

Regional Food Products and Processing in Michigan

ESA 491, 3 credits
Summer Session I (May 15 – June 28, 2012)
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:30 a.m. – 2:20 p.m.
Natural Resources Building, Room 19
Michigan State University

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Course Purpose. The purpose of this course is to examine food processing as a diverse and dynamic feature of Michigan's economy and agrifood landscape, and to explore its historical and regulatory context.

Course Objectives

- 1) To explore the historical development of food processing in Michigan.
- 2) To engage with a diversity of current Michigan processors, artisanal and industrial, producing at small and large scales.
- 3) To think about differences between small and large scales of processing and between artisanal and industrial approaches to processing.
- 4) To understand the historical development of food safety regulations and current issues in food safety policy.

Overview. Food processing has played an important role in Michigan's history, and it remains important for many communities and local economies in the state. This course explores the types of foods that are processed in Michigan and some of the issues that processors deal with. We consider some of the differences between artisanal craft processing and larger-scale mass production. We also look at how food safety regulations affect processors.

The first five sessions cover the historical development of processing techniques—such as canning—and the place of food processing in Michigan's agrifood history. We also examine changes in how food was processed and distributed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We then look at specific types of products that are processed in Michigan, from bread and cheese to soda pop and cider. Processors will visit class to guest lecture, and we will make one or two field trips to processing operations, including a tour of the MSU Dairy Plant. We will also sample Michigan foods at some of the sessions.

Readings are drawn from a variety of popular and academic sources. Evaluation is based on weekly reflections, two short position papers, a mid-term examination, a final presentation, and class participation.

Students enrolled in the Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems specialization may count this course as a social science course.

A syllabus can be downloaded at www.msu.edu/~jbuckley and is available on request. A short video introducing the course is at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7U6LKXLEKT8>.