

# MICROENTERPRISE HOME KITCHEN OPERATION FACT SHEET

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## About MEHKO

The California Health and Safety Code (California Retail Food Code) was amended in January of 2019 to establish a "Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operation" (**MEHKO**) as a new type of retail food facility. MEHKO is a food facility that is operated by a resident from their private kitchen. Once permitted, a resident can store, handle, prepare, and serve food to the public, as allowed by State law, similar to a mini restaurant.

## MEHKOs are Currently Not Authorized

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell's motion "Streamlining Access to Safe and Regulated Vending and Micro-Entrepreneurship Opportunities" on October 3, 2023. The Department of Public Health, in collaboration with County Counsel and the Department of Economic Opportunity, are directed to:

1. Draft an ordinance authorizing the permitting of MEHKOs by the Department of Public Health.
2. Conduct outreach and stakeholder engagement as the ordinance governing MEHKOs is drafted.
3. Prepare a public education program for home-based retail food operations on food safety.

Refer to the **Implementation Timeline** for updates: <https://bit.ly/mehko-lacounty>

## Benefits of MEHKO

- Small-scale, home cooking operations can create significant economic opportunities for Los Angeles County residents including women, immigrants, and people of color.
- A home kitchen operation provides guidelines, trainings, and food safety resources to home cooks to increase the knowledge of food safety practices when serving the public.
- The exchange of home-cooked food can improve access to healthy foods for communities, particularly for those with severely limited resources and options.
- MEHKOs will provide support for sidewalk food vendors by serving as a commissary for their Compact Mobile Food Operation (CMFO).

## MEHKO Requirements

- A Public Health Permit is required to operate. The operation is subject to an annual inspection and complaint-based investigations.
- No more than one full-time employee (not including family members or household members) may work at the MEHKO.
- The MEHKO operator shall obtain a Certified Food Protection Manager certificate upon successfully passing the food safety exam from an approved and accredited organization and submit it with the MEHKO application.
- Any person(s) involved in the MEHKO must obtain a Food Handler Card Certificate from an approved California provider and submit it with the MEHKO application.
- Food shall be prepared, cooked, and served or delivered on the same day it is made.
- A MEHKO may be approved to support a separately permitted CMFO.

## MEHKO Prohibitions

- MEHKOs have a limitation on the number of meals they can sell, with a cap set at 90 meals per week and 30 meals per day, with a total revenue of \$100,000 a year.
- Reselling food to other food facilities is prohibited.
- A MEHKO may not use a third-party delivery app such as Uber Eats, Postmates, Grubhub, DoorDash, etc., unless as provided for in California Health & Safety Code, Section 114367.5.
- Is not approved to operate a catering operation.
- Is not authorized to operate a Cottage Food Operation at the same residence.
- May not serve alcohol or food that contains alcohol without a license from the California Department of Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) Program.

For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/mehko-lacounty> or contact our **Community & Industry Engagement Program** at (626) 430-5156.