



**COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO HEALTH AGENCY  
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES DIVISION**

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## **COTTAGE FOOD OPERATION REQUIREMENTS**

### **Definitions**

**“Cottage Food Operation”** means an enterprise that is operated by a cottage food operator, and has not more than one full-time equivalent cottage food employee (not including a family member or household member of the cottage food operator) within the registered or permitted area of a private home where the cottage food operator resides and where cottage food products are prepared or packaged for direct and/or indirect sale to consumers.

A cottage food operation is not a “food processing facility” nor a “food facility”, and does not change status from being a “residence” for occupancy or zoning. A cottage food operation shall be classified as a permitted use of a residential property.

In 2013, the enterprise shall not have more than thirty-five thousand dollars (\$35,000) in gross annual sales in the calendar year. In 2014, the enterprise shall not have more than forty-five thousand dollars (\$45,000) in gross annual sales in the calendar year. Commencing in 2015, and each subsequent year thereafter, the enterprise shall not have more than fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) in gross annual sales in the calendar year.

**Types of cottage food** operations include the following:

1. **“Class A”** cottage food operation, is a cottage food operation that engages only in direct sales of cottage food products from the cottage food operation or other direct sales venues.
  2. **“Class B”** cottage food operation, is a cottage food operation that engages in both direct sales and indirect sales of cottage food products from the cottage food operation, from direct sales venues, from offsite events, or from a third-party retail food facility.
- **“Cottage Food Employee”** means an individual, paid or volunteer, who is involved in the preparation, packaging, handling, and storage of a cottage food product, or otherwise works for the cottage food operation. An employee does not include an immediate family member or household member of the cottage food operator.
  - **“Cottage Food Operator”** means an individual who operates a cottage food operation in his or her private home and is the owner of the cottage food operation.
  - **“Cottage Food Products”** means non-potentially hazardous foods that are prepared for sale in the kitchen of a cottage food operation and are listed in the following **Approved Food Products List**.

### **Approved Food Products List:**

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 fruit.
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. \*
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 or 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.

**\*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.

The State Public Health Officer may add or delete food products to or from the above list, which shall be known as the **Approved Food Products List**. Notice of any change to the approved food products list will be posted on the California Department of Public Health's web site at [fdbinfo@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:fdbinfo@cdph.ca.gov). Any change to the approved food products list shall become effective 30 days after the notice is posted. The notice shall state the reason for the change, the authority for the change, and the nature of the change.

**"Direct Sale"** means a transaction between a cottage food operation operator and a consumer, where the consumer purchases the cottage food product directly from the cottage food operation. Direct sales include, but are not limited to, transactions at holiday bazaars or other temporary events, such as bake sales or food swaps, transactions at farm stands, certified farmers' markets, or through community-supported agriculture subscriptions, and transactions occurring in person in the cottage food operation.

**“Indirect Sale”** means an interaction between a cottage food operation, a third-party retailer, and a consumer, where the consumer purchases cottage food products made by the cottage food operation from a third-party retailer that holds a valid health permit. Indirect sales include, but are not limited to, sales made to retail shops or to retail food facilities where food may be immediately consumed on the premises.

**“Private home”** means a dwelling, including an apartment or other leased space, where individuals reside.

**“Registered or Permitted area”** means the portion of a private home that contains the private home’s kitchen used for the preparation, packaging, storage, or handling of cottage food products and related ingredients or equipment, or both, and attached rooms within the home that are used exclusively for storage.

#### Registration/Permit Required

Food stored or prepared in a private home shall not be used or offered for sale in a food facility, unless that food is prepared by a cottage food operation that is registered or has a permit with San Luis Obispo County Environmental Health Services.

Food in a hermetically sealed container shall be obtained from a food processing plant that is regulated by the food regulatory agency that has jurisdiction over the plant, or from a cottage food operation that produces jams, jellies, and preserves and that is registered or has a permit with San Luis Obispo County Environmental Health Services.

A **“Class A” Cottage Food Operation** shall not be open for business unless it is registered with San Luis Obispo County Environmental Health Services and has submitted a completed, self-certification checklist. The self-certification checklist shall verify that the cottage food operation conforms to the following requirements:

1. No cottage food preparation, packaging, or handling may occur in the home kitchen concurrent with any other domestic activities, such as family meal preparation, dishwashing, clothes washing or ironing, kitchen cleaning, or guest entertainment.
2. No infants, small children, or pets may be in the home kitchen during the preparation, packaging, or handling of any cottage food products.
3. Kitchen equipment and utensils used to produce cottage food products shall be clean and maintained in a good state of repair.
4. All food contact surfaces, equipment, and utensils used for the preparation, packaging, or handling of any cottage food products shall be washed, rinsed, and sanitized before each use.
5. All food preparation and food and equipment storage areas shall be maintained free of rodents and insects.
6. Smoking shall be prohibited in the portion of a private home used for the preparation, packaging, storage, or handling of cottage food products and related ingredients or equipment, or both, while cottage food products are being prepared, packaged, stored, or handled.

A **“Class B” Cottage Food Operation** shall not be open for business unless it obtains a permit from San Luis Obispo County Environmental Health Services to engage in the direct and indirect sale of cottage food products.

San Luis Obispo County Environmental Health Services will issue a permit after an initial inspection has determined that the proposed “Class B” cottage food operation and its method of operation conform to this chapter.

## **Inspection**

A **“Class A” Cottage Food Operation** shall not be subject to initial or routine inspections. For purposes of determining compliance with this chapter, a representative of San Luis Obispo County Environmental Health Services may access, for inspection purposes, the registered area of a private home where a cottage food operation is located only if the representative has, on the basis of a consumer complaint, reason to suspect that adulterated or otherwise unsafe food has been produced by the cottage food operation or that the cottage food operation has violated this chapter.

Access is limited to the registered area and solely for the purpose of enforcing or administering this chapter. San Luis Obispo County Environmental Health Services may seek recovery from a “Class A” cottage food operation of an amount that does not exceed the Environmental Health’s reasonable costs of inspecting the “Class A” cottage food operation for compliance, if the “Class A” cottage food operation is found to be in violation.

A **“Class B” Cottage Food Operation** will not be inspected more than once per year by San Luis Obispo County Environmental Health Services. Additional inspections may be performed for the purposes of determining compliance, and an inspector may access the permitted area of a private home where a cottage food operation is located, if the representative has, on the basis of a consumer complaint, reason to suspect that adulterated or otherwise unsafe food has been produced by the cottage food operation, or that the cottage food operation has violated this chapter.

Access is limited to the permitted area and solely for the purpose of enforcing or administering this chapter. A “Class B” cottage food operation shall be authorized to engage in the indirect sales of cottage food products within the county in which the “Class B” cottage food operation is permitted.

A registration or permit, once issued, is nontransferable. A registration or permit shall be valid only for the person, location, type of food sales, and distribution activity specified by that registration or permit, and, unless suspended or revoked for cause, for the time period indicated.

## **Handwashing**

All employees shall thoroughly wash their hands and that portion, if any, of their arms exposed to direct food contact with cleanser and warm water by vigorously rubbing together the surfaces of their lathered hands and arms for at least 10 to 15 seconds and thoroughly rinsing with clean running water followed by drying of cleaned hands and that portion, if any, of their arms exposed. Employees shall pay particular attention to the areas underneath the fingernails and between the fingers .

Employees shall wash their hands in all of the following instances:

1. Immediately before engaging in food preparation, including working with non-prepackaged food, clean equipment and utensils, and unwrapped single-use food containers and utensils.
2. After touching bare human body parts other than clean hands and clean, exposed portions of arms.
3. After using the toilet room.
4. After caring for or handling any animal allowed pursuant to this part.
5. After coughing, sneezing, using a handkerchief or disposable tissue, using tobacco, eating, or drinking.
6. After handling soiled equipment or utensils.
7. During food preparation, as often as necessary to remove soil and contamination and to prevent cross-contamination when changing tasks.
8. When switching between working with raw food and working with ready-to-eat food.
9. Before donning gloves for working with food.
10. Before dispensing or serving food or handling clean tableware and serving utensils in the food service area.
11. After engaging in other activities that contaminate the hands.

### **Training**

A person who prepares or packages cottage food products shall complete a Food Processor Course instructed by the California Department of Public Health within three months of becoming registered/permitted. The course will not exceed four hours in length. The California Department of Public Health will work with local enforcement agencies to ensure that cottage food operators are properly notified of the location, date, and time of the classes offered.

### **Labeling**

A cottage food operation shall properly label all cottage food products in compliance with the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act. Additionally, the label shall include, but is not limited to, all of the following:

1. The words "Made in a Home Kitchen" in 12-point type on the cottage food product's primary display panel.
2. The name commonly used for the food product or an adequately descriptive name.
3. The name of the cottage food operation which produced the cottage food product.
4. The registration or permit number of the "Class A" or "Class B" cottage food operation, respectively, which produced the cottage food product and, in the case of a "Class B" cottage food operation, the name of the county of the local enforcement agency that issued the permit number.
5. The ingredients of the cottage food product, in descending order of predominance by weight, if the product contains two or more ingredients.

A cottage food product that is served by a food facility without packaging or labeling, shall be identified to the consumer as homemade on the menu, menu board, or other location that would reasonably inform a consumer of its homemade status.

### **Separation from Living Quarters**

A room used as living or sleeping quarters, or an area directly opening into a room used as living or sleeping quarters, shall not be used for conducting cottage food operations.

No sleeping accommodations shall be maintained or kept in any room where food is prepared, stored, or sold. Living or sleeping quarters located on the premises of a cottage food operation shall be separated from rooms and areas used for food facility operations by complete partitioning.

### **Additional Operational Requirements**

A person with a contagious illness shall refrain from work in the registered or permitted area of the cottage food operation. A person involved in the preparation or packaging of cottage food products shall keep his or her hands and exposed portions of his or her arms clean and shall wash his or her hands before any food preparation or packaging activity in a cottage food operation.

No food that has exceeded the labeled shelf life date recommended by the manufacturer shall be deemed to be non-perishable food. "Nonperishable food" means a food that is not a potentially hazardous food, and that does not show signs of spoiling, becoming rancid, or developing objectionable odors during storage at ambient temperatures.

No employee shall commit any act that may cause the contamination or adulteration of food, food-contact surfaces, or utensils.

Gloves shall be worn when contacting food and food-contact surfaces if the employee has any cuts, sores, rashes, artificial nails, nail polish, rings (other than a plain ring, such as a wedding band), uncleanable orthopedic support devices, or fingernails that are not clean, smooth, or neatly trimmed. Whenever gloves are worn, they shall be changed, replaced, or washed as often as handwashing is required.

If used, single-use gloves shall be used for only one task, such as working with ready-to-eat food, and shall be used for no other purpose, and shall be discarded when damaged or soiled, or when interruptions in the food handling occur.

Slash-resistant gloves that are used to protect the hands during operations requiring cutting shall be used only with food that is subsequently cooked. Slash-resistant gloves may be used with ready-to-eat food that will not be subsequently cooked if the slash-resistant gloves have a smooth, durable, and nonabsorbent outer surface or if the slash-resistant gloves are covered with a smooth, durable, nonabsorbent glove, or a single-use glove. Cloth gloves may not be used in direct contact with food unless the food is subsequently cooked.

All food shall be manufactured, produced, prepared, compounded, packed, stored, transported, kept for sale, and served so as to be pure and free from adulteration and spoilage; shall have been obtained from approved sources; shall be protected from dirt, vermin, unnecessary handling, droplet contamination, overhead leakage, or other environmental sources of contamination; shall otherwise be fully fit for human consumption.

Water used during the preparation of cottage food products shall meet the potable drinking water standards, except that a cottage food operation shall not be required to have an indirect sewer connection.

Water used during the preparation of cottage food products includes all of the following:

1. The washing, sanitizing, and drying of any equipment used in the preparation of a cottage food product.
2. The washing, sanitizing, and drying of hands and arms.
3. Water used as an ingredient.