

VAN WERT COUNTY GENERAL HEALTH DISTRICT

1179 Westwood Dr., Suite 300, Van Wert, Ohio 45891

Phone: (419) 238-0808 Fax: (419) 238-9571 Email: vwchd@vanwertcountyhealth.org

HACCP Plan Requirements for Vacuum Packaging Potentially Hazardous Foods

Vacuum packaging may extend the storage time of refrigerated foods, dried foods, and frozen foods, but it does not eliminate the possibility for all bacterial growth. It may eliminate the growth of spoilage bacteria, or the bacteria that spoil the quality of food in noticeable ways, but it may enhance the ability for some bacteria to reproduce. **It may actually increase the danger and likelihood of botulism.** Using a Reduced Oxygen Packager requires some extra steps to be taken in order to limit the growth of organisms.

The product must be:

1. Dated to be used before 14 days if kept in the refrigerator
2. Operated under a Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan to eliminate/reduce risk of botulism. This plan must:
 - a. Identify the food to be packaged
 - b. Identify how bare hand contact is prevented.
 - c. Describe how food will be labeled to identify type of food and date packaged.
 - d. Specify method of keeping food 41°F or below
 - e. Identify a specific area used for the machine.
 - f. Limit access to trained personnel
 - g. Identify washing/sanitizing procedures for surfaces and equipment
 - h. Identify how cross contamination will be prevented
3. Limit items packaged to those that do not support botulism by using two of these barriers
 - a. Acidic, pH of 4.6 or less
 - b. Dry product, water activity of 0.9 or less
 - c. Cured at a USDA processing plant
 - d. Raw meat/poultry
 - e. Kept under 41°F before, during, and after packaging.
4. Do not package fish unless maintained frozen before, during, and after packaging.
5. When thawing items that were vacuum packaged, it is recommended that the package be opened to allow oxygen to enter. Also thawing must be done correctly; under cold running water, in the cooler, in the microwave, or as part of the cooking process.

In order to continue vacuum packaging foods you must have a written plan outlining the above items. This plan may also serve as a training manual for employees. Also, there needs to be a log of what you package, the date, and the temperature before and after

packaging. If you need any assistance you may call me at 419-238-0808 Ext. 105.
Thank you.