



**The Starting Block**  
 WEST MICHIGAN REGIONAL KITCHEN INCUBATOR  
 GROWING ENTREPRENEURS  
 In Food Systems and Natural Resources



Commercial Kitchen  
 Office Rental  
 Education  
 Equipment  
 Licenses  
 Product Development  
 Warehouse & Storage  
 Community Partners

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## Food Safety Updates

Volume 3, Issue 1, January 2013

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### Food Safety Checks *KEEPING YOU ON TRACK IN THE KITCHEN*

#### WHEN TO CHANGE GLOVES

Foodhandlers must change gloves at all of these times:

- √ As soon as they become soiled or torn
- √ Before beginning a different task
- √ At least every four hours during continual use, and more often if necessary
- √ After handling raw meat, seafood, or poultry and before handling ready-to-eat food

From ServSafe Essentials, National Restaurant Association (NRA)

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 BLOCK UPDATES AND  
 PHOTOS VISIT OUR  
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### The Inside Track *ALTA CONTRERAS OF EL CARDENAL SALSA*

The demand for an authentic Mexican salsa motivated Altagracia “Alta” Contreras to start commercially producing her popular recipe at The Starting Block. Unlike most salsas on the market in this area, El Cardenal is not sweetened but has an acidic, lime flavor that sets it apart. Alta uses all fresh ingredients in the production of both her mild and hot salsas, enhancing the quality of her products.

Working at La Fiesta, Alta heard about The Starting Block from the restaurant’s owner who had used The Starting Block facilities. Utilizing the resources offered by The Starting Block, Alta was able to start her salsa business.

Since beginning commercial sales, Alta has gotten her salsas into many local retailers including Cenzo’s in Pentwater, Hansen Foods and Gale’s IGA in Hart, and La Probadita also located in Hart. Looking to expand into a larger market, Alta hopes that she can soon get her product into Meijer and Walmart stores locally, then nationwide.



Alta making her salsa

As an entrepreneur also working another job, Alta is often tired by the time she gets to The Starting Block, but her enthusiasm to make her product is what keeps her going. The positive reviews her salsas receive from customers keep her motivated. Most people who have tried her salsas say, “What a great flavor!”

*(continued next page)*

## STARTING BLOCK GRADUATES!

The Starting Block boasts several success stories from businesses that had their start here. Licensed at The Starting Block, our graduates moved on to make their product at another licensed kitchen, with a co-packer, or started their own business.

We always welcome them back for a visit to discuss their business or product, or to re-license here and use The Starting Block Kitchen.

Uncle Gene's Backwoods Pretzels	Wee Bee Jammin' Jams	Lomonaco Sicilian Style Cookies
Maple Island Pie Factory Pies	Cichetti Salts	Moon Dance Café Barbeque Sauces
Dip Sensation Dip Mixes	Mandingo Pickles	Bearboy Gourmet Rubs
Simply Suzanne Granola	Karenz Krazy Salts	SUYA Chicken and Beef Kabobs
Barlow's Gourmet Barbeque Sauces	B & B Farms Canola Oil	Herkner Foods Cherry Topping
Johnny Secreto Barbeque Sauce and Seasonings		TCB Food Processing, Asparagus Salsa and Guacamole

## Congratulations Graduates!

### Getting ready to use The Starting Block's new USDA-certified facility?

- ⚡ Visit <http://www.fsis.usda.gov> for important information on USDA regulations for meat processing and production.
- ⚡ For specific meat regulation questions, contact the Small Plant Help Desk at 1-877-374-7435 or email [InfoSource@fsis.usda.org](mailto:InfoSource@fsis.usda.org)
- ⚡ Go to [http://www.fsis.usda.gov/ask\\_karen](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/ask_karen) where you can ask the FSIS virtual representative other food safety questions.

### EL CARDENAL SALSA CONTINUED

Alta is confident that her product is something that people will enjoy, expressing, "If they haven't tried it they will discover that my salsa is unique, original."

*"If they haven't tried it they will discover that my salsa is unique, original."*

Not only does her salsa go well with chips, as most people would assume, it pairs well with fish, vegetables, and meat.

When asked about the name of her salsa brand, Alta laughs, explaining she came up with the name when she saw a cardinal out of her kitchen window in Hart in the middle of winter. From this sighting, the cardinal became the bird of Michigan to Alta because it seemed as though it never left Michigan. So Alta named her Michigan-made salsa El Cardenal after a bird that, to her, represented Michigan.



Alta labeling her salsas

*The Starting Block is West Michigan's Non-Profit Regional Kitchen Incubator and Entrepreneurial Center. Our Mission is to incubate and support the entrepreneurial spirit by providing licensed commercial kitchen facilities, entrepreneurial education, and peer-to-peer networking to new and expanding businesses. The Starting Block will be the premier regional resource for growing any new idea into a profitable, local and wealth-creating business.*

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