

Buying Local – Approved Food Sources for Food Establishments

This guide provides information on providing safe locally produced products such as produce, meat and eggs to food establishments. Food establishments include restaurants, schools, 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 that 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 farmer's market.
- Growers are not typically licensed by Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA).
- All producers are responsible to assure that 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 record keeping is particularly important in case of a trace back of a product 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) and Good Handling Practices (GHP).
- 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 that they are intact and not leaking, and for signs of contamination by rodents, insects or birds.
- Wash produce before using it 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 MDA for products produced in Michigan.
- Contact MDA with any complaints or concerns about produce safety.

Meat

Can food establishments obtain meat directly from the producer?

Yes, if the producer has a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) inspected plant or a MDA licensed processing establishment (small poultry processor 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 MDA licensed processor be marked "EXEMPT POULTRY P.L. 90-492".

Eggs

Can food establishments obtain eggs directly from the producer?

Yes, if the producer is a MDA licensed processing establishment. Michigan food laws require that egg processors (i.e. those that clean, grade or break eggs) be licensed by MDA. The 2005 Food Code, section 3-202.13 requires food establishments to receive eggs that are clean and sound and be 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>