

Buying Local – Approved Food Sources for Food Establishments

This guide provides information on providing safe, locally produced products such as produce, meat, fish, and eggs, to food establishments. Food establishments include restaurants, schools, hospitals, grocery and convenience stores, institutions, etc.

PRODUCE

Can food establishments obtain raw, uncut produce directly from the grower?

Yes. Agricultural producers may provide produce of their own production directly to consumers or food establishments. An agricultural producer is any entity that produces an agricultural product. A school, individual, licensed food establishment, or other entity can be an agricultural producer.

Can food establishments use produce they grow themselves?

Yes.

Some points to remember are:

- The grower is considered an approved source for a food establishment.
- The grower may sell directly from their production site or through a farmers market.
- Growers are not typically licensed by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD).
- All producers are responsible to assure their produce is safe and wholesome, and must comply with applicable laws. Individuals seeking assistance on safe growing information and cultural practices should contact their county MSU extension office.

How can a buyer or user help assure produce safety?

Recommendations include:

- Identify the source of the product (ask for an invoice, etc., that identifies the supplier or grower's name and address). Good recordkeeping is particularly important in case the source of a product needs to be determined due to illness or injury.
- Develop supplier agreements or contract specifications to assure products meet your standards. For example: "All apples must be tree picked and graded to U.S. No. 1, Large 3" minimum standards.
- Obtain produce from those who follow or have been certified in Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), Good Handling Practices (GHP), or have received a certificate through the Michigan Safe Food Risk Assessment Program.
- Visit the production facility or ask for more information on production practices (if applicable).
- Look at the transportation vehicle for chemicals, cleanliness, odors, and obvious debris.
- Look at pallets, packages, and boxed stored foods for cross-contamination.
- Inspect the produce for signs of insects, disease, bruising and damage, freshness, over-ripeness, and immaturity.
- Examine packages of food products to make sure they are intact and not leaking, and look for signs of contamination by rodents, insects, or birds.
- Wash produce before using to remove soil and surface contamination.
- Refrigerate leafy greens upon receipt.
- Assure that produce being sold as organic is certified by a certifying agency. The certifying agency must be registered with MDARD for products produced in Michigan.
- Contact MDARD with any complaints or concerns about produce safety.

MEAT

Can food establishments obtain meat directly from the producer?

Yes, if the producer is a U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) inspected plant or an MDARD licensed processing establishment (small poultry processors only). Beef, pork, lamb, and goat must be USDA inspected at an approved establishment and bear a USDA mark of inspection. Poultry will bear a USDA mark of inspection or, if processed by an MDARD licensed processor, will be marked, "EXEMPT POULTRY P.L. 90-492."

FISH

Can food establishments prepare fish caught by sports fishermen?

Under Michigan's Catch & Cook program, charter fishing clients can catch fish from Michigan waters and bring that fish to participating restaurants. Charter operators will assure that the fish are cleaned and packaged on ice on the boat, and will provide required documentation for the restaurant. The restaurants then cook and serve clients their own fish.

Any licensed restaurant that has the equipment, facilities, and space to prepare and serve cooked fish may participate. Facilities must be able to meet food law requirements, such as adequate space to process fish, be able to prevent cross contamination between fish and other food offerings, as well as maintaining product identity and custody. The restaurant must have a method in place to assure they are providing customers with their own fish. Any 'leftover'/remaining fish must be either returned to the client or discarded.

How can a restaurant assure fish safety?

- Look for documentation from the charter boat to assure the fish were caught the same day.
- Check temperature and condition of fish upon receipt.
- Maintain a relationship with local participating charter boat operators.
- Advise your local food safety inspector that you are participating in the program and get any questions answered.

EGGS

Can food establishments obtain eggs directly from the producer?

Yes, if the producer is an MDARD licensed processing establishment. Michigan food laws require egg processors (i.e. those that clean, grade or break eggs) to be licensed by MDARD. The 2005 Food Code, section 3-202.13, requires food establishments to receive eggs that are clean and sound, and grade AA, A, or B. Eggs must be held at refrigeration temperatures. Egg cartons or other packaging materials must be clean and properly labeled.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

National Food Safety Programs – a variety of produce safety information:
<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/%7Edms/fs-toc.html>

Michigan Food and Farming Systems
<http://www.miffs.org>

Michigan State University Extension:
<http://www.msue.msu.edu/portal>

USDA GAP and GHP Audit Verification Program:
<http://tinyurl.com/d3ch48>