

Winning: Food freedom bills are spreading across the U.S.

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([Natural News](#)) Consumers are increasingly realizing the benefits of natural foods, and it appears their voices are finally being heard as new legislation has been proposed in California and Montana that will make it easier for local small food entrepreneurs.

A new law in Montana would allow homemade food to be sold and consumed and encourage the expansion of agricultural sales by the state's farms and ranches. The bill, which is known as the Local Food Choice Act, would give people who make and sell these foods directly to the public an exemption from getting the mandatory permits, licensing labels, and inspections. Those who sell directly to grocers and restaurants, however, would not be exempt, nor would those selling food across state lines.

Incredibly, it has been illegal until now for people to sell homemade food to their neighbors. The bill, which was introduced by Republican State Rep. Greg Hertz, was inspired by a similar one in Wyoming known as the Food Freedom Act. This groundbreaking law was passed two years ago, loosening restrictions on direct-to-consumer sales of food in the state in legislation that was the first of its kind in the country. Colorado soon followed suit, and now it appears that Montana is getting on board. Rep. Hertz said that eating what people choose "should never be a crime."

Meanwhile, a separate bill in California was introduced this week that would allow home cooks to sell their prepared foods directly to consumers. Sanitation, permitting and training requirements would still apply under the bill, which is known as the Homemade Food Operations Act, but it would make the process of selling food to others much easier.

California is known for having very stringent cottage food laws. In fact, a Stockton woman is now facing a year in jail after [selling a homemade meal](#) to an undercover investigator. The single mother of six was part of a Facebook group where Stockton residents exchanged recipes and traded homemade goods. After agreeing to sell some homemade ceviche to an undercover investigator from San Joaquin County, she found herself charged with a pair of misdemeanors. After refusing a plea bargain that would give her 80 hours of community service, three years of probation and a fine of \$235, she is now facing a trial. If she is convicted, she could get a year in jail. It's hard to believe that law enforcement would spend its time trapping home cooks when there are rapists and murderers wandering free, but apparently taking business away from the Big Food manufacturers is quite a threat.

Consumers win

The new laws represent a huge win for consumers as more and more people eschew the chemical-laden junk offered by the major food manufacturers. Home cooks generally don't have the budget that big corporations have and are therefore often deterred by complicated licensing laws and sanitary regulations, leaving consumers who don't have the time or inclination to cook for themselves or [grow their own food](#) little choice but to settle for the mass-produced food on their grocery store shelves.

However, not everyone is thrilled by the legislation. Health officials in the state of Montana have expressed concern that the new bill could spur a rise in foodborne illnesses. The state representative who sponsored the Wyoming Food Freedom Act, Tyler Lindholm, said: "Every state that looks at setting their local food economy free inevitably finds food police lining up with statistics on how freedom of choice is a danger." He lamented the fact that such bureaucrats and food industry associations see the public as too ignorant to be trusted to make decisions about how to feed their families. Moreover, he pointed out that Wyoming has not seen an increase in foodborne illness since the law was passed.

It may be a small [victory for food freedom](#), but it could well set a precedent that inspires other states to let consumers decide for themselves what they want to eat.

Sources:

[Reason.com](#)

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