



Public Information

County of Ventura • Resource Management Agency • Environmental Health
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Cottage Food Business: Frequently Asked Questions

1. What are Cottage Food Products?

Cottage Food Products are specific types of foods that you make in the kitchen of your private home. Not all food products can be sold as Cottage Food Products. They must be non-potentially hazardous foods that do not require time and/or temperature control for safety. You must also store your Cottage Food Products in your home following safe, food handling guidelines outlined in the Retail Food Code to prevent adulteration caused by insects, household chemicals, water damage, unsanitary conditions, etc.

2. What is private home?

This is the place where you live, whether you own the home or are renting. So, a house, apartment, condominium, or rental home all could be a private home. (H&SC 113758(b)(6))

3. Is there a limit to how much I can sell as a Cottage Food Operator?

Yes. You are limited to \$50,000 in gross annual sales selling Cottage Foods. (H&SC 113758(a))

4. Am I limited to the types of Cottage Foods I produce in my home?

Yes. Only non-potentially hazardous foods that do not require time and/or temperature control for safety (can be safely kept at room temperature and do not require refrigeration). The following is a list of foods approved for sale by a Cottage Food Operation: (H&SC 114365.5)

- (1) Baked goods, without cream, custard, or meat fillings, such as breads, biscuits, churros, cookies, pastries, and tortillas.
- (2) Candy, such as brittle and toffee.
- (3) Chocolate-covered nonperishable foods, such as nuts and dried fruits.
- (4) Dried fruit.
- (5) Dried pasta.
- (6) Dry baking mixes.
- (7) Fruit pies, fruit empanadas, and fruit tamales.
- (8) Granola, cereals, and trail mixes.
- (9) Herb blends and dried mole paste.
- (10) Honey and sweet sorghum syrup.
- (11) Jams, jellies, preserves, and fruit butter that comply with the standard described in **Part 150 of Title 21 of the Code of Federal Regulations**. *See Below
- (12) Nut mixes and nut butters.
- (13) Popcorn.
- (14) Vinegar and mustard.

- (15) Roasted coffee and dried tea.
- (16) Waffle cones and pizelles.
- (17) Cotton candy.
- (18) Candied apples.
- (19) Confections such as salted caramel, fudge, marshmallow bars, chocolate covered marshmallow, nuts, and hard candy, or any combination thereof.
- (20) Buttercream frosting, buttercream icing, buttercream fondant, and gum paste that do not contain eggs, cream, or cream cheese.
- (21) Dried or Dehydrated vegetables.
- (22) Dried vegetarian-based soup mixes.
- (23) Vegetable and potato chips.
- (24) Ground chocolate.
- (25) Seasoning salt.
- (26) Flat icing.
- (27) Marshmallows that do not contain eggs.
- (28) Popcorn balls.
- (29) Dried grain mixes.
- (30) Fried or baked donuts and waffles.
- (31) Dried hot chocolate (dried powdered mixes or molded hardened cocoa pieces).
- (32) Fruit infused balsamic vinegar (*containing only high-acid fruits such as apple, crabapple, nectarine, peach, plum, quince, blackberry, blueberry, cherry, cranberry, grape, huckleberry, gooseberry, loganberry, pomegranate, pineapple, raspberry, strawberry, tomatillo, youngberry, grapefruit, kumquat, lemon, lime, orange*).
- (33) Dried fruit powders.
- (34) Dried spiced sugars.

*Jams, jellies, preserves, and fruit butter: Cottage food operations which produce jams, jellies, preserves, and other related products must be sure that their products meet the legal established standards of identity requirements for those products as set forth in **21 CFR Part 150**. The purpose of the regulation is to maintain the integrity of the food product to ensure consumers consistently get what they expect. The product name and ingredients listed on the label must be factual and comply with the legal definitions and standards of identity or the product may be considered misbranded. Products made with other ingredients that are not defined in 21 CFR 150 cannot be produced by cottage food operations. Addition of other ingredients or alteration of ingredient profiles changes the chemistry of the food, which can allow the growth of various bacteria and toxins under the right conditions. For example, addition of peppers (i.e. jalapeno pepper) to make pepper jelly is not supported by 21 CFR 150 and the addition of this low acid ingredient could cause the formation of botulism toxin in the product if the proper controls are not used.

5. Where can I get a copy of the Cottage Food bill?

http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/11-12/bill/asm/ab_1601-1650/ab_1616_bill_20120921_chaptered.pdf

6. Do I have to replace my home equipment stove and/or refrigerator with commercial grade units?

No. As a Cottage Food operator, you are not required to provide equipment that meets commercial standards to make Cottage Food Products.

7. Why are some products not allowed to be made and sold under the Cottage Food bill?

The Cottage Food bill allows food entrepreneurs to operate small food businesses and produce a variety of food products that are low risk from a food safety standpoint, if

prepared properly in a private home kitchen, while protecting public health to the greatest extent possible. The allowable products list is based on the food safety risk level associated with certain types of food. People who operate a licensed and inspected retail food facility have to meet certain requirements for training, food safety and handling. Since Cottage Food Operations may be uninspected, it is necessary to limit food products allowed under the law to those that are considered low risk, or non-potentially hazardous.

8. Do I have to put a label on my Cottage Foods?

Yes. The label must meet Federal law and must include all of the following:

- The words “Made in a Home Kitchen” in 12-point type on the Cottage Food Product’s primary display panel.
- The name commonly used for the food product or an adequately descriptive name.
- The name of the Cottage Food Operation which produced the Cottage Food Product.
- The registration or permit number of the “Class A” or “Class B” Cottage Food Operation, respectively, which produced the Cottage Food Product, and the name of the county of the local enforcement agency that issued the registration or permit number.
- The ingredients of the Cottage Food Product, in descending order of predominance by weight, if the product contains two or more ingredients.

What does allergen labeling, as specified in federal labeling requirements, mean?

It means you must identify if any of your ingredients are made from one of the following food groups: milk, eggs, wheat, peanuts, soybeans, fish (including shellfish, crab, lobster or shrimp), and tree nuts (such as almonds, pecans or walnuts). So, if you have an ingredient made with a wheat-based product, you have two options:

- Include the allergen in the ingredient list. For example, a white bread with the following ingredient listing: ‘whole wheat flour’, meets the requirements of federal law.
- Include an allergen statement (“Contains”) after the ingredient list. For example, a white bread, with the following ingredients: whole wheat flour, water sodium caseinate, salt, and yeast. Contains wheat and milk.

9. Are there any specific requirements for tree nuts labeling for allergens?

Yes. If your Cottage Food has tree nuts as an ingredient you must identify which tree nut you are using.

For example, if you made Nut Bread, an acceptable ingredient list would be:

Ingredients: wheat flour, water, almonds, salt, yeast.

The following would be unacceptable:

Ingredients: flour, water, nuts, salt, yeast.

10. Do I have to have any training or certificates to become a Cottage Food operator?

Yes. A person who prepares or packages Cottage Food Products must obtain a California food handler card within 3 months of becoming registered.

11. Am I required to send my Cottage Food Products to a laboratory to obtain an official ingredient list?

No. You are not required to have your product analyzed by a laboratory to obtain an official ingredient list. You must, however, list all ingredients, in descending order of predominance by weight. If you use a prepared item in your recipe, you must list sub-ingredients as well.

12. Will my home kitchen be subject to inspections by the Environmental Health Division?

If you are a registered “Class A” (direct sales only) Cottage Food Operation, then an inspection will only be conducted if a consumer complaint is received that adulterated or otherwise unsafe food has been produced by the Cottage Food Operation or that the Cottage Food Operation has violated the California Retail Food Code.

If you are a “Class B” (direct and indirect sales) Cottage Food Operation, then an initial inspection to determine that the Cottage Food Operation and its method of operation conform to the requirements of the California Retail Food Code must be conducted for a permit to be issued. After the initial inspection, a “Class B” Cottage Food Operation is subject to one inspection per year.

13. Can I make Cottage Food Products in an outbuilding on my property, like a shed or a barn?

No. The law requires the Cottage Food Products be made in your kitchen and stored in your single-family domestic residence.

14. Where can I store ingredients and finished products for my Cottage Food business?

Ingredients and finished Cottage Food Products may be stored in your private home where the Cottage Foods are made. This includes your kitchen or attached rooms within the home that are used exclusively for storage. All rooms used for food storage must be free of insects and rodents, free of dirt, dampness/water, and free of other environmental sources of contamination.

15. Can I sell my Cottage Food Products made in Ventura County in another county in California?

Another county in California may agree to allow a Cottage Food Operation registered or permitted in Ventura County to engage in direct sales of Cottage Food Products in that county.

16. Will I need any other permit or license for my Cottage Food Operation?

You may. Check with the city, or county if you are outside city limits, where your private home is located to determine if a business license or other permit is required.