

Food Safety Updates

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Hepatitis A Outbreak in Michigan

A recent outbreak of hepatitis A in southeast Michigan has led MDARD to inform all food handlers to prevent its spread. Hepatitis A is a very contagious disease that attacks the liver. An infected person can infect others up to two weeks before they feel sick, and sometimes up to a week after they feel better. (continued page 2)

The Inside Track Harinee Sampath of Prayani

For Harinee Sampath, producing her traditional Indian yogurt at The Starting Block was a no brainer.

Harinee was looking for a way to manufacture the traditional Indian raita yogurt sauces and launch her company, Prayani, but was running into dead ends. She met with co-packers, but was discouraged by their high minimums. She reached out to smaller dairies that were not interested in partnering with a small, unknown dairy company producing an unfamiliar product. Harinee was nearly at the point of investing in expensive dairy equipment herself when the equipment manufacturer she was talking with suggested that she contact The Starting Block.

“When I realized I could rent from The Starting Block, it was a no brainer,” said Harinee. “I quite literally had no other options in the state but The Starting Block.”



Prayani's Indian Raita Yogurt Sauces

The Starting Block had both the equipment and expertise she needed to launch her dairy business. “Jim was very helpful in getting started with trial runs,” noted Harinee. Other Starting Block tenants making dairy products were able to share their knowledge and answer questions as needed. (continued page 2)

WELCOME!

Please join us in welcoming entrepreneurs to The Starting Block, licensed since our last newsletter:

Matt Van Gessel of
Redhead Salsa Company

Connie McDermott of
4 C's Cookies & More

Isabel Rosas of
Chavela's Food Truck

Marit Rasmussen &
Mark Woodham of
Vox Pops Popsicles

Magda Abuhassabu of
Green Turkey Products

Michaela Alexander of
Mimi's Canning Company

Sue Ellen Bendelow of
MI Bars

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The Inside Track Continued

Prayani Raita Indian yogurt sauces are one of a kind in Michigan. The savory product line includes cucumber with mint and cilantro, carrot with cumin and coriander, and tomato with cumin and coriander flavors. “Our products are being used as a healthy (and flavorful) sour cream alternative,” said Harinee. “Currently, the product is sold in Whole Foods stores in Michigan, along with a couple of other stores.”

Harinee enjoys the responsibility that comes with owning her own business. “The best thing is knowing that accountability for progress, or lack thereof, starts and ends with me,” she commented. “The most difficult challenge is understanding consumer psychology as it relates to purchase behavior,” said Harinee.

Prayani is not slowing down, and has plans to continue expansion within Michigan before reaching further afield to markets in other states. Find Prayani online at www.prayani.com



Harinee with her helper producing Prayani at The Starting Block

Food Safety Checks Continued

Please review the following safe food handling guidelines to help prevent the spread of hepatitis A:

- Do not touch ready-to-eat foods with your bare hands.
 - Follow all safe food handling requirements, including handwashing with **warm soapy water for 20 seconds**, in any of the following instances:
 - Immediately before preparing food or working with non-prepackaged food, clean equipment and utensils, including take out containers or utensils.
 - After touching bare human body parts other than clean hands and clean, exposed portions of arms.
 - After using the restroom.
 - After handling dirty equipment or utensils.
 - When switching between working with raw food and working with ready-to eat food.
 - After coughing, sneezing, using a handkerchief or tissue, using tobacco, eating or drinking.
 - Before putting on disposable gloves to start working with food.
 - During food preparation, as often as necessary to remove dirt and contamination; and when changing jobs, to prevent cross-contamination.
 - Before serving food or handling clean tableware and serving utensils in the food service area.
- This notice sent from MDARD (MI Dept. of Agriculture and Rural Development).
For more information, visit www.michigan.gov/hepatitisAoutbreak

Starting Block News

Thanks to a MDARD Value Added Grant, The Starting Block now has a VCM (Vertical Cutting Mixer) and a new scale, pump, mixer/agitator and steam generator. These pieces of equipment will help producers making products such as salsas, hot sauce, jams and jellies, and dairy products to increase production. Our piston filler for filling larger quantities of these types of products is now up and running.

A pasteurizer for cheese-making and proof boxes, mixers, bread slicers, and ovens for baking are also available. As West Michigan’s non-profit regional kitchen incubator and entrepreneurial center, The Starting Block provides fully-equipped licensed kitchens, available 24/7 to small food businesses, including a USDA-inspected meat processing facility.