

FOOD AND BEVERAGE STARTUP JOURNEY

Are you thinking about starting a food or beverage business? The idea may seem daunting, however there are numerous resources available for new Food and Beverage companies. Although not all Food and Beverage journeys are the same, this map is a good place to get started.



>>> IDEATION

What is your great idea, how does it create value, and who does it create value for? Find people to vet that idea. By taking the needed time to consider and test ideas you can avoid costly missteps.

- **Come up with a Product Idea**
- [Consider an Ideation Session](#)
- **Understand how Your Product is Solving a Problem for Your Consumer**
- **Define Your Target Market**



>>> GET READY, SUPPORTED & NETWORKED

Business owners are involved in an array of social connections, from business networking groups to partnerships and formal business mentorships. Networking for small to mid-sized businesses is a key element for success. It allows opportunities for new business ventures, advice, friendship, and an overall community of support.

- [Establish a Support System and Look for Networking Opportunities](#)
- **Listen to Industry Podcasts**
- **Find a Business Advisor**
- **Consider Taking [Getting Your Recipe to Market](#)**
- [Join the \[PNW F&B\] Resource Sharing Network](#)



<<< PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Product development is refining your recipes and product concepts to make them saleable in a retail market. Product testing, recipe scaling, and wholesale sourcing along with tracking cost of goods are all pieces to the puzzle. Product Development can be the longest phase for pre-launch businesses, especially those working towards a self-stable food product.

- [Scale & Refine Recipe Formulation](#)
- [Test for Product Safety and Shelf Stability](#)
- [Source Wholesale Ingredients & Packaging](#)
- **Generate Nutrition Fact Panel Data**
- **Confirm Shelf Life with Microbiology Lab Tests**



<<< MARKET RESEARCH

Identifying and understanding your target market is the first step to beginning your product development journey and discovering market opportunities. Paying attention to your potential competition is vital to the success of your business and will help you position your product to be competitive in it's category.

- **Survey the Marketplace for Competitive Landscape**
- **Identify Unmet Consumer Needs, Opportunities for Innovation, and Areas of Potential Improvement**



>>> BUSINESS CREATION

There are several steps that are necessary to successfully start a business. These need to be completed before you can start selling product. Pay close attention to the necessary planning, regulatory, and legal requirements to avoid trouble down the road.

- **Draft Mission, Vision, Values Statements**
- [Start a Business Plan](#)
- [Register Business Entity With the State](#)
- [Apply for Federal EIN](#)
- **Check City / County Business License Requirements**



>>> FINANCES

For Consumer Packaged Goods, a close understanding and management of your finances is critical as you have to purchase ingredients and make your product before you make sales. Most start-up companies require initial investment and subsequent financing. Controlling your costs and sound planning are key to building a profitable business.

- **Create Start-up Cost Budget**
- **Determine Product Cost (COGs)**
- [Set Gross Margin & Selling Price](#)
- **Choose Bookkeeping System**
- **Purchase Liability Insurance**
- **Open Business Bank Account**



<<< FOOD SAFETY

Food Safety First. Food safety is the foundation of product development and essential to the success of any food business. It is practiced everyday and with the goal of continuous improvement. As a food business owner, whether you self-produce or partner with a co-packer, you are responsible for the safety of your product. If you partner with a co-packer you will not need to complete most of the steps above, but you will need to ensure your co-packing partner has.

- [Take the Acidified Food Course / Get a Process Authority Letter](#)
- [Do you Need a Food Safety License?](#)
- **Register with the FDA**
- [Review Food Safety Modernization Act \(FSMA\) Requirements](#)
- **Develop a Food Safety Plan**



<<< BRANDING & PACKAGING

Branding is an essential part of establishing your own identity and setting yourself apart from your competition. Creating a compelling brand and a retail optimized package can be the difference between success and failure.

- **Collect Packaging & Branding you Like** (photos or physical)
- **Develop Product Name, Logo & Brand Guidelines**
- [Business Trade Name Search](#)
- **Product Brand Name and Trademark Search**
- **Design Label(s) and Packaging**
- [Check Label for Compliance](#)



>>> PRODUCTION OPTIONS

SELF PRODUCTION
Most food businesses start with self-production in a home or commercial kitchen while they are finding product market fit. Brands eventually transition to contract manufacturing or building out their own processing facility.

- [Review the Farm-Direct Exemption](#)
- [Find a Commercial Kitchen](#)
- [Complete ODA Inspection & License](#)

CONTRACT MANUFACTURING (CO-PACK)
Partnering with a Co-Packer can allow you time to run and grow your business. Other benefits may include access to ingredient sources, pre-existing food safety licenses held by the co-packer, access to certifications like organic or gluten free facilities, built-in supply chain, product development access and more. With benefits also comes added costs and product run minimums, be prepared to adjust your cost accordingly.

- [Co-Packer Search](#)
- **Production Specification Sheet**
- **Label, Sourcing & Packing Requirements**



>>> DIRECT SALES & MARKETING

Through selling directly to consumers you can learn more about your customers' needs, interests and product experience. Most businesses will refine their product, pitch, packaging, labeling, etc in their first few years of business thanks to customer feedback and operational needs. Once you've worked out the kinks, then consider moving on to retail.

- [Apply for Events, Pop-ups, and Farmers Markets](#)
- **Set up Social Media Accounts**
- **Select Website / E-commerce Platform**
- **Make Business Cards & Product Information Handouts**



<<< RETAIL SALES

Selling your product really begins with you. You know your brand, your competition, and the pricing needed to successfully sell into retail. Align your products with retailers who share similar values as your brand. Ask for their feedback and be receptive to their suggestions. It is extremely important to understand the capacity of your supply chain during this phase. Rapid sales growth can result in out of stocks and permanently damage your newly formed retailer relationships.

- **Establish Wholesale Price, ensure strong margin**
- **Make sure your label has a UPC Code & Nutrition Fact Panel**
- [Identify Key Accounts & Channels](#)
- **Develop Sales Sheets**
- **Develop Product Pitch**

