

# Made in Maine: See what's cooking at Fork Food Lab

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By Alexandra Hall

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Alicia Bars, a gourmet granola bar company, is among the many startups using kitchen space in Fork Food Lab. *Photo by James C. Hardman*

The phenomenon of food business incubators has been a boon to small startups, chefs hungry to test out a new service concept, and creative culinary ideas everywhere. And Fork Food Lab in Portland is doing it right – by not just helping newcomers with costs, but by building a community of people who help and support one another through those rocky first years.

## FORK FOOD LAB

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**WHERE:** 72 Parris St., Portland

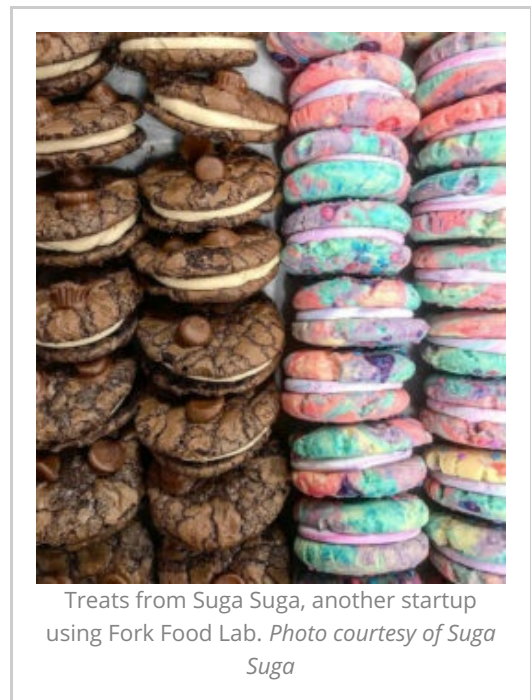
**INFO:** (207) 558-0881, [forkfoodlab.com](http://forkfoodlab.com)

**HOURS:** Tours by appointment

**EVENTS:** Member Market – 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. June 1, packaged goods for sale, ready-to-eat food, beer and wine; First Friday Pop Up Markets – three to five members set up tables from noon to 7 p.m. on first Friday of every month, Rising Tide Brewing Co., 103 Fox St., Portland; Wednesday Summer Markets – pop-up markets from 4-7 p.m. Wednesdays in June, July and August, Foundation Brewing Co., 1 Industrial Way, No. 5, Portland

Members of the organization are folks looking to launch a new restaurant, say, or perhaps a catering company. Maybe they want to dip a toe into the pickling business or a cupcake company that delivers its treats all over the area. They pay a fee to the organization and secure their own licenses, and in exchange they get a big, professional kitchen which they share with the rest of the network members to churn out their creations.

Sharing the space simplifies the process of getting food businesses off the ground, saving them all kinds of headaches and costs, from building insurance and internet bills to deliveries, cleaning and professional equipment (no fewer than 10 ovens, 17 prep stations and lots of storage space). That allows entrepreneurs to focus on making and selling their delicious products, from almond milk to whoopie pies. Members include Alicia Bars gourmet oatmeal bars, food truck Falafel Mafia, catering company Shovel & Spoon, edible cannabis producer Silverchild Confectionaries and dozens of others. Previous members who've gone on to bigger digs include The Highroller Lobster Co., White Cap cold brew coffee and Blue Spoon restaurant, among many others.



But it's hardly the members alone who benefit; the shared place is also a spot for the rest of the buying community to convene and check out new foods. The lab's tasting room is open to the public on weekends and has open house events. You can schedule a tour for various times throughout the week online, and you can also purchase Fork member products through delivery services [2DineIn.com](https://2DineIn.com) and [FarmDrop.us](https://FarmDrop.us) and at farmers markets in Yarmouth, Cumberland and Falmouth. There are also First Friday Pop Up Markets from noon to 7 p.m. at nearby Rising Tide Brewing Co., and Wednesday Summer Markets across town at Foundation Brewing from 4-7 p.m. weekly.

As dedicated as it is to developing local small food businesses and encouraging culinary innovation, Fork is also focused on helping businesses that support small farms all over the state. In fact, after almost closing in 2018, the food lab was kept open when Yarmouth's

Sustainability Lab stepped in, insisting that Fork Food Lab had become a critical bridge between local food entrepreneurs and consumers, and a fixture in the region's food system.

*Alexandra Hall is a longtime New England lifestyle writer who recently moved to Maine.*

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