

Is your product an “acidified low-acid food or beverage”?

Acid foods are foods that have a natural pH of **4.6 or below**.

Low-acid canned foods have an equilibrium pH **above 4.6** and **water activity** above 0.85. Shelf-stable low-acid foods packaged in a hermetically sealed container (canned) are regulated under Chapter 21 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) part 113 (21 CFR 113).

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Acidified foods have an equilibrium **pH of 4.6 or below** and **water activity** above 0.85.

According to the governing regulation (21 CFR 114), acidified low-acid foods are:

Acidified foods means low-acid foods to which acid(s) or acid food(s) are added; these foods include, but are not limited to, beans, cucumbers, cabbage, artichokes, cauliflower, puddings, peppers, tropical fruits, and fish, singly or in any combination. They have a water activity (aw) greater than 0.85 and have a finished equilibrium pH of 4.6 or below. These foods may be called, or may purport to be, “pickles” or “pickled ____.” Carbonated beverages, jams, jellies, preserves, acid foods (including such foods as standardized and non-standardized food dressings and condiment sauces) that contain small amounts of low-acid food(s) and have a resultant finished equilibrium pH that does not significantly differ from that of the predominant acid or acid food, and foods that are stored, distributed, and retailed under refrigeration are excluded from the coverage of this part.

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To determine if your product is an Acidified (low-acid) Food, answer the following questions:

1. My product will be distributed and sold at room temperature.

NO _____ Kept refrigerated or frozen. Labeled ‘Keep Refrigerated’ or ‘Keep Frozen’. → **Not an Acidified Food** regardless of pH.

YES _____ proceed to question 2

2. My product is fermented, carbonated, or a standard jam, jelly or preserve.

NO _____ proceed to question 3

YES _____ **Fermented foods** are **exempt** from 21 CFR 114 as long as they are not repackaged or blended with non-fermented ingredients. Carbonated beverages are **exempt** from the canning regulations. Fruit butters, jams, jellies and preserves which meet a standard of identity and contain no more than a ‘small amount’ of non-standard ingredients are **exempt** from the canning regulations.

3. My product has a water activity of greater than 0.85.

NO _____ A food with a water activity less than 0.85 is **not an Acidified Food** regardless of pH. → Request Process review for documentation.

YES _____ proceed to question 4

4. My product has a natural or normal pH of 4.6 or above.

NO _____

Naturally acid food. Fruits such as apples, peaches and pears are naturally high in acid.

YES _____

proceed to question 5

5. My product is a low-acid food, such as a vegetable or meat, with added acid, or mixed with acid or acid foods to create a food with an equilibrium pH of 4.6 or below.

YES _____

You are processing an **acidified low-acid food**.

You will need to attend an approved training course, seek process approval for each recipe/process, and file each process with the FDA (your Process Authority should be able to help you with this).

Exception Example – foods which, when canned, are not classified as ‘acidified foods’*

Naturally acidic foods

Canned peaches

Jams or jellies or preserves

Strawberry jam

(as defined by standard of identity; see 21 CFR 150 for standards)

Dressings and Condiment Sauces (containing small amount of low-acid foods such that the pH is not different from the acid or acid food)

Tarragon vinegar

Fermented foods

Sauerkraut

(can not be repackaged or have low-acid ingredients added)

*A **Process Authority** can assist in making a determination as to when a food is exempt from the canning regulations and when it is not.

B. Ingham. September 2016