

Culinary Medicine Approved Kitchen (CMAK) Recognition Program - Rules and Guidelines

Background

According to research presented in the second quarter of 2020, roughly 85% of Americans were altering the way they prepared, purchased, and consumed food. The top concerns centered around the ability to source, prepare and procure healthful foods.

When healthful-minded consumers shop for ingredients, there are several resources and options at their disposal. In grocery stores, consumers may rely on governmental labeling like the organic certification from the USDA or certification from third-party organizations like the non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, The Non-GMO Project.

However, when it comes to recognizing local restaurants in a similar fashion, there are few verifiable resources to help consumers navigate between an ultra-processed burger and the chef-crafted, locally from scratch, grass-finished bison burger.

ACF has partnered with the Windows Institute of Culinary Medicine to develop the ACFEF Culinary Medicine Approved Kitchen (CMAK) recognition program. ACFEF CMAK recognizes kitchens that meet or exceed the standards for preparing healthful dishes utilizing culinary medicine principles.

ACFEF does not recommend any one property, program or course of study over another. ACFEF may promote programs but does not endorse them as the sole recommended resource provider.

Benefits

ACFEF Culinary Medicine Approved Kitchen (CMAK) recognition provides tremendous marketability and public trust in your property. The benefits of earning this recognition include:

- **Enhance Brand Value:** Differentiate yourself from the competition with ACFEF CMAK recognition. Word-of-mouth, reviews, ratings, and Michelin stars all drive customers to your kitchen. Earning the ACFEF CMAK recognition increases your sales by letting the public know your commitment to quality and health.
- **Validate Healthfulness:** The vast majority of consumers are often unaware of where their food comes from and how it is prepared, especially within a restaurant environment. Many of the terms used in the marketing of comestibles like “locally farm fresh” or the production of meals like “farm to table” have no legal standing, and there is little disincentive for their disingenuous use. The ACFEF CMAK recognition gives consumers comfort and guarantee about the quality of the food they are paying to receive.
- **Value Recognition:** You take the time and effort to make a real difference for your customers. Quality ingredients produced in sustainable fashion are an increasingly important consideration to consumers of all ages and demographics. Attention to how the food is produced is the

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sustainable cornerstone of the Culinary Medicine approach; sustainable for the individual, the community, and the planet. The ACEF CMAK awards you the recognition you deserve and the effort your customers appreciate.

Criteria

Properties will be evaluated on the following ACEF CMAK standards:

- **Qualified staff:** at least one staff member must have earned a certificate/certification in culinary medicine. The [Level 1 Certification \(micro-accreditation\) in Culinary Medicine](#) through the University of Montana College of Health is included in the application fee.
- **Minimal processing** – no more than 20 percent of preparations on the menu can exhibit highly/ultra-processing or other undesirable additives and characteristics (as defined in the NOVA classification, see *Appendix A*).
- **Origin of ingredients** – suppliers must be fully disclosed and will be verified during the site visit.
- **Preparation method** – no more than 20 percent of a menu item can be prepared by deep-frying or other undesirable cooking method.
- **Truth in menu** – items on menu must accurately describe source of ingredients and preparation method.
- **Safety and sanitation** – must provide current, satisfactory safety and sanitation inspection report from local public health department.

Site Visits

The purpose of a site visit is to verify the information in the application. The site visit will evaluate the program against the ACEF CMAK standards. The evaluation team will prepare a written report noting strengths, weaknesses and any areas of non-compliance.

The evaluation team will consist of at least two industry evaluators, of which one industry evaluator must have a certificate/certification in culinary medicine.

Special Site Visits

The ACEF CMAK review taskforce reserves the right to require at any time special visits to a property. These shall be under conditions and within a time frame to be decided by the taskforce. Refusal of a property to cooperate with such requests shall be grounds for suspension, revocation or conditioning of its recognition. The property of which a special visit is required will be responsible for any expenses incurred by the visiting team. An invoice will be sent to the property for payment within 30 days of the visit.

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Evaluator Qualifications

Evaluators must:

- be an ACF member in good standing.
- be ACF certified as CCC®, CEC®, CEPC®, CCE®, CMC® or CMPC®.
- complete the ACF-required anti-harassment training.
- sign confidentiality/conflict of interest agreement.
- at least one evaluator must have earned a certificate/certification in culinary medicine.

Application Process

1. **Submit the application** with verification documentation and non-refundable application fee to the ACF professional development team. *See Fee Schedule.*
 - a. ACF professional development team will process fee and send a confirmation receipt by email within five business days.
 - b. The ACEF CMAK review taskforce will assess the documentation provided within 14 business days. Applicants will be notified of their status by email.
 - c. Programs that do not meet the criteria will receive a refund minus a \$250 processing fee.
2. **Complete the Culinary Medicine micro-accreditation course** included in the application fee prior to the site visit.
 - a. Applicants will receive a registration link within 14 business days of submitting the application fee for one individual to complete the Level 1 Certification (micro-accreditation) in Culinary Medicine through the University of Montana College of Health.
3. **Schedule a site visit** to validate content provided in application.
 - a. ACF will schedule a site visit within 90 days of receipt of application fee. Extensions can be granted for unusual circumstances.
4. **Conduct site visit.**
 - a. The evaluation team will send the completed team report to the ACF professional development team within five (5) business days of the site visit.
5. **Receive recognition status.**
 - a. ACEF CMAK taskforce will review the site visit report within 15 business days after the site visit.
 - If there are areas of discrepancy between the information provided in the application and the site visit report, recognition status will be denied.

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- If there are NO areas of discrepancy between the information provided in the application and the site visit report, recognition status will be granted.
- b. Recognition is granted for three (3) years.
- c. Approved properties will:
 - receive an ACFEF-CMAK approved certificate.
 - receive an ACFEF-CMAK digital badge.
 - be listed on the ACF website as an ACFEF-CMAK property.

6. Maintain recognition.

- a. Annual reports and fees must be submitted.
- b. Invoices are sent annually in October and are due by 11/30 of the current year.
- c. Failure to submit the annual report and fees within the deadline set will result in suspension of recognition. A penalty fee of \$250 will be assessed to property's submitting their report and/or fees 30 days after the due date.

7. Renew recognition status.

- a. Program must submit renewal application and fee at least six (6) months prior to expiration date.
- b. Site visit will be scheduled upon payment.

Fee Schedule

Initial Application*:	\$2,500 (includes Level 1 Culinary Medicine course and site visit)
Renewal Application:	\$1,500
Annual Fee	\$1,000

**includes a \$250 nonrefundable processing fee for ineligible programs*

Advertising of Recognition

Only after recognition is granted by the ACFEF CMAK review taskforce may a property so denote its status in official publications or in advertising. It may be listed as "Recognized as an American Culinary Federation Education Foundation Culinary Medicine Approved Kitchen."

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Program Recognition Status

Temporary

A new property will be granted temporary status upon completion and acceptance of all required application documents. Temporary status will be considered valid for a period of 90 days or completion of the initial site visit, response period, and review and ruling by the ACFEF CMAK review taskforce, whichever happens first.

Approved

Recognition status shall be granted to those properties whose eligibility requirements submitted in their application has been verified with no areas of discrepancy by a site visit evaluation. Recognition is granted for three (3) years. If significant changes are identified during the annual reports, the ACF professional development team reserves the right to request a site visit evaluation prior to the renewal date.

Suspended

Failure to meet any reporting deadlines or financial obligations or refusal of a property to respond to or cooperate with the ACF professional development team's request for a special visit or report may be grounds for suspension of recognition. Suspension will be for a specific period of time and recognition can be reinstated depending on the actions of the property and the decision of the ACFEF CMAK review taskforce. No recognition action is considered to be final until after the program has availed itself of all due process of the Appeals Procedure.

Revoked

Recognition can be revoked if the property closes, no longer wishes to renew or does not respond to the conditions set forth in a suspension within a given time period. No recognition action is considered to be final until after the program has availed itself of all due process of the Appeals Procedures.

Appeals Procedures

A property may petition for review of a decision to suspend or revoke recognition on the grounds that:

- the ACFEF CMAK review taskforce and / or the evaluation team failed to follow stated procedures;
- the ACFEF CMAK review taskforce failed to consider all the evidence and documentation presented in favor of a property's application;
- the ACFEF CMAK review taskforce acted erroneously by disregarding the policies and procedures for recognition; or
- there was bias demonstrated by an ACF CMA review taskforce or evaluation team member.

All appeals shall be submitted in writing by registered mail to the ACF national office to ensure proper tracking and compliance to timelines.

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The appeals committee will be activated once the culinary programs director receives written notice of a property's intention to appeal. The culinary programs director will appoint two past taskforce members known to have knowledge of and experience with the recognition of ACFEF-approved programs.

Step 1: An appeal will be made within 30 days of receiving the decision on recognition status. The written appeal must include reason for the appeal and include relevant supporting materials and current contact information.

Step 2: The appeal will be reviewed by the appeals committee within 30 days of receipt. The appeals committee may conduct an investigation through reasonable means.

Step 3: The appeals committee will notify the ACFEF CMAK review taskforce in writing within 10 business days of their determination. The written summary will include the reason for the decision. Confidentiality will be maintained unless otherwise advised by legal counsel. The property is not permitted to contact the appeals committee in any fashion.

Step 4: The ACF professional development team will send the appeals decision to the property by email followed by a hard copy.

Ethics

The ACFEF CMAK review taskforce, site visit evaluators and ACF national office staff will exert all reasonable efforts to protect the confidentiality of information elicited and shared during the recognition process.

The ACFEF CMAK review taskforce, Site Visit Evaluators and ACF National Office Staff will not reveal property information except to correct the record in the event that the property knowingly and purposely distorts such information about itself.

The ACFEF CMAK review taskforce, site visit evaluators and ACF national office staff are required to read and sign the ACF Canons of Ethical Responsibility, Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Agreement and complete the biennial Anti-Harassment Training approved by ACF prior to any property review or taskforce action to guarantee non-biased judgements.

Site visit evaluators will avoid conflicts of interest prior to accepting a position on a specific site visit. Taskforce representatives with a potential conflict of interest with a property must disclose the conflict, recuse themselves from the site visit, refrain from discussion or other deliberation intended to influence the outcome of the recognition process.

Conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to, current or former employment or affiliation, previous or current service as a consultant, holding a financial interest, affiliation with a property in direct geographic competition, or other close relationships with the property under review.

Appendix A – NOVA Classification¹

Group 1. *Unprocessed or minimally processed foods*

Unprocessed (or natural) foods are edible parts of plants (seeds, fruits, leaves, stems, roots) or of animals (muscle, offal, eggs, milk), and also fungi, algae and water, after separation from nature.

Minimally processed foods are natural foods altered by processes that include removal of inedible or unwanted parts, and drying, crushing, grinding, fractioning, filtering, roasting, boiling, non-alcoholic fermentation, pasteurization, refrigeration, chilling, freezing, placing in containers and vacuum-packaging. These processes are designed to preserve natural foods, to make them suitable for storage, or to make them safe or edible or more pleasant to consume. Many unprocessed or minimally processed foods are prepared and cooked at home or in restaurant kitchens in combination with processed culinary ingredients as dishes or meals.

Group 2. *Processed culinary ingredients*

Processed culinary ingredients, such as oils, butter, sugar and salt, are substances derived from Group 1 foods or from nature by processes that include pressing, refining, grinding, milling and drying. The purpose of such processes is to make durable products that are suitable for use in home and restaurant kitchens to prepare, season and cook Group 1 foods and to make with them varied and enjoyable hand-made dishes and meals, such as stews, soups and broths, salads, breads, preserves, drinks and desserts. They are not meant to be consumed by themselves, and are normally used in combination with Group 1 foods to make freshly prepared drinks, dishes and meals.

Group 3. *Processed foods*

Processed foods, such as bottled vegetables, canned fish, fruits in syrup, cheeses and freshly made breads, are made essentially by adding salt, oil, sugar or other substances from Group 2 to Group 1 foods. Processes include various preservation or cooking methods, and, in the case of breads and cheese, non-alcoholic fermentation. Most processed foods have two or three ingredients, and are recognizable as modified versions of Group 1 foods. They are edible by themselves or, more usually, in combination with other foods. The purpose of processing here is to increase the durability of Group 1 foods, or to modify or enhance their sensory qualities.

Group 4. *Ultra-processed foods*

Ultra-processed foods, such as soft drinks, sweet or savoury packaged snacks, reconstituted meat products and pre-prepared frozen dishes, are not modified foods but formulations made mostly or entirely from substances derived from foods and additives, with little if any intact Group 1 food.

Ingredients of these formulations usually include those also used in processed foods, such as sugars, oils, fats or salt. But ultra-processed products also include other sources of energy and nutrients not

¹ (*Open Food Facts, 2021*)

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normally used in culinary preparations. Some of these are directly extracted from foods, such as casein, lactose, whey and gluten.

Many are derived from further processing of food constituents, such as hydrogenated or interesterified oils, hydrolysed proteins, soya protein isolate, maltodextrin, invert sugar and high-fructose corn syrup.

Additives in ultra-processed foods include some also used in processed foods, such as preservatives, antioxidants and stabilizers. Classes of additives found only in ultra-processed products include those used to imitate or enhance the sensory qualities of foods or to disguise unpalatable aspects of the final product. These additives include dyes and other colours, colour stabilizers; flavours, flavour enhancers, non-sugar sweeteners; and processing aids such as carbonating, firming, bulking and anti-bulking, de-foaming, anti-caking and glazing agents, emulsifiers, sequestrants and humectants.

A multitude of sequences of processes is used to combine the usually many ingredients and to create the final product (hence 'ultra-processed'). The processes include several with no domestic equivalents, such as hydrogenation and hydrolysis, extrusion and moulding, and pre-processing for frying.

The overall purpose of ultra-processing is to create branded, convenient (durable, ready to consume), attractive (hyper-palatable) and highly profitable (low-cost ingredients) food products designed to displace all other food groups. Ultra-processed food products are usually packaged attractively and marketed intensively.