



# HOME-BASED FOOD BUSINESS

Under the [Food Premises Regulation](#), home-based food businesses are permitted to use their home kitchen to prepare food for sale to the public. The area of the home where food is prepared, handled, cooked and stored is considered a food premises, and as such, must comply with the [Food Premises Regulation](#). Before [opening a home-based food premises](#), you must notify York Region Public Health.

## Low-Risk Foods

Home-based food businesses that prepare **only** low-risk food items are exempt from some requirements under the [Food Premises Regulation](#).

Low-risk foods are generally considered non-hazardous and do not require time and temperature control.

Examples of low-risk foods include breads and buns without meat or cream fillings, most baked goods with no custard, chocolate, coffee, tea leaves, granola, nuts, brownies, muffins, cookies, etc.

## Requirements

- A designated hand washing sink is not required, however, **handwashing is still required** to ensure that food handlers wash their hands as often as necessary to prevent the contamination of food or food areas
- Commercial dishwashing equipment is not required, but all cooking utensils such as pots, pans, spatulas, etc., must be cleaned and sanitized. At a minimum, a 2-compartment sink is recommended
- [Food Handler Certification](#) is not required, but strongly recommended
- All foods must be purchased from an inspected or approved source
- All temperature control units such as refrigerators, freezers and hot holding units must have an accurate, working thermometer
- Hand washing sinks must have hot and cold running water, liquid soap, and paper towels
- There must be an approved sanitizer such as chlorine, quaternary ammonium, or iodine on site
- There must be a supply of potable water (drinking water). If the drinking water supply does not come directly from a municipal source, it may be on a small drinking water system and may need to comply with [Ontario Regulation 319/08, Small Drinking Water Systems](#)
- There must be adequate storage space for all food items
- All surfaces in the kitchen must be smooth, non-absorbent, and easy-to-clean
- There must be adequate ventilation and lighting
- There must be adequate garbage disposal and removal
- A green YorkSafe "Proof of Public Health Inspection" sign is to be posted

## Potentially Hazardous Foods

Foods that are not considered low-risk foods are potentially hazardous foods. Potentially hazardous foods are those that support bacterial growth because they're rich in protein and have high moisture content. These foods need to have their time and temperature watched very carefully to keep bacteria from growing, producing toxins and/or spores.

Examples of potentially hazardous foods include:

- Moist foods with a pH above 4.5
- Products containing dairy, meat, fish, poultry and eggs (e.g., cream pies, custards, meat pies, quiches, cooked rice, potatoes, pasta, etc.)

- Icing that requires refrigeration (e.g., cream cheese icing)
- Some raw vegetables and fruit (e.g., bean sprouts, garlic in oil, salads, cut melon), especially those that won't be cooked

If you are unsure if your product is considered a potentially hazardous food or would like additional information, please speak to a Public Health Inspector at 1-800-361-5653 ext. 4 or email [health.inspectors@york.ca](mailto:health.inspectors@york.ca)

## Requirements

- A designated hand washing sink **is required** and must have hot and cold running water, liquid soap, and paper towels
- All cooking utensils such as pots, pans, spatulas, etc., must be cleaned and sanitized
- A 2 or 3-compartment sink or commercial dishwasher **is required**
- There must be an approved sanitizer such as chlorine, quaternary ammonium, or iodine on site
- There must be a supply of potable water (drinking water). If the drinking water supply does not come directly from a municipal source, it may be on a small drinking water system and may need to comply with [Ontario Regulation 319/08, Small Drinking Water Systems](#)
- All foods must be purchased from an inspected or approved source
- All temperature control units such as refrigerators, freezers and hot holding units must have an accurate, working thermometer
- There must be adequate storage space for all food items
- All surfaces in the kitchen must be smooth, non-absorbent, and easy-to-clean
- There must be adequate ventilation and lighting
- There must be adequate garbage disposal and removal
- A [Certified Food Handler](#) must be on-site
- A green YorkSafe "Proof of Public Health Inspection" sign is to be posted
- For additional requirements under the [Food Premises Regulation](#), visit [A Guide to Opening a Food Premises in York Region](#)

Owners/operators may be required to meet other regulatory requirements before opening a food premises. Contact your local municipality for information on business licenses, building approval, zoning and fire code requirements.

For more information, please visit [Food Premises Operators](#).

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Can I sell my food online?

When selling online you may be required to obtain approval from Provincial and Federal authorities:

- <https://inspection.canada.ca/food-licences/food-business-activities>
- <https://omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/inspection/index.html>

### Do the requirements apply to beverages?

Under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, a food premises is a location where food or milk is manufactured, processed, prepared, stored, handled, displayed, distributed, transported, sold or offered for sale. **Food is defined as food or drink for human consumption.**

### Are canned preserves considered low-risk foods?

Canning is a method of food preservation whereby food may be treated with heat or in a combination with pH (a measure of the acidity of a food) and water activity (a measure of the availability of water to support microbial growth), then stored in sealed containers.

The risk is determined based on the type of food being canned, preserved and the processing method used. For additional information and guidance to ensure canning and preserving is conducted safely and meets the regulation visit: [Safe Canning for Operators](#).

### What are the labelling requirements?

To learn about the Federal requirements for consumer packaging and labelling, please visit [Labelling Requirements - Canada.ca](#)

### How do I get inspected? What is the link to request an inspection?

Anyone planning to open a new food premises (including a new home-based business), must notify York Region Public Health before operating their business by:

Submitting the [New Food Premises Notification Form](#) or Contacting York Region Health Connection  
1-800-361-5653 Ext. 4.

### Does my address need to appear on the green YorkSafe Proof of Public Health Inspection sign?

Under the [Food Safety Protocol, 2019](#), it is mandatory for public health units in Ontario to publicly disclose a summary of its inspection findings, this includes the type of premises, the name and address of the premises, and the date of inspection. [YorkSafe](#) is York Region Public Health's public health inspection reporting program that discloses the results of routine inspections, complaint inspections, re-inspections and enforcement activities both online and on the "Proof of Public Health Inspection" sign which is posted at the premises.

To speak with a public health inspector call **Health Connection** at **1-800-361-5653 ext. 4**  
or email [health.inspectors@york.ca](mailto:health.inspectors@york.ca)

#### PUBLIC HEALTH

1-877-464-9675

TTY 1-866-512-6228

[york.ca/FoodSafety](http://york.ca/FoodSafety)