Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
Panhandle Health District

Panhandle Health District

Healthy People in Healthy Communities

Cottage Foods Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What are cottage foods?
A. Cottage foods are foods made in a person's home or other designated location and sold directly to a consumer. They include foods that are defined in the IDAHO FOOD CODE as non-Time/Temperature Control for Safety (non-TCS) foods. Examples of cottage foods include: baked goods that do not require refrigeration, fruit jams and jellies, honey, fruit pies, breads, cakes that do not require refrigeration, pastries and cookies that do not require refrigeration, candies and confections that do not require refrigeration, dried fruits, dry herbs, dry seasonings and mixtures, cereals, trail mixes and granola, nuts, vinegar and flavored vinegars, popcorn and popcorn balls, or tinctures that do not make medicinal claims.

Q. Are cottage foods legal to sell in Idaho?
A. Yes, and they have been legal to sell for many years in Idaho. This means that neither the local Public Health District (PHD) nor the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare require a cottage food producer to obtain a food establishment permit or license.

Q. Where am I allowed to sell cottage foods?
A. You are allowed to sell cottage foods at any venue as long as the sale is direct to the consumer. Possible venues could include farmers' markets, roadside stands, the internet, or through mail order sales.

Q. Can I advertise through Craigslist , Facebook, or other online media?
A. As long as you are selling only directly to a consumer, yes.

Q. I would like to sell my cottage foods through a local store. Am I allowed to do this?
A. No, if you intend to distribute the product to a third party (wholesale), you are a regulated food establishment and must meet all the requirements of IDAHO FOOD CODE regulations.

Q. Do I have to file any paperwork with the local Public Health District?
A. Although you are not required by Idaho law to secure a food establishment permit from your PHD, a venue has the right to establish its own rules and policies that require you to demonstrate that you have consulted with the PHD. For this reason, it is advised that you complete the information in the Cottage Foods Risk Assessment Form found at www.foodsafety.idaho.gov and meet with your PHD. The Environmental Health Specialist will review the form and ensure your products are approved cottage foods. If everything is approved, they will sign the document.

Q. Is there a fee for the Cottage Foods Risk Assessment Form?
A. No.

Q. Do I have to label the foods that I am making at home?
A. Foods that you produce in your home need to be clearly labeled on the product packaging; or by a clearly visible placard at the sales/service location that also states: The food was prepared in a home kitchen that is not subject to regulation and inspection by the regulatory authority; and The food may contain allergens.

Hayden – Kootenai County	Sandpoint – Bonner County	Kellogg – Shoshone County	Bonners Ferry – Boundary County	St. Maries – Benewah County
8500 N. Atlas Rd.	2101 W. Pine St.	35 Wildcat Way	7402 Caribou St.	137 N. 8th St.
Hayden, ID 83835	Sandpoint, ID 83864	Kellogg, ID 83837	Bonners Ferry, ID 83805	St. Maries, ID 83861
208.415.5220	208.265.6384	208.783.0707	208.267.5558	208.245.4556

Q. Do I have to take a food handler or a food safety course?
A. Courses are not required, but are a good idea if you want to ensure food safety. The Food Safety Manual and Idaho Food Safety Exam can be found here: https://foodsafetyexams.dhw.idaho.gov/
Passing the exam will provide you with a valid Idaho Food Handlers Certificate.

Q. Can I have pets in the home I am cooking in?
A. While you may have pets in the home, it is strongly advised that you be very cautious and take necessary measures to ensure that pet hairs and other material does not contaminate the food you produce.

Q. I use well water. Do I have to test that water?
A. You are not required to test the water. However, it is advised that you do test it every three months for bacteria that could be harmful to human health. For more information on Drinking Water Testing and a list of certified labs visit: https://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/health-wellness/environmental-health/water-safety

Q. Can I sell fruit butter? Applesauce? Chutney? Pepper jams? Reduced sugar jams?
A. Generally, these are not allowed cottage foods. The types of products that meet the definition of a cottage food are those that will not support the growth of harmful bacteria. Fruit jams and jellies typically have a high enough sugar content that bacterial growth is not possible. Other fruit products such as pepper jams, usually do not have a high enough sugar content to prevent bacterial growth.

Q. Can I test my product to demonstrate it is a non-Time/Temperature Control for Safety (non-TCS) food?
A. Yes, but you must submit the product to a private laboratory for testing. You must demonstrate that the pH of the product is below 4.6 or that the product has a water activity (a_w) below 0.85. Rendering certain food products to make them non-TCS will not necessarily qualify them as a cottage food product. Your PHD can provide you with guidance on qualifying cottage foods.

Q. Can I produce and sell dehydrated fruit, including freeze dried fruit?
A. Yes. The dehydrated fruit must have a natural pH below 4.6. Examples include apples, apricots, berries, grapes, and plums. Melons and other low-acid fruits are not allowed. Your finished product will need to be evaluated for a_w and/or pH to confirm that it is non-TCS. Drying fruits in a homemade unit or sun-drying is not recommended. Drying of any kind should be done in a commercially/mass produced unit. Recipes, drying processes, and lab results need to be provided with the Risk Assessment form to the Public Health District for review.

Q. Can I produce and sell fruit leathers?
A. Yes, but the recipe will need to be submitted for review by the local PHD and final product evaluated for pH and a_w. As detailed above, only fruits with natural pH below 4.6 may be used. Fermented fruit leathers are not allowed.

Q. Can I produce and sell dehydrated vegetables?
A. No. Dehydrated vegetables do not meet the definition of a cottage food. Vegetables typically have a natural pH above 4.6.

Q. I make a pumpkin pie. Does it require refrigeration?
A. This depends on the recipe! While many commercially prepared pumpkin pies might have been baked in a way that makes them shelf stable, some pumpkin pies might not have been baked in a way that does not require refrigeration. You will need to complete a product assessment to determine if the pie is shelf stable.

Q. The Idaho Food Code specifically indicates that cottage foods do not include Low Acid Canned Food. What is a Low Acid Canned Food?
A. A Low Acid Canned Food is a canned item that naturally does not contain any (or very much) acid. Some examples of Low Acid Canned Foods include canned fruits, canned vegetables, canned meats, and canned pie fillings. **Q. The Idaho Food Code specifically indicates that cottage foods do not include Acidified Foods. What are acidified foods?**
A. Acidified foods are foods to which an acid ingredient is added with the intention of resulting in a pH below 4.6. An example of acidified foods includes pickled products.

Q. May I sell farm fresh eggs?
A. Ungraded, farm fresh eggs can be sold directly from the producer to a consumer or to a licensed food establishment if a "Ungraded Shell Egg Exemption Statement" is provided to the PHD. Please visit: https://idahopublichealth.com/environmental/foodprotection/Shell-Egg-Exemption.pdf to find a copy of the statement. However, the Idaho Department of Agriculture (ISDA) requires eggs to be graded if you have 300 or more laying hens.

Q. How can I advertise my products as organic?
A. You must contact the Idaho State Department of Agriculture in order to advertise a product as organic.

Q. I want to sell raw milk and raw milk products at a farmer's market. What are the requirements?
A. Raw milk and raw milk products are regulated by the (ISDA). If you want to sell these products, contact the ISDA and be familiar with their regulations.

Q. I want to make pet treats. What are the requirements?
A. Pet treats are regulated by the (ISDA). If you want to sell these products, contact the ISDA for requirements.

5/2025