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Food Safety

Food Safety for Farmers Market Vendors Series¹

Selling Meat, Eggs, and Dairy Products

UVM Extension Fact Sheet- September 2011

Farmers Markets are an important part of Vermont's culture and economy. To protect this valuable outlet for Vermont's local products, it is essential that the food sold at Farmers Markets is produced and processed according to the Vermont Department of Health and the VT Agency of Agriculture rules, regulations and guidelines. Not only will this ensure that products that are as safe as possible, it will also assure your customers that your business, as well as the entire farmers market, has product quality and safety in mind.

*****Note that all practices below which are REQUIRED by state regulations are listed in bold and italics. All other practices listed are strongly recommended for food safety.***



Selling meat products

- ***To prevent rapid microbial growth, meat must be stored, transported, and sold at <15°F if frozen and <40°F if refrigerated.***
 - o Coolers and ice packs or ice can be used to safely transport and hold meats. Check the temperature occasionally (about once/hour) with a stem food thermometer or a refrigerator thermometer².
 - o The meat should not be allowed to thaw at market, but rather should maintain its original temperature.
- ***Vendors planning to sell red meat or inspected poultry must obtain a farmers market retail license from the VT Agency of Agriculture³. All red meat sold must be inspected.***
 - o Poultry producers slaughtering less than 1,000 birds/ year are NOT required to have their product inspected or licensed for sale at farmers markets. ***The product must, however, be labeled according to the requirements listed in the UVM Extension Meat Inspection and Labeling fact sheets⁴.***
 - o ***Poultry producers slaughtering 1,000 to 20,000 birds annually are required to have a facility approved by the VT Agency of Agriculture and special labeling³***

¹ Other sheets in this series include: General Food Safety Practices, Providing Samples, Selling Fresh Produce; and Selling Prepared Foods and Baked Goods

² Stem food thermometers and refrigerator thermometers can be purchased for less than \$10 at most grocery stores and hardware stores. Be sure that the stem food thermometer can be calibrated and check its calibration occasionally.

³ Contact the meat inspection section at (802) 828-2426 for labeling and licensing information. Only one farmer's market license is required even if you are selling at multiple farmer's markets.

⁴ Fact sheets available from: http://www.uvm.edu/extension/food/?Page=food_safety.html

- ***In storage, ensure that the juices of one species (i.e. poultry, beef, etc.) do not drip onto and contaminate another species, or any other type of product, with bacteria.***
 - o Bag meat separately from any other products (particularly fresh produce, ready-to-eat foods, baked goods) to prevent cross-contamination.
- ***Label the product with “Safe Handling Instructions”⁵*** and understand these safe practices so that you can explain them to customers to increase the likelihood that the customer will handle the product safely.
- Detailed information on meat inspection and labeling requirements for selling products at Farmers Markets, as well as in many other venues is available in University of Vermont Extension Fact Sheets on Meat Inspection and Meat Labeling⁶

Selling eggs

- ***The egg carton must be clearly labeled with your address, and must comply with labeling and grading standards⁷***
- If re-using egg cartons, make sure they are clean, to prevent the transfer of bacteria to the eggs
- Eggs should be kept cool (45°F or cooler is ideal, but not required) when transporting, storing and displaying

Selling dairy products

- ***All dairy products (milk, cheese, butter, goat’s milk cheese, etc.) must meet VT Agency of Ag licensing and labeling requirements⁸. The following licenses are required:***
 - o Milk Handler’s License⁹: for anyone selling dairy products they produce
 - o Retail license¹⁰: to sell prepackaged product
 - o Frozen desserts:
 - ***If a dairy-based frozen dessert is made from scratch, a Milk Handler’s License is required and the person making the dessert must pasteurize the mix.***
 - ***If dairy-based frozen dessert is made from a pasteurized mix and pasteurized at a licensed plant, only a Frozen Dessert License¹¹ is needed***
 - ***If frozen dessert contains no dairy product (like Italian ice or sorbet), a Frozen Dessert License is needed***
 - ***If ice cream is purchased frozen and only scooped at the market, no license is needed; however the Frozen Dessert License rules for sanitation of hands and scoops must be followed.***
- ***Dairy products must be kept at or below 44°F.¹²*** Frozen dessert temperatures are according to each product
- Raw milk can be advertised and pre-bought at a farmers market, but the customer must go to the farm to pick up the milk (***raw milk can NOT be picked up at a farmers market***)¹³.



⁵ These instructions are available from: http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/pubs/Safe_Handling2.gif

⁶ Fact sheets available from: http://www.uvm.edu/extension/food/?Page=food_safety.html

⁷ Contact the VT Agency of Ag Consumer Protection Section at (802) 828-2436 for more information on egg regulations.

⁸ Contact the Dairy Section of the Agency of Agriculture at (802) 828-2433 for more information. It is recommended that producers submit draft labels to the Dairy Section of the Agency of Agriculture for review before printing.

⁹ License application is available from: http://www.vermontagriculture.com/fscdp/dairy/documents/milk_Handler_license.pdf

¹⁰ Application for retail establishment license available from: <http://www.vermontagriculture.com/documents/retailapp.pdf>

¹¹ Contact the Dairy Section of the Agency of Ag at (802) 828-2433 to request a copy of the Frozen Desert License application.

¹² Temperature listed in the FDA Pasteurized Milk Ordinance (PMO), which is the accepted the operating guideline for the handling and production of milk and dairy products in Vermont: <http://www.vermontagriculture.com/fscdp/dairy/documents/PMO.pdf>

¹³ Vermont raw milk regulations are available from: <http://www.vermontagriculture.com/fscdp/dairy/rawMilk.html>

Other useful resources:

- Complete List of State of Vermont Regulations for Selling at Farmers Markets
<http://nofavt.org/sites/default/files/Regulations%20for%20FM%20Vendors.pdf>
- Food Safety at Farmers Markets and Agritourism Venues (University of California Small Farm Center)
http://sfp.ucdavis.edu/farmers_market/food_safety.pdf
- General Farmers Market information (University of Vermont Extension)
<http://www.uvm.edu/extension/community/?Page=development.html>
- VT Farmers Market Association: <http://www.vtfma.org/>
- NOFA Farmers Market information: <http://nofavt.org/market-organic-food/farmers-markets>

UVM Extension helps individuals and communities put research-based knowledge to work.

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Second photo from:

<http://www.foodsafetynews.com/2011/08/national-farmers-market-week-highlight-on-food-safety-at-the-fruit-stand/>

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