



HELPING MAPLE MAKE THE GRADE

Pure maple syrup is a special, high-value sweetener that derives much of its worth from its unique flavor. Though consumers rarely taste sub-par maple, damaged or “off-flavor” syrup can and does occur. When syrup does not meet legal standards for sale, its value drops 50 percent. It is up to the producer to protect their bottom line by detecting off-flavored syrup before it reaches a retail container.

UVM Extension Maple Specialist Mark Isselhardt led the design of the off-flavor syrup reference set in 2017 to help producers become familiar with detecting the taste of naturally occurring off-flavors in syrup. The 1,600 sets produced contain three 1.7-ounce bottles of metabolism, buddy and sour sap off-flavors.

This project was a collaborative effort among a large maple syrup packer; the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets; and UVM Extension. Though most sets were sold to producers in Vermont, nearly 400 went to those outside the state. The North American Maple Syrup Council distributed kits to producers in 13 states and four Canadian provinces.

As the largest producer of maple in the United States, Vermont is leading the way in innovative solutions and best practices. The off-flavor syrup reference set is a perfect example of a tool that supports the long-term profitability of maple operations by increasing the amount of high quality, properly-graded maple syrup in Vermont.

For more information, visit go.uvm.edu/maple.

MASTER COMPOSTERS TURN WASTE INTO VALUABLE RESOURCE

By 2020, the final phase of Vermont’s Universal Recycling Law (Act 148) will go into effect. When it does, food scraps will be banned from landfill disposal, and many households will need to find new ways to dispose of this organic waste. Composting is a natural and valuable option which converts food scraps into soil, but it takes training to learn how to do it properly.

UVM Extension’s Master Composter Program,* coordinated by Beret Halverson, has offered this education since 2003. More than 1,000 people have participated. Some have gone on to become Certified Master Composter volunteers who educate others and support community-based projects. As a result of the course, sixty percent of students made changes to the way they dispose of organic waste and another 30 percent had plans to do so within six months.

Currently, there are 37 Certified Master Composters logging volunteer hours supporting long- and short-term community-based projects.

Master Composters use these hands-on opportunities to teach a growing number of Vermonters about composting. In doing so, the program is helping the state successfully implement Act 148, save space in landfills, and make use of valuable organic waste.

For more information, visit go.uvm.edu/mastercomposter.

**93% SAID
THEY KNEW HOW
TO COMPOST
EFFECTIVELY
BY THE END
OF THE COURSE**



**Sponsored by UVM Extension Master Gardener and Vermont Agency of Natural Resources*