



Community Kitchens

What is a community kitchen?

- ❖ Community kitchens are also known as commercial community kitchens. A commercial community kitchen is a shared space or building equipped with kitchen equipment and implements used for the processing of raw products or the creation of raw product into value-added commercial food products for sale.
- ❖ Commercial kitchens are found in agricultural communities with many local, individual or small producers. They are also found in other communities that are in need of production and market infrastructure that will allow for value-added products from that community to be placed on the shelf for sale. Often times, canning facilities are included in conjunction or in addition to the commercial kitchen. More than likely, the commercial kitchen will offer educational and training opportunities regarding value-added products, food health and safety, and marketing and promotion for small-scale producers. Most commercial kitchens operate as nonprofit businesses, but there are some for-profit commercial kitchens in existence. Finally, in many Native communities, community kitchens can and are often used for large-scale community events such as social gatherings and social feeding events.

The value of a community kitchen

- ❖ A commercial community kitchen provides a pathway for small producers and entrepreneurs to develop value-added products for market in a manner that meets all food-safety regulations and food health requirements. It also allows agricultural producers and food entrepreneurs to begin food businesses without the high cost of developing individual certified kitchen space. In turn, the economic activity in the community is spurred with the production of locally produced food products that travel fewer miles to be placed on shelves for sale. Commercial kitchens shorten the supply chain of food products and increase the volume and availability of locally produced and processed food. According to an assessment by Smith Mills College, “Community kitchens have very limited economic impact. Their value lies in a combination of economic *and* community development. They are successful as components of community centers and do not succeed as stand-alone projects. A cost-





benefit analysis should be carefully considered when judging these projects for funding” (5).¹

Considerations for developing a community kitchen

- ❖ Know your facts, numbers and community! Many communities would like to have a community kitchen but should think through a list of considerations before developing one. The following is a list of considerations before beginning a commercial kitchen. The list is not exhaustive and is meant to stimulate the process of development and provide tips on what communities can and should consider, but it is not to be viewed as a complete road map for starting one.
- 1) Determine the availability of commercial kitchens near or in your area (www.culinaryincubator.com is a good place to start).
 - 2) Develop a working list of possible patrons of the commercial kitchen (USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service has an agricultural census that gives an approximate number of commercial agricultural producers in any given area. See <http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/index.php>).
 - 3) Develop a list of possible food entrepreneurs who would benefit from a local commercial kitchen and who are not listed in the agricultural census. (State business or regulatory arms usually have an extensive listing of registered nonprofit and for-profit businesses that can be searched).
 - 4) Determine whether the community would support the community kitchen and if such a kitchen coincides with community development plans.
 - 5) Determine the food safety and health regulations that must be met in order to be in compliance. Also, explore possible relationships with food safety and food health agencies that will be involved with enforcement of regulation. The location of the facility will determine the food health and safety regulations imposed on the community kitchen used to produce food products for sale.
 - 6) Determine costs of running a kitchen such as development costs and operation costs. The cost of construction or renovation of existing buildings or existing kitchens in a community varies by region. In many instances, there may be an existing commercial kitchen that was utilized or under-utilized for other food programs or is in current use and could possibly serve as a commercial kitchen for use in the production of value-added food products for sale.
 - a. Other things to consider are that commercial kitchens require periodic inspection from state and/or federal health inspectors, and often offer routine

¹ Smithsonian Mills Center for Assessment and Research Alliances at Mars Hill College. “Developing Shared-Use Food and Agricultural Facilities in North Carolina,” <http://www.smithsonmills.com/ncshareduce.pdf> (accessed December 4, 2014).





classes for food producers and entrepreneurs to ensure compliance with health and safety rules and regulations. Ensure an adequate cost/benefit analysis is completed prior to any initial start-up.

- 7) Map out transportation issues with or for value-added food producers to ensure their products are able to make it into markets within a reasonable time frame.
- 8) Depending on the product, determine possible consumers or local retailers who may possibly sell or offer the food products produced.
- 9) List out possible classes to be offered to value-added food producers such as marketing and promotion, sales/vendor contracts, food safety law, health inspection standards, food handling, etc.

Existing kitchens in Indian Country

- ❖ Taos County Economic Development Corporation (Taos, New Mexico) www.tcedc.org
- ❖ Mat-Su Community Kitchen (Palmer, Alaska) www.atsukitchen.com
- ❖ Papakolea Community Kitchen (Oahu, Hawaii) <http://www.papakolea.com>

Resources (online or near Indian communities)

- ❖ The USDA Education and Research Search Data Reports <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products.aspx#.U0NYsP0jHwI>
- ❖ The Culinary Incubator: www.culinaryincubator.com. This website is dedicated to small food businesses that are trying to find a commercial kitchen to prepare their product.
- ❖ The Chef's Shared Kitchen (Mesa, Arizona) www.chefssharedkitchen.com
- ❖ The Mixing Bowl Kitchen (Albuquerque, New Mexico) www.SCEDC.org
- ❖ The Food Enterprise Development Center (Durant, Oklahoma) www.ruralenterprises.com
- ❖ The Foodworks Culinary Center (Arcata, California) foodworks@cityofarcata.org
- ❖ The Siskiyou Harvest and Food Center (Yreka, California) <http://www.siskiyoucounty.org>





- ❖ The Kitchen Station #1 (Telmecula, California) www.kitchenstation.com
- ❖ The Bonner Business Center (Sandpoint, Idaho) www.bonnerbusinesscenter.com
- ❖ The Brown County Culinary Kitchen (Green Bay, Wisconsin) www.bcculinarykitchen.org
- ❖ The Commercial Kitchen (Spokane, Washington) kitchenspokane@gmail.com
- ❖ Kitchen 2 Kitchen (Tacoma, Washington) www.kitchen2kitchen.us
- ❖ One World Kitchen (Sparks, Nevada) www.oneworldkitchen.com

Possible funding sources for portions of development of a commercial kitchen

- ❖ USDA Agricultural Marketing Service – Farmers’ Market Promotion Service
- ❖ USDA Rural Development Value-Added Producer Grant
- ❖ USDA Community Facilities Grant
- ❖ USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grant
- ❖ Private Funding

