

Shared-Use Kitchens for Local Producers and Their Products

Paula Schafer

Agricultural Economic Development Program

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Washington and Saratoga Counties

In the next few months, the County jail in Salem, Washington County will become vacant as it moves to its new location in Hudson Falls. At the Salem site is a commercial working kitchen that has the potential of becoming a site for a new shared-use kitchen. Town of Salem Supervisor, Bruce Ferguson and myself took a trip to the Adirondack Kitchen Project, Inc. in Plattsburgh, New York to learn more about shared-use kitchens and how to make one work at the Salem jail.

A shared-use kitchen is a community-based food processing kitchen for local food producers. The intent of a shared-use kitchen is for beginning or small producers to process their food and create a value added product to be sold. The kitchen will allow a producer to use the equipment at the kitchen and meet the required Health Department, FDA, and State food licensing requirements without investing in the set up of a kitchen in their own home. A producer would bring the ingredients, process the product themselves, and then take the product to sell. The producer would pay a fee for the use of the kitchen each time. The process should be economically better for the producer than the expense of a home kitchen.

As a producer grows and the product becomes more in demand; making it hard for the producer to do all of the processing; the next logical step may be to go to a facility doing co-packing such as the Adirondack Kitchen Project, Inc. The Adirondack Kitchen offers co-packing opportunity for one's product. Co-packing means the kitchen takes your recipe (registered in your name) and

bottles, labels the product for you for a nominal charge. Working with a co-packer allows a small producer to have the product done without time constraints, the need for an approved facility, or knowledge of processing. The co-packer does it all for you. The Adirondack Kitchen also will help you develop value added products and provide business counseling and training. For more information, contact Dave Evans at 518-561-0751.

As we pursue the idea of a shared-use kitchen at the Salem jail, we would like to connect with producers who are interested in adding value to their products by processing them. Bruce and I are planning to have an information meeting in October or November and bring together producers interested in a shared-use kitchen. We would like to find out your needs, desires, and your willingness to support a shared-use kitchen in our area. Date, place, and time will be announced. In the mean time, please contact me with your questions and comments at pjb11@cornell.edu or Washington County at 746-2560 or Saratoga County at 885-8995.

Written by Paula J. Schafer, September 2002