

WHAT ARE COTTAGE FOODS?



COLORADO

Division of Environmental
Health & Sustainability

Department of Public Health & Environment

Cottage foods are limited types of homemade food products that can be sold directly to informed consumers without licensing or inspections.

Frequently asked questions regarding these foods are answered below.

Allowed Foods

A limited range of foods are allowed that do not require refrigeration to maintain product integrity and safety. For a complete list of eligible foods refer to the Act.

Canned fruits and applesauce.

Pickled vegetables and fruits with a finished pH of 4.6 or below.

Dehydrated produce including freeze-dried produce.

Not allowed

Baked goods such as cream pies and pastries that contain cream cheese and or custard.

Salsa, hot sauce, or other condiments such as ketchup or salad dressing.

Poultry* or other meat products.

Starting my business

What steps do I need to take to start preparing and selling Cottage Foods?

- 1) Review the Cottage Foods Act
- 2) Complete a food safety course
- 3) Contact your local city and county offices to inquire about any required business licenses.

Does the Act allow me to earn up to \$10,000 for each type of muffin I produce (i.e. blueberry, banana, chocolate chip)?

Yes.

Packaging and Labeling

Do Cottage Foods have to be packaged and labeled?

Yes. All Cottage Foods should be packaged and labeled with specific information including an exact disclaimer prior to selling them directly to the informed consumer.

Can Cottage Foods be labeled as "Organic"?

Cottage Foods labeled as "organic" have to be certified by a United States Department of Agriculture-National Organic Program accredited certification agency. A producer may list an ingredient as "organic" without obtaining certification as long as the term "organic" is not on the primary label.

Contact the Colorado Department of Agriculture, Plants Division for additional information.

*Poultry is not eligible to be sold under the Act. There are laws that do allow a producer to raise, process, and sell whole poultry to consumers. Contact the Colorado Department of Agriculture, Inspection & Consumer Services Division.

Eggs

What types of shell eggs can be sold?

Chicken, quail, duck, and turkey eggs. If a producer sells more than 250 dozen shells eggs per month, then a license is required. For chicken eggs contact the Colorado Department of Agriculture at 303-477-0076. For all other types of shells eggs contact the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment Manufactured Food Program at 303-692-3645, option 2.

How should eggs be stored?

Eggs should be maintained at 41 °F or below and stored in new, clean, unused egg cartons.

What information is required on egg cartons?

The address at which the eggs originated;

The packaging date;

Any eggs not treated for salmonella must also include the following statement:

"Safe Handling Instructions: To prevent illness from bacteria, keep eggs refrigerated, cook eggs until yolks are firm, and cook any foods containing eggs thoroughly. These eggs do not come from a government-approved source."

Additional information can be found at:
www.colorado.gov/pacific/aginspection/egg-producers

Training

What type of food safety training is required?

The following options satisfy the requirements. Online courses are available at:

www.online.colostate.edu/topics-of-study/agriculture/

www.statefoodsafety.com

In-person classes may be available through your county extension office or local health department.

For more information visit:

www.farmtotable.colostate.edu

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Packaging and Labeling continued

Can Cottage Foods be labeled as "allergen-free"?

No. All Cottage Food products must be labeled with a disclaimer stating that they were produced in a home kitchen without regulatory oversight and may also contain common allergens.

Ingredients

Can pumpkin, sweet potato, and zucchini be used as ingredients for baked goods?

Yes. Pumpkin, sweet potato, and zucchini breads can be sold under the Act. Pumpkin or sweet potato pies are not allowed because they require refrigeration to maintain product integrity and safety.

Can whole fresh peppers be used to make pepper jelly?

No. Whole fresh peppers cannot be used to make fruit preserves, jam, or jelly however dried spices such as cayenne pepper, paprika, black pepper etc. are allowed to be used to make these products.

Can raw agricultural commodities such as honey, vegetables, and fruits from a local farmer or bee keeper be used to prepare cottage foods?

Yes. Fruits and vegetables with minimal post-harvest processing to remove dirt, debris, or dead leaves, and unprocessed honey can be used to make cottage food products.

Can alcohol/liquor be used as an ingredient or flavoring in baked goods or confections?

Yes. If used, it must be listed as an ingredient. It is also recommended to add language to the label that states "This product contains alcohol".

Can baked goods contain meat?

No. Baked goods that contain meat such as bacon are not allowed to be sold under the law.

Is flour considered a raw agricultural commodity?

No. The grain used to make the flour would be considered a raw agricultural product.

Can hemp seeds be used as an ingredient in baked goods?

There are certain criteria that hemp seeds have to meet in order to be used in food. Contact the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment for additional information.

Selling Cottage Foods

Where can Cottage Foods be sold?

Only in Colorado. Cottage Foods are prohibited from being sold to restaurants, grocery stores or any entity for further distribution or resale.

Can a producer sell their Cottage Food products at multiple locations and events even if they occur on the same day and at the same time?

Yes. A producer or their designated representative can sell and deliver the product directly to an informed end consumer.

Can Cottage Foods be sold from a mobile food truck or store front?

The use of a mobile food truck or store front to sell Cottage Foods is not the intent of the law and may be considered on a case by case basis by city and county ordinances and the local public health agency.

Can Cottage Foods be sold on the internet?

Yes. The mechanism of direct product delivery can be determined between the producer and the informed end consumer as long as it does not involve interstate commerce.

Best Practices

Where can I find standardized recipes for pickled fruits and vegetables?

- The Colorado State University Extension
 - The National Center for Home Food Preservation website
 - The Ball Blue Book*
 - The Ball Complete Book of Home Preserving*
 - Recipes reviewed by a process authority.
- *Available in bookstores and online.

Sanitation

How should I clean my work surfaces?

Clean work surfaces with soap and water, rinse them with plain water, and then spray or wipe them down with a sanitizer. A sanitizer solution can be made by mixing 1/8 teaspoon unscented, regular bleach (8.25%) with 16 ounces of water.

My home has a private water system, can I prepare cottage foods there?

Yes. Consider testing private water supplies at least once a year.

If I'm ill, can I prepare food?

Never prepare food while sick. Continue when you are feeling better and symptom free for at least 24 hours. Wash your hands often and never handle ready-to-eat food with your bare hands.