



STARTING A SHELLFISH* BUSINESS IN THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY

*This information pertains ONLY to crustacean shellfish (clams, mussels, oysters) operations. For an operation on handling any other seafood, complete and submit the NJDOH Initial Application to Operate a Food-Cosmetic Establishment (F-29) at: nj.gov/health/foodanddrugsafety/wfcp.shtml. For information on starting an aquaculture operation, visit the NJ Department of Agriculture's website at: jerseyseafood.nj.gov/aquaculture.html.

NOTE: The NJ Department of Health Seafood and Shellfish Project oversees a certification program that requires all wholesale shellfish dealers to handle, process, and ship shellfish under sanitary conditions and maintain records verifying that the shellfish were obtained from approved areas. The goal of these shellfish safety programs is to help assure the consumer that the clams, oysters, and mussels are harvested from areas of the state that are safe. Shellfish operations are subject to the FDA Shellfish Model Ordinance and N.J.S.A. 24:2-1, Chapter 13.

How do I start a shellfish business in NJ?

If you intend to start a *retail* (business to consumer sale) operation ONLY, contact your local health department. Find your local health department contact information at: state.nj.us/health/lh/directory/lhdselectcounty.shtml.

If you intend to start a *wholesale* (business-to-business sales) operation, complete and submit two applications:

1. Initial Application to Operate a Food-Cosmetic Establishment (F-29) at: nj.gov/health/foodanddrugsafety/ssp.shtml
2. Application for Certification to Handle Oysters, Clams, or Mussels (F-48) at: nj.gov/health/foodanddrugsafety/ssp.shtml

Once we receive and review your application, we may contact you for more information. We will then send a shellfish inspector to your place of business to evaluate your facility for certification.

What are the basic requirements for my shellfish operation?

Shellstock must be harvested from approved waters. Harvesters and dealers who you buy from must hold a current, authorized license, permit, or certification. Other requirements may vary depending on your operation. At minimum, ALL shellfish operations are required to have:

1. One (or more) Seafood HACCP certified individuals (or demonstrated knowledge of HACCP)
2. On site HACCP plan and related records that are specific to your operation
3. On site refrigerated storage unit that can maintain 45°F
4. One or more infrared thermometers
5. One or more individuals who have completed the shellfish dealer certification training video

Depending on the nature of your operation, you may or may not be required to have a refrigerated truck capable of maintaining 45°F.

What happens during an initial shellfish inspection?

A shellfish inspector will evaluate your proof of HACCP certification or knowledge, HACCP plan, and other records required by your HACCP plan. He/she will also evaluate your operation for compliance with sanitary standards and temperature capabilities. During the inspection, the inspector will observe deficiencies and provide you with advice on corrective actions. Some deficiencies can be corrected on the spot. After you have satisfied all requirements, you will be approved and will be issued a shellfish certification number. You are then authorized to begin selling shellstock in the state of NJ.

What if deficiencies cannot be immediately corrected?

Your inspector will offer you clear guidance and a timeline for correcting your deficiencies. He/she will return at a later date to determine if your deficiencies have been satisfactorily corrected. If yes, you will be issued a shellfish certification number. You are then authorized to begin selling shellstock in the state of NJ.

How about routine inspections?

Once you begin operations, you will be inspected at least twice per year, depending on the nature of your operation. If you pass your inspection, your shellfish certificate will be renewed before the expiration date of June 30 of each year.

For more info, please visit nj.gov/health/foodanddrugsafety/ssp.shtml or contact the Seafood and Shellfish Project at 609-826-4935.