



Food Safety Updates

Volume 2, Issue 3, November 2012

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

Purchasing Food from Approved Food Sources

- √ Buy food only from suppliers who get their products from licensed, reputable purveyors and manufacturers who inspect goods and follow public health laws
- √ Buy only USDA inspected and/or graded meat
- √ Do not use home-prepared or home-canned food
- √ Ensure that any potentially hazardous food being brought to this facility arrives with temperatures as specified:

Refrigerated: 41 degrees and below

Frozen: 0 degrees and below

- The Starting Block Standard Operating Procedures

The Inside Track *MARY BARKER OF MOTHER MARY'S CANNING CO.*

For the past 30 years, Mary Barker's canned goods have been popular among family and friends. Many of her canned products are made from old recipes that hark back to earlier days. "This is what our parents grew up eating when farming and canning was a way of life." People wanted to purchase her canned relishes, vegetables and applesauce, but with a full time job at the newspaper, it was too difficult to get a business started.

When the newspaper industry started downsizing, Mary and her husband, Bob, started thinking about the future and began doing research for a canning business. Mary took a labeling class at The Starting Block, and when she was laid off from the newspaper business, she went to Better Process Control School at MSU. In 2010, after deciding to start with a line of products rather than just one, Mary, her husband and their two sons and daughter-in-law began making nine products at The Starting Block. "We knew that people really liked our pickled asparagus and that they would want to try other products. We wanted to get the brand name known."

Freshness is key for Mother Mary's Canning Co. The process of picking the produce to getting it canned all happens in less than 36 hours. "We make our products in small batches, giving high attention to quality."

The real challenge, however, is production and canning in large volume. "We keep telling ourselves to stay focused and keep standards of safety and quality always utmost in our minds." Production is the biggest issue, not demand - there is a big demand. *(continued next page)*



Mary making her pickled beets

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Food Safety Checks

The Inside Track

Starting Block News

Welcome!

Please join us in welcoming new entrepreneurs to the Starting Block!

Welcome to recently licensed kitchen users

Suri Sierra of
The Purple Cupcake
Cakes and Cupcakes

Dave Diephouse of
Sweet Heat Farms
Pepper Jellies

Mike & Beatriz Schrom of
TCB Food Processing
Asparagus Salsa

STARTING BLOCK GRADUATES FEATURED IN AARP MAGAZINE!

Starting Block graduates Lomonaco Sicilian Cookies were featured in the latest issue of AARP Magazine. The article presents the benefits of kitchen incubators and promotes The Starting Block. This was great publicity for both Lomonaco Sicilian Cookies and The Starting Block.

Below is an excerpt from the AARP Magazine October/November 2012 issue entitled "CEO, You" by Karen Edwards:

"Every week for more than three years, Josie Lomonaco, 58, packed her car with boxes of flour, sugar, eggs and butter. She drove more than an hour from her home in Grand Rapids, Michigan, to the small town of Hart, home of The Starting Block, a commercial "kitchen incubator," a launchpad for nascent food businesses. There she baked batch after batch of her Sicilian cookies, tender confections made from an old family recipe. Before cofounding (with her husband, John) her new career venture—Lomonaco Sicilian Cookies—Lomonaco managed a busy orthopedic practice, baking cookies on a part-time basis from her home kitchen. John learned from the Michigan Department of Agriculture about The Starting Block which offers hourly rentals of a shared community kitchen equipped with commercial ovens, freezers and food processors; it also provides office equipment and training programs on small-business management..

The Lomonacos moved into the incubator in November 2008, sharing the space with budding food magnates turning out everything from granola to barbeque sauce. By March 2012 the couple were ready to "graduate" and move on to a larger space. Now they are at a rented baking facility, making up to 3,000 cookies a week. "We couldn't have stayed in business without The Starting Block," Josie says." -p. 27-8

Big Things Happening at The Starting Block

New USDA Meat Facility at The Starting Block!

On October 19, The Starting Block broke ground for a new USDA meat processing facility. Thanks to a Michigan Economic Development Grant, The Starting Block received \$100,000 for the facility. The kitchen will be USDA certified for the development of meat products, and will be in a separate building to ensure FSIS (Food Safety Inspection Service) standards. Starting Block users will have the opportunity to now produce various meat products including sausages, smoked meat, jerky, and meat-filled products such as pasties, ravioli, and eggrolls.

(Mother Mary's Canning Co., continued)

Stores have been very receptive of the products and they are greeted with high demand at the Muskegon Farmers Market and other regional events as well as in small specialty food stores.

Looking to the future, Mother Mary's Canning Co. hopes to slowly expand to more stores in West Michigan and to increase online sales once they figure out a good packaging and shipping method.

Reflecting on becoming entrepreneurs, Mary says there have been many challenges, but seeing people purchase and enjoy the family's products has been a highlight. It has been a lot of work, but with the help of MDA inspector Cathy Martin they were able to get licensed.

"We couldn't have gotten started without the Starting Block," she emphasized when discussing the amount of support and assistance the family received.

Learn more about Mother Mary's Canning Company featuring their product line at www.mothermaryscanning.com

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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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