



JOEL ANDERSON — NORA VARGAS
SAN DIEGO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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**SUPERVISORS ANDERSON & VARGAS HOLD PRESS
CONFERENCE IN SUPPORT OF HOME KITCHENS***

****Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations, or “MEHKOs”***

(SAN DIEGO) – On Thursday, September 9, 2021, Supervisor Joel Anderson and Vice Chair Nora Vargas hosted a press conference in support of “MEHKOs”, or microenterprise home kitchen operations. Joining the supervisors in speaking was Roya Bagheri from Foodnome, Karen Melvin from the San Diego MEHKO coalition, and Diana Tapiz, a local chef and aspiring MEHKO operator.

Supervisor Anderson and Vice Chair Vargas are introducing a board letter at next week’s board meeting that would begin the process of establishing MEHKOs in San Diego County.

State law established MEHKOs as a new type of retail food facility to be operated by a resident in a private home. MEHKOs are authorized on a county-by-county basis and can only be operated within that County’s jurisdiction. To date, 7 of California’s counties have authorized MEHKOs, including San Diego’s neighboring County of Riverside.

Supervisor Anderson shared, “I am proud to be partnering with my colleague, Vice Chair Vargas, on this item. MEHKOs bring talented chefs into our local food economy and create opportunities for economic growth.”

“Adopting the MEHKOS program will help lift non-traditional food entrepreneurs who are usually women, immigrants, people of color, and others, and who have historically faced barriers breaking in as entrepreneurs,” said Vice Chair Nora Vargas. “I’m confident that through this

program, the County of San Diego can make true transformational change by uplifting people's entrepreneurial spirit and the desire to enrich their community through their talents."

Supervisor Anderson's office received more than 30 letters of support from local community groups and organizations. Two of these supporters, Foodnome and the San Diego MEHKO Coalition, had representatives Roya Bagheri and Karen Melvin, respectively, attend and speak at the press conference.

Bagheri shared, "Foodnome, the first legal marketplace for home cooked food in the U.S., has actively supported over 150 home cooks, the majority of whom are women and people of color, to obtain legal MEHKO permits across California. In over two years of operation, with more than 100,000 meals sold, there have been zero food safety complaints. We've seen the incredible impacts of the MEHKO program on inclusion, incubation, and innovation in local communities and urge San Diego County to provide this opportunity for residents."

Melvin added, "The time is right to create a pathway for San Diego home cooks to legally and safely sell their food directly to the public from their approved home kitchens."

Supervisors Anderson and Vargas' board letter would direct County staff to return to the board in 90 days with an ordinance authorizing MEHKO operations in San Diego County. Opportunities for public input will be given during the drafting of the MEHKO ordinance.

MEHKOs can benefit those who have the entrepreneurial spirit and the desire to enrich their community through their cooking, while creating a new avenue for San Diegans to create revenue for their families. Diana Tapiz, a San Diego County resident and chef, joined the supervisors at the press conference.

Tapiz shared, "If MEHKOs become a reality in San Diego County, I can restart Tres Fuegos Cocina as a legal home business, and continue to share my food and culture, while having the flexibility to take care of my kids. I will be able to earn supplemental income for my family and continue to learn the ropes of the food industry. It will help me pursue my dream of operating a successful food business that benefits the community."

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