

LABELING

The GDA reviews product labels for formatting only. It is up to the processor to ensure packaged cottage food products are correctly labeled with the following information:

- The BUSINESS NAME and ADDRESS of the cottage food operation;
- The COMMON NAME of the product;
- INGREDIENTS STATEMENT listed in descending order of predominance by weight (including all ingredients broken down into sub-ingredients);
- The NET WEIGHT or VOLUME of the product;
- ALLERGEN declarations following FDA requirements*;
- NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION if any nutritional claims are made; and
- The COTTAGE FOOD STATEMENT in 10-pt Times New Roman or Arial font, and in a legible color:
“MADE IN A COTTAGE FOOD OPERATION THAT IS NOT SUBJECT TO STATE FOOD SAFETY INSPECTIONS.”

There are eight major food allergens that must always be clearly identified on a food label in either the ingredients statement and/or in a “Contains” statement immediately after the ingredients statement: **Milk, Eggs, Fish, Crustacean Shellfish, Tree Nuts, Wheat, Peanuts, and Soybeans.*

For additional labeling questions and support, contact the Food Safety Division headquarters office at 404-656-3627.

WWW.AGR.GEORGIA.GOV/FOODSAFETY

Visit the Food Safety Division’s website for additional information; including information about getting a notarized affidavit for proof of U.S. citizenship, the Cottage Food Regulations and license application, Food Labeling brochure, contact information, FAQs, guidelines for food sold at non-profit events, and more.

FOOD SAFETY DIRECTIVES

- 1) Handwashing**
 - * Clean before preparation and packaging, and after any unsanitary activity.
 - * Use liquid soap, paper towels, and warm water.
- 2) Bare-Hand Contact**
 - * Bare-hand contact with ready-to-eat foods should be avoided. Use disposable gloves, bakery papers, or tongs.
- 3) Hair Restraint & Clean Garments**
 - * Hair restraint and clean outer garments worn while processing and packaging.
- 4) Eating, Drinking, & Tobacco**
 - * Employees should not eat, drink, or use tobacco products while processing and packaging.
- 5) Preventing Contamination When Tasting**
 - * Employees should not use a utensil more than once to taste a cottage food product.
- 6) Employee Health**
 - * Employees exhibiting the following symptoms should not process or package cottage foods:
 - Vomiting;
 - Fever;
 - Diarrhea,
 - Jaundice; or
 - Sore throat with fever.
- 7) Unauthorized Persons**
 - * No persons other than the operator or employees under their supervision should be in the kitchen during processing or packaging.
- 8) Food Contact Surfaces**
 - * Food contact surfaces of equipment and utensils should be clean to sight and touch before processing, and as necessary during processing to prevent product contamination.
- 9) Proper Storage of Ingredients/Finished Products**
 - * Ingredients and finished products should be stored separate from residential supplies, and in a manner that prevents contamination.
- 10) Proper Use & Storage of Chemicals**
 - * Chemicals should be used according to the label instructions;
 - * Stored to prevent contamination of food and contact surfaces;
 - * Spray bottles should be labeled; and
 - * No pest control chemicals used in the kitchen.
- 11) Pests**
 - * Pests should not be present, and the kitchen should be kept clean to prevent harborage conditions.
- 12) Pets**
 - * Pets should not be allowed in the kitchen during processing and packaging.

Starting a COTTAGE FOOD Business in Georgia



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Starting a Cottage Food Business

COTTAGE FOOD OPERATIONS

Cottage food sales are allowed under Georgia regulations, Chapter 40-7-19. Licensed cottage food operators can only make non-potentially hazardous foods (see Approved Cottage Food Products below). Operators can use their domestic home kitchen to produce products to sell directly to consumers at non-profit events, for-profit events, and through on-line internet sales. Cottage food operators may not distribute or wholesale these products, nor can they ship cottage food products across state lines. Without a Food Sales Establishment License, cottage food products are considered to be from an unapproved source, and cannot be distributed to retail stores, restaurants, or institutions.

APPROVED COTTAGE FOOD PRODUCTS

The following products can be produced with a Cottage Food License:

- Loaf Breads, Rolls, and Biscuits;
- Cakes (*except those that require refrigeration*);
- Pastries and Cookies;
- Candies and Confections;
- Fruit Pies;
- Jams, Jellies, and Preserves (*not to include Fruit Butters*);
- Dried Fruits;
- Dry Herbs, Seasonings, and Mixtures;
- Cereals, Trail Mixes, and Granola;
- Coated & Uncoated Nuts;
- Vinegar and Flavored-Vinegars; and
- Popcorn, Popcorn Balls, and Cotton Candy.

COTTAGE FOOD CHECKLIST

If you want to start a cottage food business, there are some steps you should complete before you contact the GDA about becoming licensed :

- The first step is to contact your city/county PLANNING & ZONING office(s) to make sure that there are no local ordinances that would stop you from operating a home based business.
- The next step depends on your water/sewage connections:
 - If you are on a PUBLIC WATER SUPPLY, your water quality should be acceptable. If you have a PRIVATE WELL the water will have to be tested annually. You must also adhere to the requirements found in the Department's *Non-Public Water Supply Testing Guidance* document.
 - For sewage disposal, if you are on city/county sewer, you should contact your local PUBLIC UTILITIES to ensure that your intended cottage food operations are acceptable for the existing system. If you are on a private septic system, you should contact your county health department to ensure your home's SEPTIC SYSTEM can handle the output from your cottage food operations.

- The last step is to obtain FOOD SAFETY TRAINING that is American National Standards Institute (ANSI) accredited. There are several programs accredited by ANSI, and a Food Handler's certificate is adequate to meet the Department's requirements. A copy of the certificate issued upon course completion be attached to the cottage food license application.



LICENSING

A Cottage Food License Application form is available on the GDA website, or via fax, mail, or email. Prior to licensing, a notarized affidavit and proof of U.S. citizenship is required. The annual \$100 license fee is due January 1st. Cottage food operators applying after June 30th only pay \$50. All products the cottage food operator intends to produce must be listed on the application form; these products are then listed on the cottage food license issued to the operator. If the operator decides to change or add additional cottage food products (not listed on the original application) the operator must file another application form and pay an additional license fee to cover the cost of the reassessment of the home kitchen and processing of the new application.

INSPECTION

The GDA will perform a one-time, pre-operational inspection after processing the Cottage Food License Application, which ensures the cottage food operator can meet the requirements of the regulations. After the pre-operational inspection, GDA only performs additional inspections as needed due to a change in operations (add/changing products), or to investigate consumer complaints and potential foodborne illness outbreaks.

FOOD SAFETY DIRECTIVES

These simple food safety guidelines are "best practices" for food handling in cottage food operations. They are strategies used to limit the potential for foodborne illness outbreaks. See a summary on the back page of this brochure.