

Issue Brief

Connecticut's Cottage Food License

The Department of Consumer Protection (DCP) reviews cottage food operation license applications from individuals seeking to sell food prepared in a home kitchen. Licenses are only available to individuals seeking to prepare non-potentially hazardous foods. Products are “potentially hazardous food” if they require time and temperature control for safety to limit pathogenic microorganism growth or toxin formation (e.g., fresh fruit or custard-filled cakes, fresh juices, dehydrated meats, garlic in oil, canned vegetables).

Generally Permissible Cottage Food Products

DCP has classified certain food products as generally non-hazardous, consistent with federal law's definition. If an applicant wants to sell something that does not appear on DCP's list, he or she must seek [permission](#) before doing so. Generally permissible cottage food products include:

- Breads, rolls, and biscuits (plain and unstuffed)
- Brownies, pastries, and cookies
- Cakes and cupcakes (see [this](#) for more information on frostings)
- Candies and confections
- Chocolates and fudge
- Coated or uncoated nuts
- Coffee and tea (but not as prepared beverages)
- Cooked fruit pies (except pumpkin)
- Dried fruits and fruit leather
- Dried herbs, seasonings, and mixtures
- Dried pasta and granola
- Jams, jellies, and preserves
- Marshmallow products
- Popcorn, popcorn balls, and cotton candy
- Vinegar and flavored vinegar

What is a cottage food operation?

DCP offers cottage food operation licenses to individuals who (1) produce cottage food products only in their private residential dwelling's home kitchen and for sale directly to the consumer and (2) do not operate as a food service establishment (e.g., restaurant), food retailer, distributor, or manufacturer. Licensees may not have annual gross sales over \$25,000 (beginning October 1, 2022, the cap is raised to \$50,000).

What is a “home kitchen” within a “private residential dwelling”?

A “private residential dwelling” is an owner- or resident-occupied dwelling (including an apartment). It does not include a group or communal residential setting within any type of structure or outbuilding, shed, barn, or other similar structure. “Home kitchen” means a kitchen designed and intended for use by a home's residents but that is also used by a resident to produce cottage food products. It may contain one or more stoves or ovens designed for residential use. Shared commercial (rented) kitchens do not qualify.

How does one obtain a cottage food operation license?

Applicants must annually submit a [form](#) to DCP along with a \$50 fee. To be eligible for licensure, an applicant must first complete an approved food safety course that includes training in food processing and packaging. Applicants with well water must provide DCP with a copy of a water analysis. Applicants must agree to let DCP inspect their operation at any time to ensure compliance with the law's requirements. When applying, applicants must specify what types of products will be produced and the production method.

Does one need municipal approval to operate a cottage food business?

The law requires cottage food operations to comply with any applicable municipal laws and zoning regulations related to conducting business from a private residential dwelling. When submitting a license application to DCP, an applicant must state that the operation complies with local regulations.

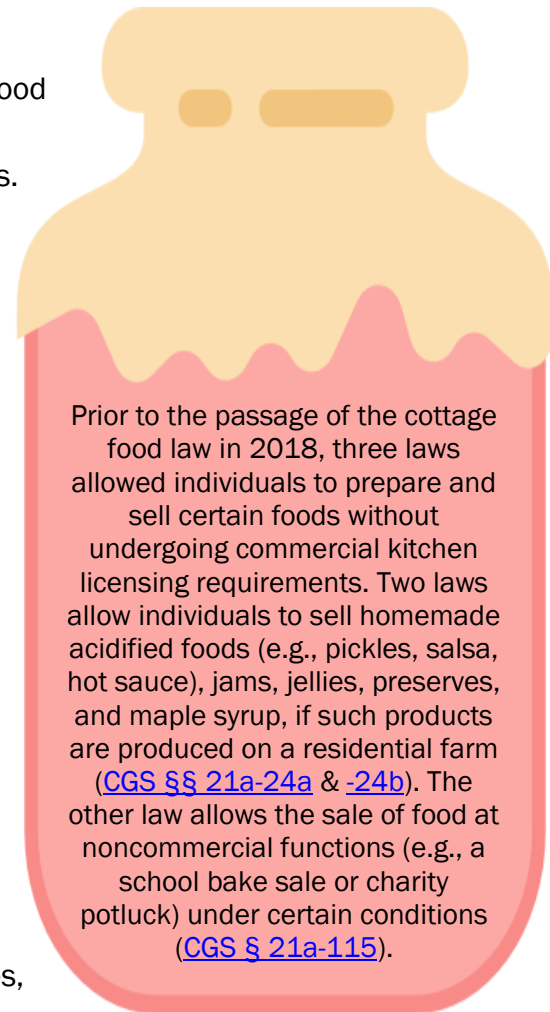
To whom may one sell cottage food products?

Licensees (or a designee) may only sell cottage food products directly to a customer (i.e., person-to-person at the point of production, farmers markets, local fairs and festivals, or charitable organization functions, for example). It is not legal for a licensee to sell to a wholesaler, broker, or distributor for resale. Nor may licensees sell their products at grocery stores, restaurants, long-term care facilities, group homes, day care facilities, or schools. Licensees may advertise and take orders for a product online, by phone, or mail, but must directly deliver products to consumers. Products may not be delivered by mail, by other third party delivery services, or by mobile food ordering companies.

What are the labeling requirements for cottage food products?

Cottage food products must be prepackaged and labeled with the following information in English: (1) the licensee's name and physical address; (2) the product's common or usual name; (3) the product's ingredients, in descending order of predominance by weight or volume; (4) allergen information in the same manner as specified in federal labeling requirements; (5) the product's net weight or volume, including the metric equivalent; and (6) in 10-point clear and conspicuous type, "Made in a Cottage Food Operation that is not Subject to Routine Government Food Safety Inspection."

For wedding cakes, birthday cakes, and other specialty cakes that are not easily packaged, licensees must include all required label elements on the invoice and deliver it with the cake.



Prior to the passage of the cottage food law in 2018, three laws allowed individuals to prepare and sell certain foods without undergoing commercial kitchen licensing requirements. Two laws allow individuals to sell homemade acidified foods (e.g., pickles, salsa, hot sauce), jams, jellies, preserves, and maple syrup, if such products are produced on a residential farm ([CGS §§ 21a-24a & -24b](#)). The other law allows the sale of food at noncommercial functions (e.g., a school bake sale or charity potluck) under certain conditions ([CGS § 21a-115](#)).

**Learn
More**

CGS §§ [21a-62b to 21a-62h](#)

PA [22-8](#) and OLR's [summary](#) of it

DCP's Cottage Food Operators [Website](#)

DCP's [Cottage Foods Operator Manual](#)

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