Tel. (207) 287-5671 Health Inspection Program Fax (207) 287-3165

November 30, 2018

Specialized Food Processes

Dear Eating Establishment Owner,

The Health Inspection Program (HIP) wants to share important information with you about specialized food processes such as curing meats and vacuum packaging of foods. Some Maine restaurants are performing these processes now, and others have expressed interest in doing so. There are strict requirements that must be met before performing these processes.

 If you are not conducting these specialized food processes then this will be only an informational letter for you.

HACCP Plans

Restauranteurs and Eating Places that chose to perform certain specialized food processes must first develop a detailed process plan called a Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan to ensure that specialized food processes are safe. The Maine Food Code requires a HACCP plan because foods prepared by these processes pose a higher health risk and can be contaminated with deadly bacteria called Listeria monocytogenes (Listeriosis) or Clostridium botulinum (Botulism) which can cause serious illness and death.

HACCP plans will be accepted for only the following specialized food processes:

* Vacuum packaging, cook chill packaging with exception below, sous vide packaging (following required minimum internal cooking temperatures, per the Maine Food Code chapter 3), acidified canned foods, fermenting of vegetables, and cured foods.

The development of the HACCP plan is the responsibility of the licensee. I have attached the 2013 Maine Food Code HACCP section along with guidance documents and templates to assist you. They can also be found on our website at [maine.gov/healthinspection](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/environmental-health/el/index.htm).

Variances

\*For some processes a variance will be needed in addition to a HACCP plan. The Maine Food Code defines a variance as a written document issued by the HIP that authorizes a modification or waiver of one or more requirements of the Maine Food Code if, in the opinion of the HIP, a health hazard or nuisance will not result from the modification or waiver.

Variances will be issued for only the following specialized food processes:

* Curing with the addition of nitrites only, acidification of canned foods, fermenting of vegetables, and preparation of sushi.

Due to the complexity of the process and HACCP plan, the Health Inspection Program will **not** approve variances for:

* The fermenting of meats, smoking of foods as a method of food preservation and the reduced oxygen packaging of fresh seafood and fish products.

Applicants for a variance will need to demonstrate that they have an appropriate level of training and/or experience to process the product safely. Please refer to the HACCP training course list for available training opportunities.

Please contact our offices at 207-287-5671 should you have any questions about this information.

Sincerely,



Lisa Silva

Program Manager

Health Inspection Program

Division of Environmental Health

Maine CDC

\*See 12/27/17 Policy Change Letter for Reduced Oxygen Packaging section 3-502.12 of the State of Maine Food Code