



# County of Santa Cruz



## HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

### Environmental Health Division

701 Ocean St. Room 312, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

(831) 454-2022 TDD/ TTY: Call 711

[www.scceh.org](http://www.scceh.org)

## Press Release

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For Immediate Release

October 4, 2024

Contact: Sandra Hughes

[sandra.hughes@santacruzcountyca.gov](mailto:sandra.hughes@santacruzcountyca.gov)

### **Santa Cruz County Board Approves Two-Year Pilot Program for Home-Based Kitchens**

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY – On September 24, 2024, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors approved a two-year pilot program to permit Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations (MEHKOs) to operate in Santa Cruz County. MEHKOs are small-scale food service operations that can serve and deliver food from a home after meeting certain requirements and obtaining a Health Permit. Now that the Board of Supervisors has passed an ordinance, Health Services Agency's Environmental Health Division will begin accepting MEHKO applications starting January 1, 2025.

"This is an exciting opportunity to support our residents in their efforts to earn additional income and share their culinary talents with the community," said Supervisor Bruce McPherson, District 5. "This ordinance also provides a legal pathway for folks who may already be cooking in their homes to serve their friends and neighbors, as well as broaden their reach."

"Environmental Health is excited to launch the MEHKO program, which will expand access to diverse, locally prepared food while supporting local entrepreneurship," said Andrew Strader, Director of Environmental Health. "Our Consumer Protection team is committed to providing guidance to home-based food operations through the health permitting process and ensuring they are equipped to operate safely and in compliance with food safety regulations, prioritizing both community health and business success."

Residents interested in participating in the MEHKO program can visit the [Environmental Health Division's webpage](#) to learn more about the process or review the [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

Grant funding of up to \$3,000 is available to MEHKO participants through COOK Alliance, a non-profit organization offering virtual training via COOK Academy. Participants can [apply online](#) to be one of their 500 participants selected for this opportunity.

Email [environmentalhealth@santacruzcountyca.gov](mailto:environmentalhealth@santacruzcountyca.gov) for MEHKO program updates or questions.

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About Santa Cruz County Environmental Health:

Environmental Health Division of the Health Services Agency is committed to the protection of public health and the environment within Santa Cruz County through oversight, inspection, monitoring, permitting, investigation, enforcement, information management, education, and collaboration, while providing excellent customer service.

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