

## REDUCED OXYGEN PACKAGING WITHOUT A VARIANCE 3-502.12

3-502.12 Reduced Oxygen Packaging (ROP) can be done without a variance if the following criteria are met:

(A) A food establishment that packages Time/Temperature Control for Safety Food (TCS) using a ROP method shall control the growth and toxin formation of *Clostridium botulinum* and the growth of *Listeria monocytogenes*.<sup>P</sup>

(B) Except as specified under (F) below, a food establishment that packages Time/Temperature Control for Safety Food using a Reduced Oxygen packaging method shall implement a HACCP Plan that contains the information specified under 8-201.14(C) and (D)<sup>Pf</sup> (See HACCP Handout) that

(1) Identifies the food to be packaged;<sup>Pf</sup>

(2) Except as specified under sections (C) through (E) of this section, requires that the packaged food shall be maintained at 5°C (41°F) or less and meet at least one of the following criteria:<sup>Pf</sup>

(a) Has an  $a_w$  of 0.91 or less,<sup>Pf</sup>

(b) Has a pH of 4.6 or less,<sup>Pf</sup>

(c) Is a meat or poultry product cured at a food processing plant regulated by the USDA using substances specified in 9 CFR 424.21, Use of Food Ingredients and Sources of Radiation, and is received in an intact package,<sup>Pf</sup> or

(d) Is a food with a high level of competing organisms such as raw meat, raw poultry, or raw vegetables;<sup>Pf</sup>

(3) Describes how the package shall be prominently and conspicuously labeled on the principal display panel in bold type on a contrasting background, with instructions to:<sup>Pf</sup>

(a) Maintain the food at 5°C (41°F) or below,<sup>Pf</sup> and

(b) Discard the food if within 30 calendar days of its packaging, if it is not served for on-premises consumption, or consumed, if served or sold for off-premises consumption;<sup>Pf</sup>

(4) Limits the refrigerated shelf life to no more than 30 calendar days from packaging to consumption, except the time the product is maintained frozen, or the original manufacturer's "sell by" or "use by" date, whichever occurs first;<sup>P</sup>

(5) Includes operational procedures that:

(a) Prohibit contacting ready-to-eat food with bare hands as specified under 3-301.11(B),<sup>Pf</sup>

(b) Identify a designated work area and the method by which:<sup>Pf</sup>

(i) Physical barriers or methods of separation of raw foods and ready-to-eat foods to minimize cross contamination,<sup>Pf</sup> and

(ii) Access to the processing equipment is limited to responsible, trained personnel familiar with the potential hazards of the operation,<sup>Pf</sup> and

(c) Delineate cleaning and sanitization procedures for food-contact surfaces;<sup>Pf</sup> and

(6) Describes the training program that ensures that the individual responsible for the ROP operation understands the: <sup>Pf</sup>

- (a) Concepts required for a safe operation, <sup>Pf</sup>
- (b) Equipment and facilities, <sup>Pf</sup> and
- (c) Procedures specified under (B)(5) of this section and 8-201.14(C) and
- (D), the contents of the HACCP Plan. <sup>Pf</sup>

(7) Is provided to the regulatory authority prior to implementation as specified under 8-201.13(B).

(C) Except for fish that is frozen before, during, and after packaging, a food establishment may not package fish using a ROP method. <sup>P</sup>

(D) Except as specified under (C) and (F) of this section, a food establishment that packages TCS foods using a cook-chill or sous vide process shall:

(1) Provide to the regulatory authority prior to implementation, a complete HACCP plan. See (B) above. <sup>Pf</sup>

(2) Ensure the food is:

- (a) Prepared and consumed on the premises, or prepared and consumed off the premises, but within the same business entity with no distribution or sale of the packaged product to another business entity or the consumer, <sup>Pf</sup>
- (b) Cooked to heat all parts of the food to a temperature and for a time as specified under Section 3-401.11(A), (B) and (C), which describes cooking raw animal foods <sup>P</sup>
- (c) Protected from contamination before and after cooking as specified under Parts 3-3 and 3-4 of this Code, <sup>P</sup>
- (d) Placed in a package with an oxygen barrier and sealed before cooking, or placed in a package and sealed immediately after cooking and before reaching a temperature below 57°C (135°F), <sup>P</sup>
- (e) Cooled to 5°C (41°F) in the sealed package or bag as specified under Section 3-501.14 (on cooling) <sup>P</sup> and:

- (i) Cooled to 1°C (34°F) within 48 hours of reaching 5°C (41°F) and held at that temperature until consumed or discarded within 30 days after the date of packaging; <sup>P</sup>
- (ii) Held at 5°C (41°F) or less for no more than 7 days, at which time the food must be consumed or discarded; <sup>P</sup> or
- (iii) Held frozen with no shelf life restriction while frozen until consumed or used. <sup>P</sup>

(f) Held in a refrigeration unit that is equipped with an electronic system that continuously monitors time and temperature and is visually examined for proper operation twice daily, <sup>Pf</sup>

(g) If transported off-site to a satellite location of the same business entity, equipped with verifiable electronic monitoring devices to ensure that times and temperatures are monitored during transportation, <sup>Pf</sup> and

(h) Labeled with the product name and the date packaged, <sup>Pf</sup> and

(3) Maintain the records required to confirm that cooling and cold holding refrigeration time/temperature parameters are required as part of the HACCP plan and:

- (a) Make such records available to the regulatory authority upon request, <sup>Pf</sup> and
- (b) hold such records for at least 6 months; <sup>Pf</sup> and

(4) Implement written operational procedures as specified under (B)(5) of this section and a training program as specified under (B)(6) of this section. <sup>Pf</sup>

(E) Except as specified under (F) of this section, a food establishment that packages cheese using a ROP method shall:

- (1) Limit the cheeses packaged to those that are commercially manufactured in a food processing plant with no ingredients added in the food establishment and that meet the Standards of Identity as specified in 21 CFR 133.150 Hard cheeses, 21 CFR 133.169 Pasteurized process cheese or 21 CFR 133.187 Semisoft cheeses; <sup>P</sup>
- (2) Have a HACCP plan that contains the information specified as in (B) above and as specified under (B)(1), (B)(3)(a), (B)(5), and (B)(6) of this section; <sup>Pf</sup>
- (3) Labels the package on the principal display panel with a "use by" date that does not exceed 30 days from its packaging or the original manufacturer's "sell by" or "use by" date, whichever occurs first; <sup>Pf</sup> and
- (4) Discards the ROP cheese if it is not sold for off-premises consumption or consumed within 30 calendar days of its packaging. <sup>Pf</sup>

(F) A HACCP plan is not required when a food establishment uses a ROP method to package TCS food that is always

- (1) Labeled with the production time and date,
- (2) Held at 5°C (41°F) or less during refrigerated storage, and
- (3) Removed from its package in the food establishment within 48 hours after packaging.

(Document updated November, 2018 after MA adopted the 2013 Federal Food Code and the 2015 Amendments.)