

An Introduction to Shared-Use Commercial Kitchens¹

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This factsheet is one of a “Food Entrepreneurship in Florida” series that assists beginning and established food entrepreneurs by providing them with information on topics highly relevant to starting and running a food business—regulations, safety, labeling, processing, and marketing. This series serves as a useful guide to help make a business plan and determine the feasibility of starting a food business.

Background

Shared-use commercial kitchen facilities are becoming more common in Florida and across the United States. These facilities allow food entrepreneurs to start or grow their food businesses without the high initial cost of investment and the need to build their own facilities. However, the different names or definitions used for these kitchen facilities can sometimes be confusing. This factsheet intends to explain the main types of shared-use commercial kitchens and provide useful information for those looking to use these facilities in Florida.

What is a shared-use commercial kitchen?

A commercial kitchen refers to a facility designed and built to meet current healthy and safety codes. These kitchens have running water, proper plumbing, and surfaces that are suitable for food production. They must also meet minimum construction standards in all food preparation areas so that food business operators can comply with state or

federal regulations. Shared-use commercial kitchens function like co-working spaces, where multiple individuals or businesses can use the same facility. These kitchens typically offer multiple food preparation areas, cold and dry storage, professional-grade equipment, and a sanitation program, allowing several businesses to operate simultaneously. Users can rent the space by the hour, day, or month to operate their food businesses (Meador McCausland et al. 2018).

There are various terms used to describe shared-use commercial kitchens, such as incubators, accelerators, community kitchens, food hubs, or food innovation centers. While these terms are similar, they may point to slight differences in kitchen model or purpose. Table 1 provides definitions for these types of shared-use kitchens.

Food Regulations and Permits

Regardless of the type of shared-use kitchen, the main goal is to ensure businesses comply with food safety regulations. In Florida, food business owners must register with either the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) or Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS). These businesses are subject to initial and ongoing inspections. The DBPR regulates restaurants, caterers, and temporary event vendors, while the FDACS oversees retail and wholesale food processors.

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Depending on the type of food, method of sale, and annual sales, business must follow specific regulations, such as the the FDA Food Code or Current Good Manufacturing Practices (cGMPs) found in 21 CFR 117. Shared-use kitchens often host multiple businesses simultaneously, which means various regulations and inspections from both DBPR and FDACS may apply within the same facility. While shared-use kitchen owners can offer guidance, it is the responsibility of each business owner to obtain the necessary permit to operate within the facility.

Additional Services in Shared-Use Commercial Kitchens

Shared-use commercial kitchen owners or employees often provide additional services to help members start and grow their food businesses. These services can include food-safety trainings, business classes, marketing and distribution opportunities, legal and financial advising, and packaging partnered with universities, making it possible for experts to offer these trainings or services (for example, Extension education). Privately owned facilities might provide these services themselves or use outside consultants. The level of guidance and services offered by each facility depends on the needs of the clients and the resources available.

The range of services offered varies between facilities. This variation is a key factor in distinguishing different types of facilities, as listed in Table 1. However, the term “accelerator” in a facility’s name does not always mean it follows the model described in the definition. Some facilities only offer the basic commissary model, which provides commercial kitchen space for business owners. This model is suitable for established businesses that only need commercial kitchen space. On the other hand, entrepreneurs in the beginning stages might rely on the additional services provided by an incubator, accelerator, or food hub.

When searching for a facility, entrepreneurs should determine their needs, communicate with facility owners or directors, and ensure their goals align with the resources the facility offers. They should also consider whether the kitchen rental rates fit their budget. Facilities may rent kitchen space by the hour, day, or month, so entrepreneurs should select a facility that matches their expected usage. Many shared-use commercial kitchens in Florida and across the United States offer options for food entrepreneurs. A list of current shared-use commercial kitchen facilities in Florida is found in Table 2.

Benefits of Using a Shared-Use Commercial Kitchen

When starting a business, food entrepreneurs face several start-up costs, such as purchasing or building a facility, furnishing the facility with commercial equipment, supplying tools/utensils, and making down payments on utilities. The costs to build out a commercial kitchen in an existing space can run up to \$100–\$300 per square foot (Meader McCausland et al. 2018), which may be unworkable for clientele with limited financial means. Shared-use commercial kitchens can help reduce this financial burden for small food businesses.

Ultimately, shared-use facilities provide adequate commercial kitchen space, with minimal capital investment, so local food entrepreneurs may try out new products in the market and limit the effect of potential product failure. Furthermore, the resources, services, and networking opportunities these facilities may provide will ease the process of launching a new food business and may catalyze the growth of the business.

Additional Resources

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS)

Food Establishment Minimum Construction Standards: https://www.fdacs.gov/content/download/64038/file/Food_Establishment_Minimum_Construction_Standards.pdf

Mobile Food Establishments: <https://www.fdacs.gov/Business-Services/Food/Food-Establishments/Mobile-Food-Establishments>

Retail Food Establishment Permit: <https://www.fdacs.gov/Business-Services/Food-Establishments/Retail-Food-Establishment-Permit>

Wholesale/Manufactured Food Establishment Permit: <https://www.fdacs.gov/Business-Services/Food-Establishments/Wholesale-Manufactured-Food-Establishment-Permit>

Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR)

Food Service Permit Information: <https://www.myfloridalicense.com/intentions2.asp?chBoard=true&boardid=200&SID=>

References

Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO). 2017. “Guidelines for Incubator Kitchens.” https://www.afdo.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Guidelines_for_Incubator_Kitchens_acc_updated_2017.pdf. Accessed 20 Oct 2024.

Meador McCausland, D., R. Miller, A. Colpaart, and M. King. 2018. *Shared Kitchen Toolkit: A Practical Guide to Planning, Launching and Managing a Shared-Use Commercial Kitchen*. The Food Corridor. <https://www.thefoodcorridor.com/resources/>. Accessed 26 Mar 2020.

Topaloff, A. 2014. “The Shared-Use Kitchen Planning Toolkit.” Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. <https://dr.lib.iastate.edu/entities/publication/f3d3307a-20b2-42c4-b885-8c966dfc83ae>. Accessed 20 Oct 2024.

Table 1. Shared-Use Commercial Kitchen Type Definitions

Commissary kitchen	An established commercial kitchen that allows food service businesses to rent kitchen time to prepare and store food. May also offer food trucks and mobile food vendors a place to acquire potable water and dispose of wastewater.
Incubator Kitchen	An entrepreneurial support organization with commercial kitchen facilities focused on advancing the growth of small and emerging food businesses. Often these facilities offer trainings or services to guide members as they open and grow a small food business.
Accelerator Kitchen	Typically, a kitchen facility with a short-term program designed to help food businesses with high growth potential. Members receive guidance and networking opportunities, and in return, the accelerator may obtain a percentage of equity in the company.
Community Kitchen	A shared-use kitchen that serves the community at large and is not for the exclusive use of for-profit businesses. May apply to kitchens found in facilities such as churches or community centers.
Food Hub	An aggregation and distribution center for locally produced foods. May include a shared-use kitchen for food processing, but also a retail market (e.g., coffee shop) where clientele may sell their products.
Food Innovation Center	A multiprogram facility that offers technical services to entrepreneurs. May or may not include kitchen space for rent.
Definitions derived from AFDO (2017), Meader McCausland et al. (2018), and Topaloff (2014).	

Table 2. Shared-Use Commercial Kitchens in Florida*

Business Name	Address	Phone Number/Email	Website
Bakery Pro Kitchen			https://www.bakeryprokitchen.com/
Beaver Street Commissary	2356 Beaver St. Jacksonville, FL 32209	904-655-6603; info@beaverstreetcommissary.com	www.beaverstreetcommissary.com
Catapult Kitchen Incubator	502 E. Main St. Lakeland, FL 33801	863-940-9660	https://catapultlakeland.com/kitchen/
Citrus County Community Kitchen	2804 W. Marc Knighton Court Lecanto, FL 34461	352-527-7540/352-527-5993	https://www.citrusbocc.com/departments/community_services/parks_recreation/community_building_rentals/index.php
Commercial Kitchen Fort Myers	11770-A Metro Parkway Fort Myers, FL 33966	239-462-3589; ckfm@comcast.net	www.commercialkitchenfortmyers.com
Commercial Kitchen of Naples	1431 Rail Head Blvd. Ste. 1 Naples, Florida 34110	239-238-6030; info@CommercialKitchenNaples.com	https://commercialkitchennaples.com/
East End Market	3201 Corrine Drive Orlando, FL 32803	321-236-3316; info@eastendmkt.com	https://eastendmkt.com/commissary-kitchen/
EME's Commissary Kitchen			https://www.emesfoodhall.com/commissary-kitchen
Florida Chefs Workshop	7097 30th Ave. North St. Petersburg, FL 33710	727-308-1256	www.floridachefsworkshop.com
Florida Culinary Accelerator @ Immokalee	170 Airpark Blvd., Suite 103 Immokalee, FL 34142	239-252-2227 Ext.1; theculinaryaccelerator@colliercountyfl.gov	www.collieredo.org/culinary-accelerator
The Food Factory	13920 SW 139th Ct. Miami, FL 33186	305-677-3770; info@thefoodfactory.us	https://www.thefoodfactory.us/
Healthy Food Factory	150 NW 16th St. Boca Raton, FL 33432	561-394-7466	www.healthyfoodfactory.com/
Jax Kitchen	1850 Emerson St. Jacksonville, FL 32207	904-619-5872; cook@jax-kitchen.com	www.jax-kitchen.com
KitchenShare	524 N MLK Jr Blvd. Tallahassee, FL 32301	850-577-1615; kitchenshare@thefnia.org	www.kitchensharetlh.com/
Lake Commissary Kitchen	50 West Orange Ave. Eustis, FL 32726	352-989-6795; info@lakecommissarykitchen.com	www.facebook.com/lakecommissarykitchen/
Let's Eat Fresh	809 N Magnolia Ave. Ocala, FL 34475	352-299-5233; LetsEatFresh@yahoo.com	www.letseatfresh.net/
Let's Cook Shared Kitchen	5831 Memorial Highway Tampa, FL 33615	813-260-4604; info@letscooksharedkitchen.com	www.letscooksharedkitchen.com
LPKitchen	470 Ansini Blvd., Suite D/E, Hallandale Beach, FL 33009	LPKitchenMiami@gmail.com	https://www.lpkitchen.com/
My Kitchen8 Culinary Centers	9351 SW 56 Street Miami, FL 33165	786- 365-7614; info@mykitchen8.com	https://www.thekitchendoor.com/kitchen-rental/my-kitchen8-culinary-centers
My-Rent-A-Kitchen	1188 Kapp Drive Clearwater, FL, 33765	727-441-1843; myrentakitchen@gmail.com	www.myrentakitchen.com
Orlando Caterers & Commissary	929 W. Michigan St. Orlando, FL, 32805	407-757-9240; info@orlandocaterers.com	https://orlandocaterers.com/
Orlando Commissary	9318 E. Colonial Dr. A7 Orlando, FL 32817	321-348-7386; rent@orlcommissary.com	https://www.almendraskitchen.com/
OTH Kitchens & Food Business Consulting	1499 SW 30th Ave. Boynton Beach, FL 33426	561-596-3993; othkitchen@gmail.com	https://www.othkitchens.com/
Pasco County Incubator Kitchen	15029 14th St. Dade City, FL 33523	352-521-1254; aschlitt@mypasco.net	https://www.pascocountyfl.net/services/cooperative_extension/incubator_kitchen.php

Business Name	Address	Phone Number/Email	Website
Prokitchen Hub, Tampa	224 South Dale Mabry Hwy. Tampa, FL 33611	813-804-8944	www.prokitchenhubtampa.com
Pro Kitchen Hub	5007 North Hiatus Rd. Sunrise, FL 33351	954-514-7889; frontdesk@prokitchenhub.com	www.prokitchenhub.com
Seminole Commissary Kitchen	117 East Church Ave. Longwood, FL 32750		https://www.seminolecommissarykitchen.com/
Sunshine Kitchen	7550 Pruitt Research Center Rd., Fort Pierce, FL 34945	772-467-3107; McCantsRe@stlucieco.org	https://www.stlucieco.gov/departments-and-services/county-administration/tcerda/sunshine-kitchen
Tampa Bay Kitchen	25778 US Hwy 19 North Clearwater, FL 33763	727-432-2317; info@tampabaykitchen.com	www.tampabaykitchen.com/
WeCook Miami	2180 NW 24th Ct. Miami, FL 33142	305-400-8959/305-546-4967; info@wecookmia.com	https://www.wecookmia.com/
Working Food	219 NW 10th Ave. Gainesville, FL 32601	352-260-4458; kitchen@workingfood.org	www.workingfood.org
Your Culinary Place LLC	6592 Superior Ave. Sarasota, FL 34231	941-922-9222; Chef@YourCulinaryPlace.com	www.yourculinaryplace.com
*This list is provided for the information purpose only. The inclusion on this list does not indicate endorsement of the kitchens by UF/IFAS. https://www.foodtruckprofit.com/commissary-kitchens-by-state/florida			