WHAT'S NEW

News and Activities from the Food Science & Technology Extension Specialists | Summer 2026

FOOD SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
VIRGINIA TECH

UPCOMING TRAININGS

PACKINGHOUSE HAZARD ANALYSIS AND CRITICAL CONTROL POINT (HACCP)

For individuals working in produce packinghouse who need to develop and document a food safety management program based on the principles of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) systems.

August 17-20, 2026 | 1:00pm to 5:00pm

Live, Online via Zoom | Find out more and register **here** or visit website below
https://estore.uga.edu/C27063_ustores/web/product_detail.jsp?PRODUCTID=11459

JUICE HAZARD ANALYSIS AND CRITICAL CONTROL POINT (HACCP)

For individuals who are processing juice or products containing juice ingredients, especially those with food safety, quality assurance, or quality compliance roles and/or who believe they could be exempt from this regulation.

November 2-5, 2026 | 1:00pm to 5:00pm

Live, Online via Zoom | Find out more and register **here** or visit website below
https://register.ext.vt.edu/search/publicCourseSearchDetails.do?method=load&courseId=4199413&selectedProgramAreaId=25579&selectedProgramStreamId=

PACKINGHOUSE HAZARD ANALYSIS AND CRITICAL CONTROL POINT (HACCP)

For individuals working in produce packinghouse who need to develop and document a food safety management program based on the principles of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) systems.

December 14-17, 2026 | 1:00pm to 5:00pm

Live, Online via Zoom | Find out more and register **here**
https://register.ext.vt.edu/search/publicCourseSearchDetails.do?method=load&courseId=3979145&selectedProgramAreaId=25579&selectedProgramStreamId=

Virginia Cooperative Extension
Virginia Tech
Virginia State University

Virginia Cooperative Extension is a partnership of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and local governments, and is an equal opportunity employer. For the full non-discrimination statement, please visit ext.vt.edu/accessibility.

UPCOMING TRAININGS CONTINUED

BOOKMARK THIS SITE! *(TITLE CONTAINS LINK)*
Not all of our offerings get featured in our newsletter but you can stay up-to-date on current workshops and courses by checking our Food & Health program page on register.ext.edu.

ONGOING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

HOME FOOD PRESERVATION

This course is intended to help provide participants with the basic knowledge of safe home food preservation methods.

Online, self -paced | Find out more and register **here** or visit website below
https://register.ext.vt.edu/search/publicCourseSearchDetails.do?method=load&courseId=1208936&selectedProgramAreaId=25579&selectedProgramStreamId=

ENHANCING THE SAFETY OF LOCALLY GROWN PRODUCE - PRODUCE GROWERS/FARMERS MARKET PRODUCE VENDORS

This course is for produce growers and farmers market vendors to understand the causes of foodborne illness and practices to decrease risks.
Online, self -paced | Find out more and register **here** or visit website below
https://register.ext.vt.edu/search/publicCourseSearchDetails.do?method=load&courseId=1362590&selectedProgramAreaId=25579&selectedProgramStreamId=

SERVSAFE MANAGER TRAINING

Trainings held at Extension offices across Virginia are intended for food service workers at restaurants, hospitals, schools, and childcare centers. Course recognized by the Virginia Department of Health as meeting the requirements to be a Certified Food Protection Manager. Check out the Food and Health programs page online at register.ext.vt.edu to see the list of current classes or visit https://register.ext.vt.edu/public/category/programArea.do?method=load&selectedProgramAreaId=25579 and search **ServSafe**.

Virginia Cooperative Extension
Virginia Tech
Virginia State University

For more information contact Lester Schonberger at hlschon@vt.edu

OTHER OUTREACH ACTIVITES

On April 13, 2026 Melissa Wright was featured on the Curious Conversations podcasts to talk about food ingredients, nutrition, and labels. Find out more online and listen to the podcast at ***https://news.vt.edu/articles/2026/04/research-curiousconversations-Wright.html***

On June 18, 2026, Extension Specialist Dr. Mengyi Dong will lead a State 4-H Congress workshop titled **"Invisible Clues: Using eDNA to Track Aquatic Life & Protect Virginia Waters,"** introducing youth to how environmental DNA can be used to monitor and protect local waterways.

HELP US SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT Support for Virginia's Food Entrepreneurs

FOOD PRODUCER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NETWORK

The Food Producer Technical Assistance Network, led by FST faculty member and Extension Specialist Melissa Wright, helps food entrepreneurs understand how to produce safe, market-ready products. Since 1991, the program has supported Virginia's food industry by offering guidance in key areas, including:

- starting a food business
- navigating food safety requirements
- developing nutrition labels
- understanding state and federal regulations

Through expert guidance and science-based evaluations, the program strengthens Virginia's food sector by helping producers create safe, high-quality, compliant products.

A request for these services can be made online **here**

Virginia Cooperative Extension
Virginia Tech
Virginia State University

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Consumer Acceptance of Chesapeake Bay Wild Blue Catfish

Consumer interest in Chesapeake Bay wild blue catfish is growing, and this Virginia Tech study shows why. Although blue catfish are an invasive species that threaten native Bay ecosystems, they also offer a promising opportunity for processors and seafood businesses. Researchers found that consumers rated wild-caught blue catfish positively even when tasted plain, noting naturally sweet, tender, and buttery qualities. With the right processing practices and clear messaging about sustainability, wild blue catfish can be positioned as both a high-quality regional seafood and a way to support Chesapeake Bay restoration.

Feng, Y., Carneiro, R. V., O'Keefe, S., Yin, Y., Parraga-Estrada, K., Watts, E., Schwarz, M., & van Senten, J. (2026). Consumer Acceptance of Chesapeake Bay Wild Blue Catfish. Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication BSE-386P.
Available online at https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/BSE/bse-386.html

Which Foods Should I Keep or Discard During a Power Outage?

Severe weather and power outages can quickly push refrigerated foods into the "danger zone," where bacteria multiply fast enough to cause spoilage or illness. This fact sheet explains how long foods stay safe without power and shows why simple steps like keeping refrigerator doors closed, using appliance thermometers, and filling freezers to maintain cold temperatures make a major difference. The guidance makes it clear that preparation before an outage is the best defense against both waste and risk.

Gabriel, E., Strawn, L. K., Boyer, R., & Schonberger, L. (2026). Which Foods Should I Keep or Discard During a Power Outage? Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication FST-518NP.
Available online at https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/pubs_ext_vt_edu/en/FST/fst-518.html

¿Es la Leche Cruda Segura? Riesgos para la Salud y Datos Legales Explicados

Spanish publications shares that although raw milk is often promoted as a more "natural" choice, the science is unmistakably clear: skipping pasteurization leaves consumers exposed to dangerous pathogens. Because raw milk can carry Salmonella, E. coli, Listeria, and even viruses like H5N1, contaminated milk provides an ideal environment for germs to grow – especially during milking, handling, or storage.

Fredes-Garcia, D. A., Osorio-Barahona, M., Gutierrez Forbes, I., Chowdhury, B., Cheng, R., Boyer, R., & Schonberger, L. (2026). ¿Es la Leche Cruda Segura? Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication FST-515NPs.
Available online at https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs_ext_vt_edu/FST/fst-515/FST-515s.pdf

RECENT PUBLICATIONS continued

What Makes Faba Bean Hummus a Smart Choice?

Faba beans are emerging as a smart, sustainable ingredient for Mid-Atlantic growers and food producers, and this publication shows how they can also elevate a familiar favorite: hummus. Because faba beans thrive in Virginia's climate and naturally improve soil health, they offer both nutritional and environmental advantages. The guide also provides step-by-step instructions for making hummus from fresh, frozen, or dried beans, along with food-safety tips to keep homemade hummus safe and high-quality. With strong consumer acceptance and clear sustainability benefits, faba bean hummus represents a promising new product opportunity for regional processors and entrepreneurs.

Singh, M., Schatz, J., Schonberger, L., Balota, M., O'Keefe, S., & Carneiro, R. (2026). What Makes Faba Bean Hummus a Smart Choice? Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication FST-516NP.

Available online at https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/pubs_ext_vt_edu/en/FST/fst-516.html

Common Foodborne Pathogens: Campylobacter jejuni

Campylobacter jejuni is one of the most common causes of foodborne illness in the U.S., and this publication explains why it remains such a persistent threat. The bacterium spreads easily from animals to people and is frequently linked to undercooked poultry, raw milk, and untreated water. The fact sheet emphasizes that simple steps like cooking meat to safe temperatures, preventing cross-contamination, testing private wells, and washing hands after handling animals can significantly reduce risk.

Ehsan, R., Cheng, R., & Schonberger, L. (2026). Common Foodborne Pathogens: Campylobacter jejuni. Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication FST-517NP.

Available online at https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs_ext_vt_edu/FST/fst-517/FST-517.pdf

What Do I Need to Know to Sell SEAFOOD at the Farmers Market?

Selling seafood at farmers markets offers a major opportunity for Virginia producers, but this publication makes clear that doing it safely requires careful planning. The guide explains which permits are required, what types of seafood can be sold, and when specialized training, such as Seafood HACCP, is mandatory. It also outlines best practices for transporting and displaying seafood on ice, preventing cross-contamination, labeling packaged products, and meeting shellfish tagging and traceability requirements.

Eifert, J., Boyer, R., Pomfrey Wells, E., Saunders, T., & Yang, L. (2026). What Do I Need to Know to Sell Seafood at the Farmers Market? Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication FST-519P.

Available online at https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs_ext_vt_edu/FST/fst-380/FST-519.pdf

QUESTIONS BUT NOT SURE WHO TO CONTACT?

It can be confusing to find the best person to reach out to so we want to make it easier. Please use this as a general guide:

AUDIENCE / TOPIC AREA	SPECIALIST & THEIR WEBPAGE
Entrepreneurs & Food Startups | Labeling requirements, process authority needs, regulatory guidance	**Melissa Wright** -www.fst.vt.edu/about/faculty-and-staff/faculty/mwright.html
Food handlers & consumers | ServSafe training, food safety education, and home food preservation support	**Lester Schonberger** - www.fst.vt.edu/about/faculty-and-staff/faculty/lschonberger.html
Aquaculture Producers | fish and shellfish production systems and operations	**David Kuhn** - www.fst.vt.edu/about/faculty-and-staff/faculty/dkuhn.html
Food Manufacturers & Value-Added Processors |Assistance with operations & product development	**Alexis Hamilton** - www.fst.vt.edu/about/faculty-and-staff/faculty/ahamilton.html
Seafood quality and safety | Guidance on engineering, quality control, and safety practices.	**Mengyi Dong** - https://www.fst.vt.edu/about/faculty-and-staff/faculty/mengyi-dong.html
Meat, poultry, and seafood products | Support for processing, safety, and quality of meat	**Taozhu Sun**- www.fst.vt.edu/about/faculty-and-staff/faculty/taozhu-sun.html
Fresh produce growers, packers, and retailers | Assistance with regulation compliance and best practices	**Laura Strawn**-www.fst.vt.edu/about/faculty-and-staff/faculty/lstrawn.html
Enology, fruit chemistry, and consumer perception | support for wine production	**Demi Perry**- www.fst.vt.edu/about/faculty-and-staff/faculty/demi-perry.html

When in doubt just email Stephanie Slocum at sslocum@vt.edu and she will make sure it gets to the correct Food Science and Technology Extension Specialist.

Virginia Cooperative Extension
Virginia Tech
Virginia State University

Contributors: Alexis Hamilton, Dave Kuhn, Lester Schonberger, Laura Strawn, Taozhu Sun, Melissa Wright, Demi Perry, Stephanie Slocum, and Mengyi Dong