

CALIFORNIA Cannery License Program



To reduce the public health risk, federal and state regulations are in place to control the production of low-acid and acidified canned food products.



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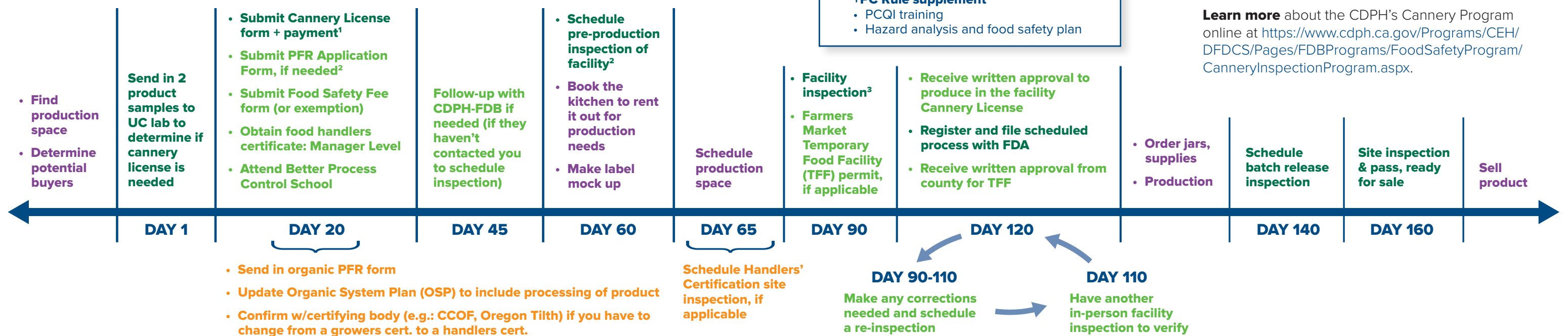
Low-acid and acidified canned foods must be produced under highly controlled conditions to ensure safety. Low-acid canned products are composed of ingredients that have a naturally high pH (above pH 4.6). Acidified canned products are composed mainly of ingredients that have a moderately high natural pH to which an acid ingredient (e.g. vinegar, lemon juice) is added to bring the final equilibrium pH of the food to 4.6 or below. Improperly processed low-acid and acidified canned foods can lead to severe health consequences, including death, in individuals that consume them. This is due to the growth of the bacteria *Clostridium botulinum* in these improperly processed products. As this bacteria grows in food it produces a potent neurotoxin that can be lethal to humans and animals. To reduce the public health risk, federal and state regulations are in place to control the production of these types of foods.

Low-acid canned products must be thermally processed to inactivate spores of the bacteria *Clostridium botulinum* using a pressure canner or retort. Acidified canned products have an acid ingredient (e.g. vinegar, lemon juice) added to the product to bring the final equilibrium pH of the food to 4.6 or below. The pH of 4.6 or below will inhibit the germination of *Clostridium botulinum* spores and mild thermal processing (boiling water canning, pasteurizing) will eliminate other microorganisms of public health concern in these products. Both low-acid canned foods and acidified canned foods must be produced under the California Department of Public Health's Food and Drug Branch (CDPH-FDB) Cannery Inspection program. All products and processes must be evaluated by the University of California Laboratory for Research in Food Preservation (Process Authority in CA) for being adequate to control *Clostridium botulinum* risk prior to initial production. A CDPH-FDB Cannery Inspector must inspect each lot/batch of product after it is produced, but before it is released on the market for sale.

Cannery License Program Timeline

The timeline below provides an overview of the steps involved and approximate time required to obtain a Cannery License.

Note: Only continue on this timeline if Cannery license is required (based off of UC Lab results: S-letter)



¹You only need to submit payment for Cannery License if you haven't already paid for PFR (for that same business).

²If you are storing the product somewhere other than where you're making the product then you'll need two inspections one for the kitchen (Cannery) and one for the storage area (PFR).

³If you pass the PFR inspection you will receive a verbal "ok" to start production of product. You will not be able to sell it in locations that require a PFR written certificate and completion number until you have those from the CDPH-FDB (e.g. getting a Temporary Food Facility Permit to sell at the Farmer's Market).

Products likely to require a Cannery License in California

Low-acid canned foods

- Canned vegetables
- Canned soups
- Canned stocks

Acidified canned foods

- Canned tomato sauces with added vegetables
- Canned salsa
- Vinegar vegetable pickles (not fermented*)
- Hot sauces (not fermented*)
- Pickled eggs
- Relishes

This is not an exhaustive list and products may fall under different categories depending on the product formulation. The products listed here are given as general examples. All products need to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by the CA Process authority.

*Only items that are traditional fermented products to which no acid (vinegar, lemon juice, etc.) is added in the recipe are exempt from the CA pH Control Program

FAQs

How much will all of the regulatory fees cost?

It is difficult to predict the total cost of the Cannery license due to the fact that in-person inspections are required and the amount of time required for that is unknown. According to the CA Cannery Law text, (article three on Proration of Costs,) a process is in place for the state department to determine quarterly the costs of inspection fees and to prorate the cost to all cannery license holders.

Where do I go to get help on establishing the process for my product (for example a heat penetration study)?

You can find a list of consultants to help with this type of work here: http://ucfoodsafety.ucdavis.edu/Food_Industry_Contacts/Consultants/. A list of food processing authorities can be found here: <http://www.afdo.org/foodprocessing>

Where can I learn more about food safety best practices for value added canning?

The UC Davis Food Safety webpage on Food Processing has lots of resources available.

What are the repercussions if we do not have a valid cannery license and we produced products?

According to the CA Cannery Law text, violators are subject to conviction of a misdemeanor, which involves a fine of \$50-\$1,000 or imprisonment in the county jail for up to six months.

Learn more about the CDPH's Cannery Program online at <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CEH/DFDCS/Pages/FDBPrograms/FoodSafetyProgram/CanneryInspectionProgram.aspx>.



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