There are many people in Eureka want to start their own food-based business (such as making cookies or pies). However, it is tough to find a commercial kitchen space to lease. Yet, if you know where to look, there are dozens of under-utilized kitchens throughout the City. “Eureka Kitchen Connect” is an exciting new program link budding entrepreneurs with under-utilized kitchen space. These kitchens can be found in churches, vets halls, and community buildings throughout the City. This symbiotic relationship brings additional income to the organizations with under-utilized kitchens while providing more location options and lowering startup costs for new producers. Win!

Starting a new food business has many barriers of entry. For some, finding the right location to start production can be at the top of the list. Redwood Acres has filled the role of Business Incubator in Eureka and they currently have a wait list with many of the current business tenants (over 10) bursting at the seams. The Arcata Food Works, a similar facility in Arcata, also has a wait list.

What does this mean for our City? Wait for it… it’s good news.

We have a booming artisan food and beverage industry that sees no slowing down it its future.

There’s no denying the quantity of companies in this industry, but often people are unaware that these companies are often “best in class.” For example, take the new distillery, Humboldt Craft Spirits. They were just honored with not only the gold medal but the silver and the bronze medals as well at the recent American Distilling Institute’s Annual Craft Spirits
Conference. Or take Dick Taylor Chocolate, they just won gold at the internationally acclaimed, Sofi Awards (the Oscars of food awards.)

This program will seek to support and encourage this growing market segment and ultimately make Eureka a hub of specialty food and beverage companies.

A Few of Benefits of This Program

**Increased Availability and Lower Overhead**

When new food and beverage companies are starting out, production time is limited and sometimes unknown. Renting by the hour poses issues with storage and needing to haul equipment back and forth. While taking on the renting of a building full-time or building their own kitchen significantly increases start-up costs. Even for those who can afford it, it can take them years to maximize their space. In the meantime, those funds could be used in other ways to grow their business such as marketing, packaging, etc. This temporary, low cost entry approach also offers companies the ability to “try out” their business. To test the waters. A chance to figure out, “Hey, do I really want to do this?” without breaking the bank.

**Community**

Entrepreneurs often work long hours, alone. Things can get lonely. Yes, being your own boss comes with its fair share of perks but it also lacks in some of the social benefits of working a “day job.” This model offers a strong community tie in. You’re entering an already established community and are able to be introduced to the neighborhood by trusted folks. You’re able to pass the church administrative personnel, caretaker or pastor in the halls and make small talk. You’re able to interact on the daily with those who work in and with the organization. Your business model may even allow for you to share the kitchen with another business startup. You might be making your grandmother’s pumpkin soup while someone else is making trail mix in the same space. You may even be able to help each other with packaging.

**Market Research**

These buildings already have robust event schedules with Sunday service and evening support groups. They often rent out the space to other non-profits for a variety of meetings and get-togethers with varying groups of people. For a budding entrepreneur, this is a built-in market research group. A go-to pool of people to hone recipes and try out new product lines. If anything, it gives their families a break from being product development guinea pigs. Having a community around them that helps them feel connected and supported is incredibly valuable. We all know we thrive when we feel supported. New business owners are no different.
Food Hubs

Finally, these little kitchens, sprinkled throughout the City, will create mini food hubs in residential areas. It could mean walking around the corner to a baker and picking up fresh bread or swinging by and picking up a warm pie with your kids while you’re walking the dogs.

In conclusion, Eureka Kitchen Connect (EKC) sees a growing market segment, its needs, and seeks to provide a solution. By sourcing alternative options for accessing licensed kitchens for specialty food producers, new companies are not only able to find a cost effective start-up solution but also benefit from so many ancillary benefits. The city benefits by increasing the number of successful businesses in the specialty food and beverage segment and the community benefits by having exceptionally high-quality products being produced in their neighborhoods and offered by their local grocer.

If you are a food producer and are thinking about going into business or are looking to change locations please follow the link below and fill out the survey. We look forward to connecting you to a kitchen.

Click Here for Kitchen Connect Survey