

Husking Walnuts for Sale in Tennessee

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In recent years, many farmers that sell products direct to the public at farmers markets, roadside stands and on-farm stores have considered adding walnuts to the mix of products they sell. Oftentimes, consumers express interest in purchasing walnuts that have had the outer husk removed. Some consumers even request that the nut case be removed so that only the nut meat is purchased. Walnut parts are shown below in Figure 1.

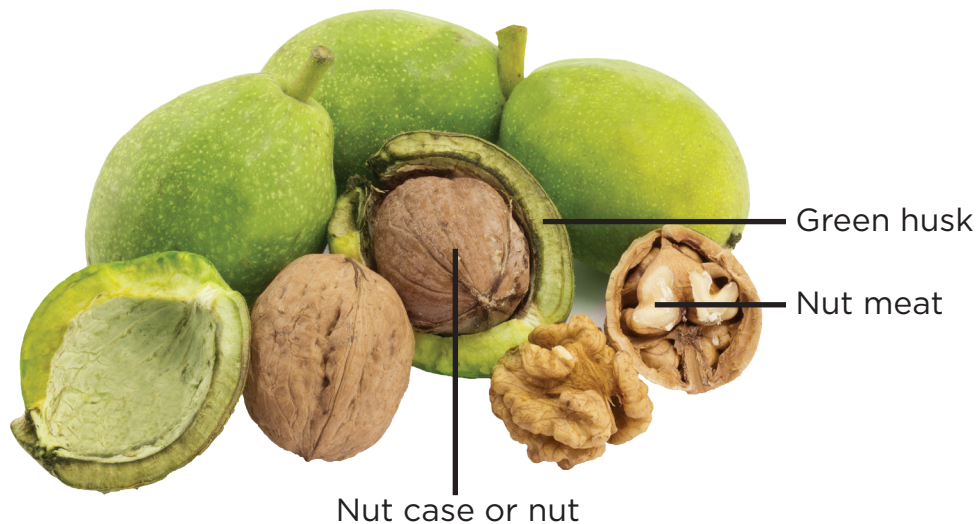


Figure 1. Parts of a Walnut

Food Processing

Farmers considering the sale of husked and/or cracked walnuts should consider the possible food processing and food permitting regulations and requirements. In

general, husking of walnuts would not be considered a food processing step. Husking refers to the removal of the outermost husk of the walnut seed/nut. The husk is green in color when the seed/nut matures on the tree. Whether or not the removal of the walnut husk is part of food processing

may depend on the specific method and procedure in which the husk is removed.

If someone wants to sell husked walnuts, the method used to remove the husk should be performed in a sanitary manner in order to minimize health risks. An example of a method that is not sanitary would be for the walnuts to be tossed in a driveway and drive over them for a few days: This would not be an acceptable method for husking walnuts that are to be sold. There are a variety of other homemade contraptions that have been designed to remove the outer husk, though many of them would not be an acceptable sanitary method for husking. When evaluating tools for husking walnuts, it is important to consider if the tools can be easily cleaned. Metals such as stainless steel are always preferred, and would prove durable for use over time.

It is also common practice to soak walnuts in water prior to husking; however, the use of water can introduce risks to the process. Therefore, regulatory and food safety regulators generally do not recommend the use of water. If water is used it should be potable water (suitable for drinking). The use of water introduces risk as any harmful bacteria on the surface of the husk can be transferred to the nut meat during the soaking process.

Do I Need a License?

To determine whether a food manufacturing license is needed, farmers wanting to remove the outer husk and sell the nuts should:

1. Submit a written protocol to the Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA), Division of Consumer and Industry Services, Food and Dairy Section. The protocol should include a

- detailed description of the procedures that will be followed to remove the husk.
2. The farmer should ask if a permit or license is needed based on the protocol.

If the procedure of removing the outer husk does not constitute processing, then TDA should respond to inform that no permit is needed. If the procedure that will be used to remove the outer husk is deemed to be processing, then TDA should provide guidance on the proper permit and inspection requirements. Correspondence should be sent to:

Tennessee Department of Agriculture
Food Manufacturing Administrator
440 Hogan Road
Nashville, TN 37220

Nut Meat Sales

Beyond husking, if someone wants to crack the nut and extract the nut meat for sale, they will likely need to be licensed and permitted by TDA as a food manufacturer. Once again, much of the license and permit requirements would depend on the exact process, method and equipment that is used to extract the nut meat. Similar to husking, those wanting to extract the nut meat for sale are encouraged to write a detailed description of the procedures they will follow to crack and extract the nut meat, submit it (in writing) to the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Food and Dairy section, and ask if a permit/license is needed for the described procedure. Correspondence should be sent to:

Tennessee Department of Agriculture
Food Manufacturing Administrator
440 Hogan Road
Nashville, TN 37220

More information on requirements for food manufacturers may be found in [UT Extension Publication PB-1399 titled Getting Started in a Food Manufacturing Business in Tennessee](http://utextension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/PB1399) (online address: utextension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/PB1399).

Labeling

Labeling for packaged walnuts should also be considered. Processed and packaged walnuts should have affixed labels with:

1. Name of the product.
2. Accurate net weight from approved and permitted scales.
3. Ingredients.
4. Name and address of the processor, packer or distributor.

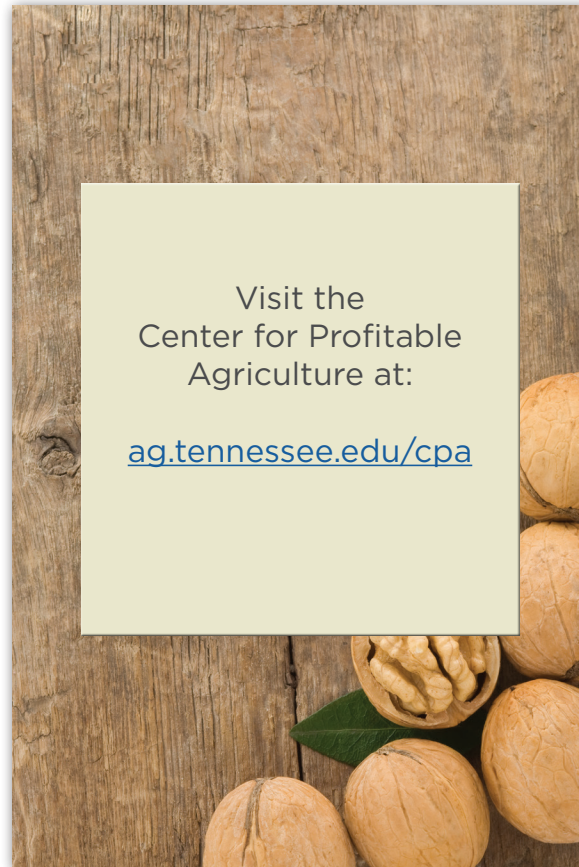
An example of a peel-and-stick label for processed walnuts is provided below in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Example Peel-and-Stick Label for Processed Walnuts

It should be noted that packaged walnuts must be sold by weight. The net weight must be included on the package label, and the weight must be determined on legal-for-trade scales that are permitted by TDA. The net weight is the weight of the contents inside the package: not including the weight of the packaging and label. Questions regarding weights and measures requirements or scale permits in Tennessee should be directed to:

Standards Administrator
Tennessee Department of Agriculture
Consumer and Industry Services
615-837-5109



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