

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, 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, Cottage Food Regulations, license application, Food Labeling brochure, contact information for the District Offices, 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, warm water and paper towels.
- 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 shall be 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 shall be 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



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Gary W. Black
Commissioner

Food Safety Division
19 Martin Luther King Jr Dr SW
Room 306
Atlanta, GA 30334

Phone: 404-656-3627
Fax: 404-463-6428
www.agr.georgia.gov
Twitter @GDAFoodSafety

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 BUSINESS 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 there are no local ordinances that prevent you from legally operating a home-based business.
- The next step depends on 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 for coliforms and nitrates. The GDA can perform this test at an annual testing fee of \$100.
 - ⊗ For sewage disposal, if you are on city/county sewer, you should contact your local PUBLIC UTILITIES to ensure your cottage food operations are acceptable for the existing system. If you use a private system, you should contact your county health department to ensure your 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 three accreditations certified by ANSI: ServSafe™, NRFSP, and Prometric. A copy of the certificate from completing one of these food safety exams must be included when submitting a cottage food license application.

LICENSING

The Cottage Food License Application form is available on the GDA website, at any of the District Offices, or via fax, mail, or email. Prior to licensing, a notarized affidavit and proof of U.S. citizenship is required. There is an annual \$100 license fee (new cottage food operators applying after June 30th 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 re-inspection of the home kitchen and processing the new application.

INSPECTIONS

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, the 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; more information is on