

6 – Establish procedures for ensuring the HACCP system is working as intended.

Identify ways that the procedures that are being followed are validated as being suitable.

For example product samples could be kept and tested intermittently to ensure that they are fit for consumption within the parameters of the operation. This might be conducted visually by the business; alternatively services of external laboratories can be employed to test for water activity, bacteria levels as well as monitoring the DNA profiles of ingredients.

7 – Establish record keeping procedures.

Businesses should create a written HACCP plan, make an analysis of hazards and maintain records and documents to effectively monitor, verify and validate the daily business procedures and handling of process deviations.

For example identify how chocolates is made and create a HACCP plan for each product. Keep records when products are being made that can verify that the appropriate processes are followed, measured and that corrective action is taken when necessary.

18.5 Taking products to market

Successful artisan chocolate making is as much about the presentation, price, type of product, the people that are selling it, where it is sold, how it is promoted and how easy it is to purchase as it is about quality. Outstanding chocolate skills can be of minimal value if products are not positioned and sold appropriately to the market. Consideration should be given to identify where artisan products are to be positioned, along with where they are being sold.

18.5.1 Market stalls and food festivals

Market stalls and participation in food festivals are an ideal opportunity to test out new products as well as starting to understand the interests, tastes and demographics of your customers. Consider a small range of products and types with a mixture of items with different shelf lives and package sizes. Samples are an essential way of building a perception of quality and customer loyalty.

- *Product* – Traditional, niche recipes. Well presented personal indulgences and gifts. Bars and filled assortments. Seasonal figurines and moulded chocolates are ideal lines at seasonal fairs, especially around Christmas and Easter. Avoid product lines with too short a shelf life or over extending the range of products that can be produced with quality. Avoid delicate items that require additional care for transportation.
- *Price* – Avoid high-end luxury lines that are expensive and require greater “moments of happiness” to sell effectively. Prices at specialist markets where “artisan” is celebrated can be set at a higher than usual price point.
- *Process* – Engage with customers, offer free samples of products.
- *Place* – Local food markets, food fairs and specialist shows.

- *Promotion* – Ensure products are clearly labelled, staff should be able to explain about the quality of the product and promote how it is made.
- *Physical appearance* – Dress the stall smartly, cleanly and attractively to the desired audience.
- *People* – Staff should be keen to listen to comments and feedback, these are ideal opportunities for artisan producers to engage with customers, test new recipes and respond to customer comments.

18.5.2 On-line retail sales

Consider products that are easy to dispatch and travel without spoilage or damage. Products will need to be consistently available, so start with a small number of product lines with a moderate shelf life that you can make at a reasonable and profitable scale and keep in stock.

- *Product* – Unusual chocolate bar flavours, interesting individual filled chocolates that can be boxed for the gift market. Avoid fragile items or a large range of products with a short shelf life that may require a short product run to fulfil orders.
- *Price* – Remember when setting prices that products will be instantly comparable to other discount brands on-line.
- *Process* – Ensure the ordering process is clear and easy to follow and that products are dispatched promptly. Website content must be sufficiently accurate and up to date with stock numbers.
- *Place* – Additional investment may be necessary to ensure your website and products stand out where customers are unable to easily sample them.
- *Promotion* – Invest time in building a web audience and bringing your website into contact with potential and regular customers using social media and customer engagement activities.
- *Physical appearance* – Build credibility in the products and the processes by telling stories about ingredients, inspiration behind the recipes and clear and detailed product information to re-create the personal shopping experience.
- *People* – Respond promptly to customer's questions.

18.5.3 Private orders and commissions

These are ideal opportunities for large batch runs of individual items or for more intricate, high-quality items, particularly good opportunity for a highly skilled chocolatier to be able to command a higher price for a quality item or gift. Agreed order and consumption dates allow for short shelf life, high-quality items.

- *Product* – Personalised chocolate bars and gift boxed chocolates, bespoke chocolate displays and artwork, wedding and party favours or gifts. Offer a small but varied range of product lines, large orders can be profitable but this can be reduced if large quantities of equipment are required to fulfil a special order.
- *Price* – A highly skilled chocolatier is able to command a higher price for a quality item or gift.
- *Process* – Customers are engaging with the expertise and personal touch for higher priced, bespoke items. Ensure full requirements are understood and the ordering process is simple and contains all order details.