

MICROENTERPRISE HOME KITCHEN OPERATIONS (MEHKO)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q1: Will the introduction of Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations (MEHKOs) prevent food safety issues?

Yes. Under the Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations (MEHKO) permitting process, operators will be subject to similar standards as restaurants. Those standards are:

- **Increased Regulation:** MEHKOs will bring existing unpermitted operations under formal regulatory oversight, enhancing food safety standards.
- **Mandatory Training:** MEHKO operators will be mandated to complete a food safety manager course, enhancing their knowledge and skills to handle food safely.
- **Employee Certification:** Employees working in MEHKOs will need to have a food handler card and the operator will be required to obtain a certificate in food safety, further ensuring safety in food handling processes.
- **Positive Track Record:** Research indicates that with proper regulation, food safety can be maintained or even enhanced through the MEHKO framework.

Q2: What if there are concerns regarding traffic and parking issues with MEHKOs?

- **Meal Cap:** MEHKOs are limited on the number of meals they can sell, with a cap set at 90 meals per week and 30 meals per day, preventing large-scale traffic and parking issues.
- **Previous Experience:** Other jurisdictions that have authorized MEHKOs have not reported a significant increase in neighborhood complaints or issues associated with MEHKOs.
- **Adaptive Strategies:** Provisions are in place to adapt and modify regulations if unforeseen traffic and parking issues arise.
- **Community Engagement:** The program encourages operators to engage in good neighbor practices, fostering community harmony.

Q3: How will the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health address concerns about the disposal of oils and grease from MEHKOs?

- **Education During Inspections:** The department will educate food handlers about waste disposal as part of the inspection process.
- **Referral to Public Works:** The department will refer any observations to the applicable city or County public works division for follow-up actions.

Q4: Some people argue that sidewalk vendors and microentrepreneurs have unfair advantages. How does the MEHKO program address this concern?

- **Level Playing Field:** The program aims to bring equity by requiring both sidewalk food vendors and MEHKOs to comply with state law and County code along with obtaining proper permits.
- **Revenue Cap:** The revenue cap of \$100,000 per year emphasizes that MEHKOs are an entry point to entrepreneurship, not a replacement for traditional businesses.
- **Formal Economy Entry:** The MEHKO program aims to help microentrepreneurs become part of the economy by promoting business growth and encouraging innovation.



Q5: Will the MEHKO program lead to more sidewalk food vendors operating without permits?

- **Regulation Enhancement:** The program will increase regulation of sidewalk food vending by providing affordable commissary spaces and clear pathways to legal permitting.
- **Encouraging Compliance:** By offering affordable and legal alternatives, the program aims to reduce unpermitted sidewalk food vending.
- **Equitable Enforcement:** The program will enable the County to enforce regulations more equitably, identifying and penalizing non-compliant food operators effectively.

Q6: How does the MEHKO program affect a city's ability to have local control over this issue?

- **Preservation of Local Control:** Each city retains control through local municipal ordinances, such as noise, traffic, and nuisance regulations.
- **Ongoing Communication:** The County is committed to engaging with cities to discuss and address their concerns. The County will seek feedback from the cities to develop and refine the MEHKO ordinance.
- **Progress Reporting:** The County will share regular progress reports, maintaining transparency and facilitating adjustments based on each city's experiences and suggestions.

Q7: How are landlords protected from property damage from residents operating MEHKOs?

- **Landlord Notification:** Operators will be advised to notify their landlords about their MEHKO activities, preventing conflicts and misunderstandings.
- **Lease Agreement Compliance:** To prevent MEHKO operators in a rental unit from being displaced due to violating the terms of their lease, operators will be required to ensure their business activities do not violate the terms outlined in their residential rental agreements, safeguarding property interests. This will be a part of the education during the permitting process.

