



Guide to Selling on [auntieChef.com](https://auntiechef.com)

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A Quick Overview

At auntieChef, we love to help food entrepreneurs follow their dreams. We know you're excited to sell your delicious cooking on auntieChef. This guide will help turn your talent into success!

Below is a simple checklist of steps to get you started. At the end of this guide you'll find a buffet of helpful info and links if you want even more details. Before you can sell your scrumptious food, you'll have to set up your business. Here are some basics:

1. Become a food entrepreneur

- Find a commercial kitchen to cook in
- Set up your business
- Get the correct licensing and insurance

2. Open your auntieChef online kitchen

- Choose great dishes
- Upload photos and descriptions of your dishes to the auntieChef site
- Decide on your prices, delivery method and/or pickup hours and payment

3. Keep your customers happy

- Focus on food-safety
- Be responsive
- Manage your orders well
- Go beyond customers' expectations

STEP 1: Become a food entrepreneur

Find a place to cook

We know your home's kitchen is nice and cozy, and is perfect for you and your family. But most food for *sale* must be prepared in certified commercial kitchens, due to legal requirements in most states.

Don't worry, you don't have to build your own commercial kitchen! There are probably plenty of commercial kitchens available to rent in your area. To find them, talk to neighborhood caterers, restaurants, independent bakeries, churches/synagogues, and community centers - often these places have their own commercial kitchens (and can rent them out to you during their downtime).

Where you can find commercial kitchens

Stand-alone shared kitchens

Are often "incubators" for local food businesses. These are sometimes hard to locate, but an online search or posting a question in the auntieChef community forums could help you find them.

Neighborhood restaurants & cafes

May rent their kitchens during off-peak hours. It's a win-win situation, for both you and the restaurant.

Churches/synagogues & community centers

Many have certified commercial kitchens in their buildings that remain unused for most of the year.

Commercial kitchens are usually large spaces, so it often makes sense to pair up with another seller and cook together – this spreads out the cost of renting the kitchen. Find a buddy and partner up! Check the auntieChef forum for other people in your area looking for a partner.

Set up your business

When you sell food, you are a business. Many small businesses don't file any registration forms with the government at first, because they choose to operate as sole proprietorships with no employees.

If you have grander aspirations and you have your own employees, you may want to form a partnership or corporation. This requires some additional expense, and possibly consulting with

professional advisors (e.g., an accountant or attorney).

Get your permits

Prepared food is more regulated than, let's say, doorknobs (and for good reason!). Food safety standards vary from state to state (and sometimes from city to city). It's a bit of a legal jungle out there, but you can figure it out if you explore a bit.

To start, find out what licenses you need by checking with your city hall or state health department.

Common licenses that food businesses often require include:

- Business permit
- Food service establishment license (often attached to the commercial kitchen)
- Food-handling license
- Filing with the state government to pay sales tax

Look into insurance

All food businesses need to protect themselves from liability in case a customer gets sick. The first and most important step is to follow common-sense food-safety precautions. However, liability insurance is also important. Talk with a local insurance agent to find out what coverage is right for you.

Set up your books, figure costs and taxes

As the money flows in from your auntieChef business, you'll have to give Uncle Sam (the IRS) his cut. This means collecting sales tax for each order you make. Find out more about sales tax by contacting your state and local revenue departments.

The income your business generates will also be taxed, so keep good records of your cash inflow and expenses (including ingredient, commercial kitchen, packaging, and delivery/transportation costs).

STEP 2: Open Your auntieChef Online Kitchen

Selling on auntieChef is fun, easy, and could bring in a lot of money! Here are some tips to make your auntieChef business a smashing success.

Choose the right dishes

Your success on auntieChef will depend on the taste and presentation of the food you sell. In the beginning, limit your menu to a few great dishes you can cook easily.

Select dishes that:

- Get rave reviews from your friends and family – foods that are simply delicious!
- Are special: auntieChef customers are looking for the unique and authentic.
- Are in high demand from your customers.
- Are not too time-consuming to prepare.
- Keep well in the fridge, as many customers may purchase food for the entire week.

To ensure that your food truly is delicious, get as many people as you can to sample your cooking and find out what they like, and what they'd improve. The more feedback you get, the better you'll know what will appeal to your customers.

Present with pride!

First-time auntieChef customers are buying your food based on what they see in your photos. Make their mouths water!

Take yummy photographs

Amazing food photos make our mouths water! Take pictures of your kitchen and dishes - close-ups of colorful meals look great with proper lighting. Upload as many pictures as the site permits; the more pictures, the better! Please only upload photographs of the actual food you prepared in order to avoid claims of deceptive advertising. Also, if your food presentation or menu items change, don't forget to replace your photographs with updated versions.

A nice photo of you (ideally a close-up) will make your customers feel a personal connection with your menu – show them the smiling chef behind the food they order.

Describe your kitchen and great food

Your descriptions should highlight your cooking's authenticity, quality, and taste. Entice them with your words, but don't get hung up on your writing style - simple, honest language will do.

“Kitchen Story”	Use this section to give your customers a more personal glimpse of who's behind your food. Just tell a simple story and be genuine.
Dish titles and descriptions	Keep these brief, with enough clarity to help your customers find what they want. Key information includes main ingredients, taste profiles (e.g., spicy, sweet), preparation details (e.g. baked, fried) and where the dish originated.

Figure out pricing

How much should you charge for your dishes? There are two easy ways to figure out.

Costs	Calculate how much a dish costs to make, and add on the profit you'd like to take home. Factor in costs like ingredients, commercial kitchen rentals, packaging, transportation, taxes, and any operational fees.
Competition	Set your prices relative to what local food establishments are charging.

Think carefully about setting your minimum order size. Initially, consider selling dishes in larger batches (e.g., setting the minimum quantity of a chicken dish that can be ordered at 4 servings vs. 2 servings). This will guarantee a minimum quantity in each order as your volume increases.

Most states require you to collect sales tax from your customers for meals purchased, and doing so is easy on auntieChef.com. First, find out how much sales tax to collect (tax regulations can vary greatly by location; consult with an accountant, or check with your state's Department of Revenue to find out more). When setting up your auntieChef online kitchen, indicate what percentage sales tax you'll apply to your orders; this sales tax will appear as a separate line in your customers' shopping cart.

Choose delivery/pickup options

Some customers will be happy to pick up their food. However, others will require the convenience of delivery. Offering delivery to nearby customers may bring in a lot of extra business.

You have a few options for getting your food to your customers:

**Let customers pick it up
from your location**

Decide on pickup hours convenient for you and your customers.

Deliver the food yourself

You or a helper can deliver food to your customers.

**Hire a local delivery
company**

Find local errand-running services that could deliver your meals to your customers for you. Check the Frequently Asked Questions section on the auntieChef site for some suggestions of local delivery services.

We suggest that you keep things simple in the beginning. Offer just a few delivery/pickup windows per week so you can learn how your orders will flow. Later on, you can set up more frequent pickups or deliveries by going to your kitchen and selecting “Delivery/Pickup Info”.

Arrange to get paid

Because auntieChef is using Amazon Payments, getting paid for your food is simple. Your customer’s payment is automatically transferred into your Amazon account once you confirm an order. You can use these funds to purchase things on Amazon.com, or transfer the funds to your bank account. See Amazon’s <http://payments.amazon.com> for more details.

Once the customer pays, Amazon deducts the auntieChef transaction fee from your account. Additionally, once your kitchen sales hit a certain amount, we also charge you a monthly subscription fee. Refer to our seller policy on www.auntieChef.com for more details.

STEP 3: Keep Your Customers Happy

auntieChef customers are looking for chefs who can provide homestyle meals they can count on. Here are some tools and tips to help you manage your business.

Focus on food safety

Your customers want food that's delicious *and* safe! Best practices include proper selection of foods in the grocery store, careful storage and cooking, and thorough clean-up after cooking. Here are some basic tips (this is a basic, not complete, list):

Buying Food

- When buying packaged poultry, meat or fish, check the expiration date on the label. If items look/smell odd don't buy them, regardless of the expiration date!
- Place refrigerated items in your shopping cart last to ensure freshness.
- Don't buy fruits with broken skin or unpasteurized ciders/juices (they can contain bacteria).

Refrigerating & Freezing Your Groceries

- Store food at proper temperatures to prevent spoiling - your refrigerator should be at a chilly 40°F, and your freezer should be 0°F or lower.
- Freeze (or cook) raw poultry, fish or meat within 2 days of purchase.
- Put poultry, meat and fish in individual plastic bags so they don't contaminate other foods.

Preparing and Cooking Food

- Wash your hands THOROUGHLY with hot water and soap before preparing any foods, and also after handling raw poultry, fish, meat or eggs.
- Never place cooked food on a dish that had raw poultry, fish or meat on it.
- Thaw frozen poultry, fish and meat in the refrigerator or microwave - never at room temperature. Once thawed, cook immediately.
- Don't let raw eggs sit at room temperature for more than 2 hours, and always thoroughly cook them (Never serve foods that contain unpasteurized raw eggs).
- Be sure to wash all fruits and vegetables with water (even if you're going to peel them) to remove any pesticides, bacteria or dirt.

Cleaning Up After Cooking

- Wash cutting boards separately from other utensils and dishes in hot, soapy water, and then disinfect. Make sure to again rinse thoroughly with plain water after disinfecting.
- Disinfect your counters and other exposed surfaces that may have had contact with any raw foods.
- Wash your hands with hot water and soap.

You can find links to more complete food safety information at the end of this guide.

Love your customers

Turn interested people into buyers by being responsive - potential customers love kitchen owners who address their questions promptly and are attentive to details. On auntieChef, customers can post questions or comments on the public “Questions for the Cook” section of your kitchen. Show your customers you care - be friendly, informative, and go above and beyond their expectations.

Market yourself and your kitchen

Word of mouth is one of the most powerful ways to get new customers. Once you open your auntieChef online kitchen, be sure to share the news with your friends! If they're anything like our friends, they'll talk to *their* friends, and the word about your kitchen will spread like wildfire across town.

While new customers are fantastic, repeat customers are the best. Why? Because you don't have to convince them to try your food - they already love your cooking! Print out your menu from your kitchen's unique web address on the auntieChef website, and include it with a customer's order. You're giving them an easy way to come back and order from you again!

Another marketing tip - consider adding holiday-specific dishes to your menu at the appropriate times of year. Your customers will notice your kitchen's festive offerings, and want to participate in the fun.

Manage your orders carefully

When you get a new order, auntieChef sends you a notification. Be sure to log into your account regularly so you can confirm orders promptly (If you don't confirm an order within 24 hours, it will automatically be cancelled). Note your buyers' special instructions and delivery/pickup preferences.

So you find that you have a lot of orders - this is good! Now you've got to think about how to make sure you handle these hungry customers with ease. Consolidate your orders for the day, so you know how much of what to cook on any given day.

Your customers are busy people, and they expect you to follow through once you confirm their orders. Avoid rescheduling or canceling orders (other than in emergency situations), so your customers learn they can count on you.

Need More Help?

Visit the auntieChef community page and post a question. Take advantage of the collective expertise in the auntieChef community.

You can also email the auntieChef team at support@auntieChef.com - we'd be happy to answer your questions.

Helpful Info and Links

Finding a Kitchen

Culinary Incubator Map

<http://www.culinaryincubator.com/maps.php>

Culinary Incubator Information for Kitchen Rentals

http://www.culinaryincubator.com/tenant_information_kitchen_rental.php

Commercial Kitchens for Rent

<http://www.commercialkitchenforrent.com/>

Commercial Kitchen Connections

<http://www.bizkitchens.com/>

Setting Up as a Business

Here are some standard business structures to consider:

- A sole proprietor** ... is the simplest structure under which you can operate a business. This isn't a legal entity, and simply refers to the person who owns the business and is personally liable for its debts. It can operate under its owner's name, or under a fictitious name, like 'Bob's Kitchen'.
- A corporation** ... is chartered by the state in which it is headquartered and is considered by law to be a unique entity, separate and apart from those who own it. A corporation can be taxed, sued and enter into contractual agreements.
- A partnership** ... is when two or more people share ownership of a single business. The partners should have a legal agreement that sets forth how decisions will be made, profits will be shared, disputes will be resolved, and other conditions.

US Internal Revenue Service (IRS)

Frequently Asked Questions on sole proprietorships and partnerships:

<http://www.irs.gov/faqs/faq/0,,id=199633,00.html>

- Sole proprietorships** <http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/article/0,,id=98202,00.html>
- Corporations** <http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/article/0,,id=98240,00.html>
- Partnerships** <http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/article/0,,id=98214,00.html>

U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)

On choosing a business structure:

<http://www.sba.gov/smallbusinessplanner/start/choosestructure/index.html>

http://www.sba.gov/smallbusinessplanner/start/choosestructure/START_FORMS_OWNERSHIP.html

State government links for businesses

<http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/article/0,,id=99021,00.html>

FindLaw -- Starting a Business: First Steps

<http://smallbusiness.findlaw.com/starting-business>

Handy (and Free) Small Business Forms

<http://www.entrepreneur.com/formnet/index.html>

