

Processing Meat and Poultry in a Commercial Kitchen in California: Relevant Regulations

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Commercial kitchens operating as retail food facilities are permitted by county Environmental Health departments and must comply with the California Retail Food Code (<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/services/Documents/fdbRFC.pdf>).

Under a county Environmental Health permit, the facility can bring in USDA-inspected carcasses/boxed meat and poultry and do the following:

- Retail cuts
- Ground meat and fresh sausage
- Add marinades and other flavorings (for flavor, not for preservation)
- Package product: Freezer paper, tray wraps, plastic wraps, barrier films and meat trays, and non-vacuum shrink bags are acceptable. Vacuum packaging (AKA “reduced oxygen packaging”) requires a variance/HACCP (see below).
- Freeze product

Certain, more hazardous activities require the facility to apply to CDPH for a variance and prepare/follow a HACCP plan:

- Smoking and curing
- Using food additives or components such as vinegar for food preservation
- Custom processing animals for personal use as food

The HACCP plan does not have to be approved by Environmental Health or CDPH. The required elements of the HACCP plan are listed in CalCode 114419.1. The person operating a food facility pursuant to a HACCP plan shall designate at least one person to be responsible for verification of the HACCP plan (114419.2).

Other activities also need a variance but must follow a HACCP plan approved by CDPH:

- Using acidification or water activity to prevent the growth of *Clostridium botulinum*.
- Reduced-oxygen packaging.

For those two activities, HACCP plans must be submitted to CDPH with the variance application.

Relevant sections of the California Retail Food Code:

- Variance application: 114417
- Activities requiring a HACCP plan: 114419
- HACCP Plan components: 114419.1