

## Maine's Shared Use Kitchen Coalition

Maine has a number of shared use kitchen and food storage facilities in various stages of planning. These projects include the Penobscot Bay Commercial Kitchen in Bucksport, the Fairbanks School Shared Use Kitchen in Farmington, The York County Community Kitchen in Saco, the Cobscook Marketing Co-op/Community Kitchen in Eastport, and the Connections Local Foods Cooperative Kitchen Project in Dixfield. Other projects in the conceptual phase include an incubator kitchen in Rumford.

Although each community partnership has a slightly different focus, it is fair to say that the common mission is to provide farmers, fishermen, and food entrepreneurs with facilities and the necessary equipment to add value to their food products. The typical user is likely to be low to moderate income and seeking to expand their market, increase their income, and create jobs. Coalition members have come together to discuss common issues and learn from each other as we develop these and other local projects.

The concept of a Shared Use Kitchen is to help food entrepreneurs by providing access to modern commercial kitchen equipment in a shared space, to prepare and process food for consumer marketing. The facility would meet all state and federal regulations and requirements. It would also provide a supportive environment in which information and support can be accessed easily.

A shared use commercial kitchen offers local food growers, producers, and entrepreneurs an opportunity to develop their food product concepts and bring them to the consumer market. Equipment in these shared use commercial kitchens can include commercial ovens, ranges, mixers, kettles, industrial food processors, refrigerators, freezers, dry storage, and other equipment resources. Business planning and training can also be a part of the services provided by these facilities.

Maine's Shared Use Kitchen Coalition has organized to build awareness of the value of these types of facilities to communities and to serve as a catalyst for investment in Shared Use Commercial Kitchens.

- Research shows that this type of facility can work in rural areas where cost and regulatory factors make it increasingly difficult for small producers to obtain or renew a home based food-processing license.
- The growth of the specialty foods segment of the retail food industry is more than double that of the overall industry over the last three years.
- There are renewed efforts to increase local food security and to support "buy local" efforts and to support entrepreneurs and farmers as consumers become more health conscious and more aware of food ingredients and processing.

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The Coalition is being coordinated by the Threshold To Maine Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Area. For more information about the Coalition and to get a list of participating organizations and groups, please contact the Threshold To Maine office.



Threshold To Maine RC&D Area, Inc.  
67 Shaker Road, Suite 9  
Gray, ME 04039-9640  
(207) 657-3131  
threshold@gwi.net

## **Maine's Shared Use Coalition Organizations**

These organizations are currently participating in the Coalition. Other groups, agencies, and organizations are welcome to become part of the Coalition and can join as the network expands.

York County Community Action Program (Saco Kitchen Project)  
York County Shelter (Saco Kitchen Project)  
Fairbanks School Neighborhood Association (Farmington Kitchen Project)  
Unity Barn Raisers  
Washington Hancock Community Agency (Bucksport Kitchen Project)  
Down East Business Alliance (Bucksport Kitchen Project)  
Town of Bucksport (Bucksport Kitchen Project)  
Cobscook Bay Resource Center (Eastport Kitchen Project)  
Connections Local Food Cooperative (Rumford and Dixfield Kitchen Projects)  
Women, Work, and Community  
Maine's Small Business Development Centers  
Maine Rural Partners  
University of Maine Dr. Mathew Highlands Pilot Plant  
University of Maine Cooperative Extension  
Threshold To Maine RC&D Area  
Time and Tide RC&D Area  
Down East RC&D Area  
Maine Department of Agriculture  
Maine Department of Community and Economic Development  
Maine Department of Health and Human Services  
Maine Department of Environmental Protection  
State Planning Office  
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service  
U.S. Food and Drug Administration  
Pemberton's Gourmet Foods

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