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## **Piecemakers told to halt fresh food sales Health agency inspected group's operation last week.**

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**By BRIAN MARTINEZ The Orange County Register**

**COSTA MESA** — The only way the Piecemakers' home-style restaurant will shut down is "over our dead bodies," members of the anti-government religious group vowed.

The county Health Care Agency on Thursday ordered the commune-style business to immediately stop selling freshly prepared food at the Piecemakers Country Store because the group doesn't have the proper permit.

"Oh please, spare me," said Marie Kolasinski, Piecemakers' 84-year-old founder and spiritual leader. "This is God's business, and we don't need their permission to run it."

Violating the state health and safety codes could lead to misdemeanor charges, District Attorney spokeswoman Susan Kang Schroeder said.

This latest round in the Piecemakers' decade-long dispute with the county started last week, when 21 district attorney's investigators, Costa Mesa police officers, and health agency officials conducted a court-ordered inspection of the store's food-service operations.

The investigators arrested seven of the Piecemakers — five women and two men — for interfering with the authorities during the encounter.

The District Attorney's Office has not decided if it will press criminal charges in the Oct. 26 incident, but those arrested are to appear Nov. 28 at Harbor Justice Center.

The Piecemakers plan to caravan to that hearing, waving American flags and patriotic signs. They've been passing out fliers for the occasion, which they've dubbed a **["Let Freedom Ring Rally."](#)**

"We're tired of them bullying us and telling us how to run our business, when we are the ones pouring our lifeblood into it," Piecemaker Katie Needham said. "God tells us how to run it, and they have the audacity to come here and enforce their

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codes on us.”

The county is enforcing laws created by the state Legislature, health agency spokesman Howard Sutter said.

The reinforcements and the warrant for last week’s inspection were needed because the Piecemakers had previously denied inspectors access to the kitchen, officials said.

The fracas that led to the arrests began when Kolasinski pulled an inspector’s thermometer out of a pot of stew.

“Nobody sticks their dirty thing in my soup,” she said.

Piecemakers claim their kitchen and table area are cleaner and safer than many places that have the proper permit and allow inspections. Their food permit allows them to sell only prepackaged foods.

“A permit will never make a kitchen clean,” Kolasinski said. “Our customers are our best inspectors. They tell us if something is wrong or right. The agency doesn’t care about our customers. It’s just a job for them... a power trip.”

The Health Care Agency does its work to protect the public’s health, Sutter said.

Piecemakers customers Joanne Tucker and Kathleen Havens said they’ve regularly eaten at the shop’s little restaurant for the past five years and haven’t gotten sick.

The agency attempted to investigate one complaint about the store’s food-service operation in November 2003, but Sutter would not disclose the nature of the complaint.

Founded in 1978, Piecemakers brings in about \$3 million in revenue each year and breaks even, Kolasinski said. The 26 members live in four large houses nearby and each receives enough money for basic life needs. The remaining profits are put back into the business or are used to fight the government, she said.

Piecemakers sells quilt supplies, original calendars and knick-knacks.

They also run a hair salon, offer craft classes, and perform custom interior and furniture design and construction.

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