



Fact sheet

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So You Want to be a Food Manufacturer . . .

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You have a fantastic new idea for a food product. Everyone who tastes it tells you that it's really great. Some even suggest that you should go into business for yourself. After giving it some careful thought you decide you will go into business and sell your product. But where do you go from here?

There are many questions you will have to answer and problems that you will have to solve before you will realize your dream. Perhaps you have already been asking yourself some of these.

Commonly Asked Questions

- What is the shelf-life of my product?
- How can I determine my product's shelf life?
- Will my product be safe? Can it cause food poisoning?
- Where will I manufacture it?
- How will I sell it? Who will sell it?
- What should I put on the label?
- Do I need insurance?
- Where will I find the food processing equipment I need?
- Where will I buy supplies and ingredients?
- Is there anyone who can help me answer all these questions?

These are just a few of the obvious questions. As you answer these simple questions, rest assured that more complicated ones will take their place. Let's try to address some of the questions above in a systematic manner.

More information and details can be found in the **Resources** section at the end of this fact sheet.

Production Facilities

If you want to make a food product for retail sale you will NOT be able to make it in your home. This means you will have to either build your own facility and buy your own equipment, rent existing facilities and equipment, or contract with an existing food processor to "copack" your product for you. A copacker will do all the work of mixing, processing, and packaging your product for you and put your label on the product.

Learning About Food Science

Many, many technical issues can influence the success or failure of a new food product. Many universities offer a 4-year Bachelor of Science degree in Food Science as well as 3 to 5 more years of advanced graduate study to educate scientists to work in the food industry. It is unlikely you are willing to spend four or more years in class before beginning your food business, so you will have to rely on the expertise of others to solve your technical problems. You can begin to educate yourself, however, and this will help you communicate with the experts. The trade magazines are a good place to start learning, and books and intensive short courses can be the next logical step.

Some universities offer assistance to small and medium sized businesses and entrepreneurs through extension specialists in food science, extension agents, and manufacturing and technology extension programs and centers.

The food industry also has many different trade



associations. These may also be a good resource for technical problem solving. Examples of trade associations include the National Food Processors Association, The Snack Food Association, and the Association for Dressings and Sauces.

Technical Issues

There are as many different technical problems as there are products, but examples of typical problems might include the following.

Shelf-Life

What is the shelf-life of your product? Consumers won't try your product again if it is spoiled. Then again, your vendors may require a certain shelf life if they are to carry your product. A long shelf life gives you the best opportunity to sell the product. The only reliable way to determine the shelf life of a new food product is by laboratory testing.

Preservatives

If your product needs preservative chemicals to achieve the desired shelf-life, you must decide upon which preservative to use and at what concentration. Again testing may be required to find the best conditions for preservative use.

Product Development

The ingredients and procedure you are using to manufacture your product now work just fine in your kitchen, but how will you make 100 pounds at a time? Where will you buy the ingredients in the quantities you need, and how will you know that they will work the same way? The quality of a food product is influenced by the ingredients and the way they are combined. A product development consultant may be needed to assist you in the scale-up or modification of your initial recipe.

Packaging

The package used to hold a food product is very important. You must select a package that is tamper resistant, inert, strong, light-weight, and attractive to

the consumer. Matching package characteristics to product needs requires knowledge and experience you may not have. Again, the recommendations of a knowledgeable consultant may help you make the best choice of packaging material.

Safety

The most important technical issue in manufacturing a food product is SAFETY. If a product doesn't taste good or look right the consumer may not buy it again, but if you cause a case of food poisoning you could be prosecuted, go to JAIL and lose your whole business! Many different types of pathogenic bacteria exist, and they can make people very sick or even kill them. Such organisms as *Salmonella enteritidis* or *Clostridium botulinum* are only two of many types to be concerned about. You must know with absolute certainty that your food product is completely free from risk due to these deadly pathogens. The knowledge and expertise of a food microbiologist are needed to evaluate a food products safety. Expensive testing may also be required.

Legal Issues

Making a food product for retail sale can be a risky business. You will need liability insurance for your own protection, and if others are manufacturing or selling your product for you, they may require that you have liability insurance. For help in finding insurance, see the Resources section. You will also have local, state, and federal laws you must obey to avoid prosecution, jail, and/or heavy fines. These laws are concerned with the production facilities, the ingredients in the food, the processing conditions of the food, and the label on the food product. Business permits are also required.

Marketing Issues

To be successful, you must sell product. Usually this means your product must appear on a market shelf somewhere. Competition for shelf space in supermarkets is very intense, and many new products are introduced each year by established companies, so you may find it difficult to even get your foot

in the door. Managers at many chain stores do not have the authority to accept your product, and those who have the authority may charge a high fee for shelf space. Several alternatives are available. Smaller gourmet or health food stores may be interested in your product. A food broker may also have the leverage you need to get your product in the door.

Other Issues

As you can see from the sections above, going into the food business is not going to be easy. Don't

make it any harder on yourself than it has to be. Start with one product, rather than a whole product line. Each product you try to develop and market will have its own set of problems, so it is best to focus on one at a time. Be ready, however, with line extension concepts. Very few successful food companies have been built on a single product line! It may seem impossible to overcome all these roadblocks to success, but it has been done before. Examples of food entrepreneurs like yourself who have made it big can be found in *Inc. Magazine*.

Resources

University Assistance

Rutgers Center for Advanced Food Technology
CAFT Technology Extension Program
120 New England Ave.
Piscataway, NJ 08854
(908) 445-6130

Provides product and process development assistance, including problem definition; manufacturing facilities for product start-ups; product development and quality control laboratories; and a consulting associates network with expertise in product marketing, management, and process technologies.

Your State University
Extension Specialist in Food Science
Able to provide assistance with questions and guidance relative to next steps.

Cook College Office of Continuing Professional Education
Laws House, 101 Ryders Lane
New Brunswick, NJ 08903
(908) 932-9271

Introduction to Food Science,
Introduction to Food Microbiology,
Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points for Food Safety.

State Resources

N.J. Commission on Science and Technology
New Jersey Entrepreneurs Forum
c/o Rutgers BIC
100 Jersey Avenue, Bldg. D
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

The forum publishes a newsletter for New Jersey entrepreneurs.

Books for Food Manufacturing Entrepreneurs

Food Processing: A Guide to Creating a New Business

Dr. Don Downing
Food Venture Center
New York State Agricultural Experiment Station
Cornell University
Geneva, NY 14456-0462
(315) 787-2273

Food Processors Handbook: Guidelines for Getting Started

Dr. Al. B. Wagner, Jr.
Department of Horticultural Sciences
Texas Agricultural Extension Service
Texas A&M University System
College Station, TX 77843
(418) 845-7341

Food Industry Directories

Thomas Food Industry Register
Thomas Publishing Company
One Penn Plaza
New York, NY 10117 0854
(212) 290 7341

Supermarket, convenience store, and wholesaler/distributor lists; ingredient suppliers; foodservice vendors; private label manufacturers (copackers); company profiles; trade associations; convention calendar; government resources.

Guide and Directory

Food Processing
301 E. Erie Street
Chicago, IL 60611
(312) 644 2020

Government agencies, convention and exposition calendar, trade associations, architects and engineers, economic development guide, laboratories and consultants, ingredient suppliers, and equipment suppliers.

The Almanac of the Canning Freezing and Preserving Industries

Edward E. Judge and Sons
P.O. Box 866
Westminster, MD 21157
(301) 876 2052

Trade associations, FDA per-

sonnel, food law, labeling, statistics, equipment, supplies, and services.

The Directory of the Canning, Freezing and Preserving Industries

Edward E. Judge and Sons
P.O. Box 866
Westminster, MD 21157
(301) 876 2052

Alphabetical, geographical and product based lists of food processors.

Food Engineering Directory of US Food and Beverage Plants

Chilton Company
Chilton Way
Radnor, PA 19089
(215) 964 4000

Alphabetical, geographical and product based lists of food and beverage processors.

Food Engineering Master Food Engineering, Circulation Department

P.O. Box 2035
Radnor, PA 19080 9435
(215) 964 4000

Guide to ingredients, equipment, supplies, and services, including descriptions, specifications, labeling requirements, and chemical/physical properties.

Food Industry Source Book

Cahner's Publishing Company
455 North Cityfront Plaza Drive
Chicago, IL 60611-5503
(312) 693 3200

Trade associations, convention and exposition calendar, 70 top food

processing companies, government agency guide, economic development guide, architects and engineers, laboratories and consultants, ingredient suppliers and equipment suppliers.

Trade Magazines and Scientific Journals and Other Periodicals

Food Engineering
Chilton Company
Chilton Way
Radnor, PA 19089
(215) 964 4000

Food Processing
Putnam Publishing Company
301 E. Erie Street
Chicago, IL 60611
(312) 644 2020

Food Production Management
CTI Publications, Inc.
2619 Maryland, Ave.
Baltimore, MD 21218 4576
(301) 467 3338

Food Technology
Institute of Food Technologists
221 N. Lasalle St.
Chicago, IL 60601
(312) 782 8424

Inc. Magazine
Box 5412
Boulder, CO 80322
(800) 234-0999

Prepared Foods
Cahner's Publishing Company
455 North Cityfront Plaza Drive
Chicago, IL 60611-5503
(312) 693 3200

Book Publishers

Van Nostrand Reinhold/AVI
P.O. Box 668
Florence, KY 41022 0668
(606) 525 6600

Elsevier Science Publishing
Orders Department
P.O. Box 882
Madison Square Station
New York, NY 10159
(212) 633 3950

Butterworth Heineman
80 Montvale Avenue
Stoneham, MA 02180
(800) 366 2665

American Association of Cereal Chemists
3340 Pilot Knob Road
St. Paul, MN 55121
(800) 328 7560

CRC Press, Inc.
2000 Corporate Blvd.
Boca Raton, FL 33431
(800) 272 7737

Marcel Dekker, Inc.
270 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10016
(212) 696 9000

Academic Press
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers
Book Marketing Department
1250 Sixth Avenue
San Diego, CA 92101 4311
(800) 321 5068

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