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**Open Forum for Small Scale Food Processors
Ask Questions... Get Answers!**

If this had been an in-person class, the physical space would have been tight. But COVID protocol required an online format of our recent Small Scale Food Processing Workshop, and we are glad it did! With 60 participants joining in everyone had a "seat".

The Workshop, organized by the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Monroe County, was aimed at current and aspiring food entrepreneurs to help them better understand the key factors that contribute to a successful small scale food business. Two main topics were covered: the fundamentals of food processing including the licensing process, regulatory issues, and food safety; and the basics of managing a small business such as writing a business plan, setting prices, and applying for grants.

Presenters from the *NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets*, *Cornell University Food Venture Center*, *Small Business Development Centers*, and local business owners shared their knowledge and experience with participants.

The Workshop generated an overwhelming positive response from the audience. Here are some examples:

"What a wonderful, well run program! Thank you. The information here will help get us back on track."

"Thank you for presenting a great program. I certainly learned so much and it gave me quite a bit to think about and to be able to take action on my hopes and plans."

"My wife and I enjoyed the two-day seminar. It was incredibly informative. Thank you so much for organizing it. It inspired us to get going and we are now in the process of

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getting our 20C License through NYSDAM at our local parish kitchen.

The workshop also produced new inquiries, especially in the area of food processing fundamentals. Some asked questions specific to their own operations during the workshop, some sent them by email after the event.

In response to the high level of interest we are now planning an Open Forum as a follow up. The Forum will be an informal event in which active audience participation will be encouraged for learning and networking. Participants are invited to bring questions and get answers specific to their operation. The Forum is not only for the Workshop attendees, but also for all current and potential food entrepreneurs!

Our first speaker will be **John M. Luker**, Assistant Director, Division of Food Safety & Inspection, NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets. He will share his expertise in the world of regulatory and licensing requirements.

Our second speaker will be **Laura Fox O'Sullivan**, President, The Commissary: Downtown Kitchen Incubator & Vice President, Rochester Downtown Development Corporation. She will discuss the process of using their commercial kitchen and the services it offers.

Additionally, **Shannon Prozeller**, Cornell University Food Venture Center, will be available to answer questions regarding the recipe approval and scheduled process to assure the safety of the products.

Registration and more details are available at:

<http://monroe.cce.cornell.edu/events/2021/03/19/open-forum-for-small-scale-food-processors>

Registration is open until the event starts. Upon registration you will receive a confirmation email with instructions for joining. Attendance is free.

You can submit questions in advance by contacting Jarmila Haseler at 585-753-2565 or email jh954@cornell.edu.



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