



# 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 controls for safety. You must also store your Cottage Food Products in your home following safe, food handling guidelines outlined in the California Retail Food Code (CRFC) to prevent adulteration caused by insects, household chemicals, water damage, and unsanitary conditions.

## **2. What is a private home?**

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

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

Yes. As a Cottage Food Operation Class A, you are limited to \$75,000 in gross annual sales selling Cottage Foods. As a Cottage Food Operation Class B, you are limited to \$150,000 in gross annual sales. (CRFC 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 produced. This means the foods can be safely kept at room temperature and do not require refrigeration. (CRFC 114365.5). See the list of foods approved for sale by a Cottage Food Operation on the California Department of Public Health website: [Approved Cottage Foods](#)

## **5. Is a Cottage Food Operator allowed to repackage commercially prepared ready-to-eat foods that are non-potentially hazardous?**

Yes. If the commercially prepared foods are whole, ready-to-eat, and do not require refrigeration, you may repackage. See #9 for labeling requirements.

## **6. 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](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/11-12/bill/asm/ab_1601-1650/ab_1616_bill_20120921_chaptered.pdf)

## **7. 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.

## **8. 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 and are non-potentially hazardous.

## **9. Do I have to put a label on my Cottage Foods?**

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

- The words “Made in a Home Kitchen” or “Repackaged in a Home Kitchen” in 12-point type.
- 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 permit number.
- The ingredients of the Cottage Food Product, in descending order of predominance by weight, if the product contains two or more ingredients.

## **10. What does allergen labeling, as specified in federal labeling requirements, mean?**

It means that 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), tree nuts (such as almonds, pecans, or walnuts), and sesame.

For example, for bread made with the following ingredients: whole wheat flour, whole milk, salt, and yeast, you would add the following allergen statement: Contains: wheat and milk.

## **11. 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 an unacceptable ingredient list: Ingredients: flour, water, nuts, salt, yeast.

**12. 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 as a Cottage Food Operation Class A or permitted as a Cottage Food Operation Class B.

**13. 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 an ingredient that lists two or more ingredients on the package label, you must list these as sub-ingredients on your label as well, e.g., butter (pasteurized cream, salt).

**14. 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.

**15. 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.

**16. 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 and dampness/water, and free of other environmental sources of contamination.

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

Yes. A Class A Cottage Food Operation can engage in direct sales throughout California. A Class B Cottage Food Operation can engage in both direct and indirect sales throughout California.

**18. Can I ship my Cottage Food Products via mail or another third-party delivery service?**

Yes. Both direct and indirect sales of Cottage Food Products may be shipped via mail or another delivery service in California. Shipping outside of California is prohibited.

**19. Can I advertise my Cottage Food Products through an internet website, social media platform, newspaper, newsletter, or other public announcement?**

Yes. Whichever way you choose to advertise, the following information must be included on the advertisement:

1. The county of approval
  - a. "Registration issued in Ventura County" for a Class A Cottage Food Operation
  - b. "Permit issued in Ventura County" for a Class B Cottage Food Operation
2. The registration or permit number
3. A statement that the food prepared is "Made in a Home Kitchen" or "Repackaged in a Home Kitchen", as applicable.

**20. Will I need any other permit or licenses 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.