

There are many unique barriers to entry in the food industry. Food products must be manufactured and packaged in an inspected facility, but few start-ups have the capital available to build or lease a dedicated facility. Many commercial kitchens can be rented during off hours, but space can be difficult to find for those without industry connections. And even the most reasonable rental rates may be unaffordable for small start-up companies. To help address these issues, in 2008 the Utah Legislature passed the Cottage Food Rule, which allows food produced in inspected home kitchens to be sold to the public. To participate in the Cottage Food Program, you must not have any free-roaming pets, only certain types of products can be made, and your product cannot be sold to restaurants or outside the State of Utah. For more information on the Cottage Food Program, visit the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food [website](#).

The USU Incubator Kitchen is a 1000 sq. ft. food production facility certified through the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food. But for those just starting in the food business, it should look much more familiar than other commercial kitchens. The Incubator Kitchen houses 5 complete kitchen units, and can be used by up to 2 groups at a time depending on the types of products being made. The purpose of this facility is to provide food entrepreneurs (especially those who do not qualify for the Cottage Food Program or who wish to sell their products online) with free access to production space during their start-up phase. The Incubator Kitchen can be used by most small food companies for 6 months at no charge. Ideally, your business will outgrow the Incubator Kitchen within those first months – but if not, you can continue to use the space (cost and conditions will be determined on a case-by-case basis).

To begin using the Incubator Kitchen:

- Contact the USU Extension Food Quality Specialist to arrange a tour of the kitchen. This is especially important if you have specific equipment requirements.
- Register your company in the city in which you reside. You will need to show your business license to the State Inspector during your certification visit.
- You must have a current Food Handler's Permit or Food Safety Manager Certification. You will need to show proof of this to the State Inspector during your certification visit.
- Provide a list of your products to the USU Extension Food Quality Specialist for review. Only certain types of products will be approved by the State Inspector; we can provide feedback and assist with any items that require laboratory analysis.
- Develop a written food safety plan outlining how you will keep your product safe (e.g. ingredient storage, cleaning and sanitizing equipment/surfaces, hygiene issues such as gloves, hairnets, and hand washing). You will need to provide a copy of this to the Food Quality Specialist and the State Inspector.
- Carefully read through the kitchen use agreement. If you have any questions or concerns, you should address these before scheduling the visit with the State Inspector.
- It is **strongly** recommended that you obtain insurance coverage for your business. You will be held liable for any safety-related issues that arise from your products.