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DOH ADOPTS UPDATES TO FOOD SAFETY CODE

25-100

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HONOLULU – The Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) adopted amendments to the Hawai'i Food Safety Code to allow sale of certain homemade foods, to align with the 2022 U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Model Food Code, and increase food service flexibility for long-term care facility residents. The rules were effective August 24, 2025 and adopted as part of Hawai'i Administrative Rules (HAR), Title 11, Chapter 50.

The Hawai'i Food Safety Code was updated to expand opportunities for Homemade Food product producers, as required in Act 195, Session Laws of Hawaii 2024, by:

- Amending the Homemade Food definition to include pickled, fermented, or acidified plant food products that must have a pH at or below 4.2 or a Water Activity level at or below 0.88.
- Allowing Homemade Food producers to sell to third parties and wholesale their non-Temperature Controlled for Safety products.

The 2022 version of the FDA Model Food Code is the most current version released and provides scientifically sound technical and legal basis for regulating the food industry in Hawai'i. Amendments that align with the 2022 FDA Model Food Code include:

- Declaring sesame as the ninth major food allergen recognized by the federal government. All FDA requirements applicable to major food allergens, including labeling and manufacturing requirements, apply to sesame as of January 1, 2023. Permitted Food Establishments must inform customers in writing (e.g., signage, table tents, note on menu boards, handouts) if any of the nine major food allergens are used within the food establishment.
- Creating requirements to allow pet dogs in outdoor dining spaces if certain provisions of the rule are followed.

The revised rule also allows owners/operators of long-term care facilities that serve Highly Susceptible Populations to serve raw or undercooked foods to residents upon a resident's request. The previous Food Safety Code included an absolute prohibition for food establishments to serve HSPs raw or undercooked foods. This change was adopted to allow increased flexibility for long-term care facility residents who wish to consume raw or undercooked foods, such as rare steak, if the resident acknowledges the risk of foodborne illness.

[The updated version of HAR §11-50 is available here.](#)

The [DOH Food Safety Branch](#) protects and promotes the health of Hawai'i residents and visitors through education of food industry workers and regulation of food establishments statewide. The branch conducts routine health inspections of food establishments where food products are prepared, manufactured, distributed or sold.

The branch also investigates sources of foodborne illnesses and potential adulteration. It is also responsible for mitigating the effects of these incidents to prevent any future occurrences. The DOH food safety specialists strive to work with business owners, food service workers and the food industry to ensure safe food preparation practices and sanitary conditions.

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