

Variations



PUBLIC HEALTH REASONS: Specific food processes that require a variance have historically resulted in more foodborne illness than standard processes. These processes present a significant health risk if the facility is not following specific operational procedures for each batch of product. These types of operations may require the person in charge and food employees to use advanced equipment and demonstrate specialized competencies. The variance requirement is designed to ensure that the proposed method of operation is carried out safely.

FOOD CODE, OAR 603-25-0030, CHAPTER 3-502.11

Food establishments are always evolving and experimenting with different styles of cooking and preparing food for their customers. This may include food preparation techniques that do not comply with the Food Code. Because of the hazards associated with certain foods and processes, retail food establishments must apply for a variance before starting any specialized processing.

Some examples of special processes are:

- Curing with nitrates
- Smoking food for preservation
- Reduced oxygen packaging (also called vacuum packaging) of cooked foods
- Acidifying foods
- Operating a molluscan shellfish display tank
- Sprouting seeds or beans onsite

Variations may not be approved for facilities that do not meet minimum Food Code requirements. Variations are for facilities that can show that the rules present an undue burden to their operation and that their proposed alternative will provide public health protection equal to or greater than the measures provided for in the current rules.

All variance applications must be approved before the procedure is put into practice.