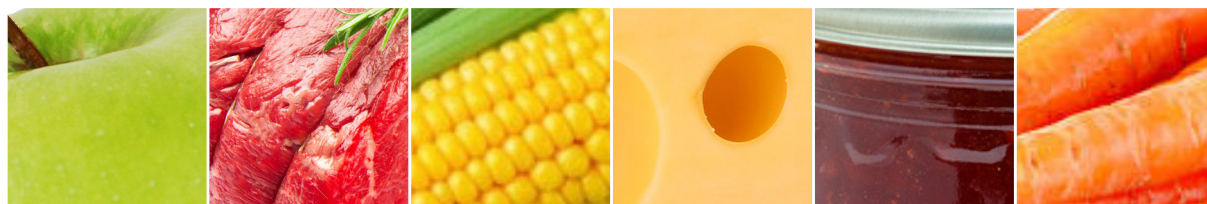


# ENHANCING THE SAFETY OF LOCALLY PREPARED FOODS



Publication FST-301NP

## What do I need to know to sell JAMS, PRESERVES, JELLIES, and FRUIT BUTTERS at the farmers market?

### What are jams, preserves, jellies, and fruit butters?

Jams, preserves, jellies, and fruit butters are defined as a mixture of fruit, sugar, and pectin that forms a thick or semi-solid gel. These products are categorized by their fruit content and consistency.

- ▶ A **jam or preserve** is made from crushed or ground fruits and can contain pulp and/or seeds.
- ▶ A **jelly** is made from the juice of the fruit. Jellies are often transparent and contain no pulp or seeds.
- ▶ A **fruit butter** is made from crushed fruit and sugar, and it usually contains additional spices and/or flavoring.

Some examples of these include:

- ▶ Strawberry, blueberry, and blackberry jam – made from crushed fruit.
- ▶ Grape and apple jelly – made from grape or apple juice.
- ▶ Apple and pumpkin butter – made from crushed apples or pumpkins and spices.

### Why prepare jams and jellies?

Jams, preserves, jellies, and fruit butters are value-added products with a long shelf life. Making and selling these types of products allows you to use excess produce and reduce waste.

### How do I know if the jams, preserves, jellies, and fruit butters I want to sell require state inspection?

Depending on the fruit (or other ingredients) you are using, you might be able to sell your product without having a state inspection. This varies depending on your state's laws and regulations. Some states have a retail sales exemption (sometimes referred to as "cottage food laws"). If applicable, this exemption allows you to prepare your product from a kitchen that is not inspected and to sell directly to the consumer. Figure 1 provides a detailed decision tree to help you determine if your product requires any additional testing, or an inspection. However, if you want to sell your product at wholesale (to other businesses), your kitchen must be inspected.

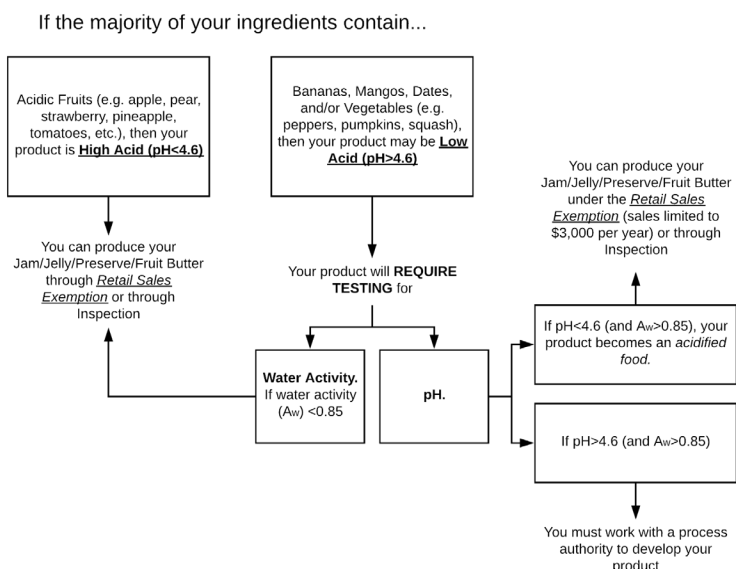


Figure 1 This decision tree allows producers to determine if a kitchen inspection is required. (Figure by Lily Yang, Virginia Tech.)

## Note:

**Warning:** Products made with low-acid ingredients (e.g., pumpkin butter, squash butter, and bacon jam) are popular products that could be produced unsafely. Products with low-acid ingredients could be at risk for botulism. It is **essential** to test low-acid products to determine their safety.

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If the type of jam, preserve, jelly or fruit butter that you are making requires testing (see figure 1), the pH and water activity tests can be done through a process authority, food scientist, or food-testing laboratory. If after testing, it is determined that your product is an acidified food (through pH and water activity testing), you must go through a process authority for safe processing guidelines. For a list of process authorities, please consult the following Association of Food and Drug Officials list of food processing authorities (<http://www.afdo.org/foodprocessing>)

Just because your product meets the criteria to be sold with the exemption, does not mean that you have to use the exemption. Some producers prefer to have their kitchen inspected so they do not have to label their products as having been processed and prepared without state inspection.

### What steps do I follow to sell my product under a retail sales exemption?

Selling under a retail sales exemption means you are selling your product out of an uninspected kitchen. The requirements that must be followed are:

1. Have a label that includes all general labeling requirements (see below) as well as the name, physical address, and telephone number of the person preparing the food. Additionally, the phrase **“NOT FOR RESALE – PROCESSED AND PREPARED WITHOUT STATE INSPECTION”** must be displayed prominently on the front label.
2. These products can only be sold at farmers markets, from your private home, or to an individual for their own consumption.
3. These products cannot be sold across state lines, on the internet, or in stores (at wholesale).

It is also important to note that even if you sell your product without inspection, you must produce a safe product and know what makes your product safe. For example, you must know if your product is acidic and therefore prevents microbial growth.

### What steps do I follow to sell my product under inspection?

1. Familiarize yourself with the regulatory process of starting a food business.
  - Refer to the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' webpage [Home & Commercial Kitchen-Based Businesses](#) for more information.

2. Complete and submit the correct application that pertains to where you will be producing your product (Application for Home Food Processing Operation or Application for a Commercial Kitchen Food Processing Operation).
3. After you submit your application, VDACS will review your application for completeness and will contact you with further questions and/or to schedule an inspection.

### What some guidelines for producing Jams, Preserves, Jellies and Fruit Butters safely?

- ▶ Ensure that fruits are high quality. Utility-grade fruits can be used as long as fruits are not rotten or moldy.
- ▶ Use proper cleaning and sanitation practices.
- ▶ Observe proper personal hygiene, including hand washing.
- ▶ Wear food-safe gloves during food handling and food preparation.
- ▶ Purchase ingredients and products from approved, reputable suppliers.
- ▶ Become familiar with safe canning procedures (fig. 2).



Figure 2. Strawberries that have been boiled to make strawberry jam. (Photo by Renee Boyer.)



For more information about how to produce high-quality jams, preserves, jellies, and fruit butters at home, please refer to:

- ▶ USDA's "Complete Guide to Home Canning"
- ▶ University of Georgia's National Center for Home Food Preservation website.
- ▶ University of Georgia's "So Easy to Preserve"
- ▶ Virginia Cooperative Extension publication 348-594, "Boiling Water Bath Canning" (Boyer and McKinney 2013).
- ▶ VCE publication 348-585, "Pressure Canning" (Boyer and Chase 2016).

See Additional Resources for information to access these publications.

### How should my jams, preserves, jellies, and fruit butters be stored at the farmers market?

Homemade jams, preserves, jellies and fruit butters should be sold and stored in canning jars with sealed lids, as shown in figure 3. As with all canned foods, store and sell your products in a cool and dry location. Heat (including storing in a sunny location or trunk of a car) can greatly affect the quality of canned products.



Figure 3. Jam produced and canned in canning jars with sealed lids that have been checked for a good seal. (Photo by Renee Boyer, Virginia Tech.)

### What are the requirements for my label?

Regardless of whether you sell your product with or without inspection, the product should be clearly labeled and should include:

- ▶ Product identity.
- ▶ Net weight in U.S. standard weight units and metric units.
- ▶ Ingredients (by descending weight).
- ▶ List of allergens.
- ▶ Name and address of manufacturer.
- ▶ Consumer storage and preparation instructions.
- ▶ Best-by date. (Typically, jams, preserves, jellies, and fruit butters will have a shelf life of at least 12 months. The best-by date on the label indicates how long the product will be of best quality.)

### Additional Resources

Andress, Elizabeth L., and Judy Harrison. 2014. *So Easy to Preserve*, 6th Edition. <https://setp.uga.edu/>

Boyer, Renee R., and Julie McKinney. 2013. *Boiling Water Bath Canning*. VCE publication 348-594. [http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs\\_ext\\_vt\\_edu/348/348-594/348-594\\_pdf.pdf](http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs_ext_vt_edu/348/348-594/348-594_pdf.pdf).

Boyer, Renee R., and Melissa Chase. 2016. *Pressure Canning*. VCE publication 348-585. [https://pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs\\_ext\\_vt\\_edu/348/348-585/348-585-PDF.pdf](https://pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs_ext_vt_edu/348/348-585/348-585-PDF.pdf).

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