



# Food Testing and Labeling Services



Any food product sold in the state of Alabama must meet regulations set by the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH). These regulations closely follow the Federal Food Code established by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The Code of Federal Regulations Title 21 part 114.3 defines minimally processed foods and sets standards regarding the acidity and moisture level of these products. In order for a food to be sold as minimally processed it must have a pH below 4.6 and/or a water activity below 0.85.

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## pH

The acidity of foods is measured by pH. The range of pH is commonly considered to extend from zero to 14. A pH value of 7 is neutral, because pure water has a pH value of exactly 7. Values less than 7 are considered acidic, while those greater than 7 are considered basic or alkaline. Acidic foods are usually tart and sour, all fruits are acidic: tomato, lemon, peach, apple, etc. The FDA rule for acid foods states that a food must have a pH below 4.6 to be sold as a minimally processed food. The reason for this is bacteria do not grow at this level of acidity.

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## Water Activity ( $A_w$ )

Water Activity ( $A_w$ ) is a measure of the water available for bacterial growth.  $A_w$  is not necessarily linked to water content. Two products with similar water content can have very different  $A_w$  and therefore may have different spoilage rates. Like pH, as the  $A_w$  decreases, fewer groups of organisms are able to grow. An  $A_w$  of less than 0.85 is generally assumed to be shelf safe. This is the FDA requirement for minimally processed foods. Shelf safe means that pathogens (organisms that can cause illness) should not be able to grow.

## Services and Costs

### In Alabama:

pH test	\$40.00
A <sub>w</sub> test	\$40.00
Nutrition Facts Label	\$75.00

### Out of State:

pH test	\$80.00
A <sub>w</sub> test	\$80.00
Nutrition Facts Label	150.00

Checks should be made payable to:  
***Auburn University.***

pH/A<sub>w</sub> testing requires you to send us a small sample of your product.

For a Nutrition Facts label we must have:

- 1) Recipe/formula with **all** ingredients with accurate measurement/weight (i.e., grams, pounds, ounces, etc. - household measure is acceptable).
- 2) Ingredients panel for all products used in formula—ex: if ketchup is an ingredient, send the ingredient panel from the brand you use.
- 3) Total weight/volume of batch before cooking
- 4) Net batch yield/weight after cooking
- 5) Retail Container/package size

Send to: Patti West at the address on the right.



## Contact Information

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