

## COTTAGE FOOD OPERATIONS - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### What is a Cottage Food Operation (CFO)?

A CFO is an enterprise located at a private home where approved, non-potentially hazardous or low risk food products are prepared or packaged for sale and consumption to consumers.

### What kinds of foods can be produced by a CFO?

Only “non-potentially hazardous foods” may be produced by a CFO. These are foods that do not require refrigeration to keep them safe from bacterial growth, which could potentially make people sick. California Department of Public Health maintains a list of approved cottage food categories on their website. Click here view list of [CDPH approved cottage foods](#).

### What if the product I want to make is not on the list of approved cottage foods?

You may submit a “Request to Add Food Product to the Approved Food List” to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). Careful evaluation of the food will be given before any food will be considered for addition to the Approved Food List. Requestors will be notified in writing of the Department’s decision.

**Note:** foods that are not on the list of approved cottage foods are required to be produced in a commercial kitchen and a “Processed Food Registration” (PFR) must be obtained from California Department of Public Health.

### Do I need any special training or certifications to become a CFO?

Yes. A person who prepares or packages cottage food products must possess either a Food Safety Manager Certification or California Food Handler’s Card (both of which can be obtained online through one of several online accredited agencies).

### What are the two classifications of CFOs?

- Class A may only engage in the “direct sale” of cottage food products.
- Class B may engage in both “direct sales” and “indirect sales” of cottage food products.

### What is meant by “Direct Sale” of cottage food?

“Direct Sale” means a transaction within the State of California between a CFO operator and a consumer, where the consumer purchases the cottage food product directly from the CFO. A direct sale may be fulfilled in person, via mail delivery, or using any other third-party delivery service.

### **What is meant by “Indirect Sale” of cottage food?**

“Indirect sale” means an interaction between a CFO, a third party retailer, and a consumer, where the consumer purchases cottage food products made by the CFO from a third party retailer that holds a valid permit issued by the local environmental health agency in their jurisdiction.

### **How much will the registration or permit cost the CFO?**

Application fees change slightly each fiscal year (July 1<sup>st</sup> – June 30<sup>th</sup>). Visit the Placer County Environmental Health (PCEH) Website to view the current fee schedule.

### **Do I need any other licenses or permits to start a Cottage Food Operation?**

Yes. CFOs are required to obtain a business license from the jurisdiction in which their CFO is located. The licensing jurisdictions in Placer County include City of Roseville, City of Lincoln, Town of Loomis, City of Rocklin, City of Colfax, and City of Auburn. All other communities (ie. Newcastle, Granite Bay, Meadow Vista, etc) are consider “unincorporated Placer County”. CFOs located in unincorporated Placer County must obtain a business license from Placer County Treasurer-Tax Collector’s Business Licensing Division.

### **Do I need to obtain a business license BEFORE applying for a CFO with Placer County Environmental Health?**

No. A business license application may be submitted to the appropriate jurisdiction after obtaining a CFO permit or registration with PCEH.

### **Will my CFO Registration/Permit allow me to sell at other retail venues?**

Yes, but additional health permits may be required to sell at other locations such as Community Events, Farmer’s Markets, Denio’s, etc. Please contact the Environmental Health Division @ 530- 745-2300 for additional permit requirements.

### **Can I sell my Cottage Food Products online?**

Yes. Direct sales of CFO products may be fulfilled in person, via mail delivery, or using any other third-party delivery service.

### **Are there sales limitations for Cottage Food Operations?**

- “Class A” cottage food operation is limited to \$75,000 in verifiable gross annual sales.\*
- “Class B” cottage food operation is limited to \$150,000 in verifiable gross annual sales.\*

\*The gross annual sales for a “Class A” or “Class B” cottage food operation shall be annually adjusted for inflation based on the California Consumer Price Index.

## **Can I expand my home kitchen area square footage to accommodate my cottage food operation?**

Any expansion or remodeling must be consistent with a residential home kitchen. Contact the county or city building, planning, and fire authorities for approval and applicable permitting requirements. All cottage food operations including preparation, mixing, assembling, storage, packaging, and or labeling shall occur inside the living space of the home.

**Note:** garages, sheds, backyards, vehicles, out-buildings or any other structure or location outside the living space cannot be used as storage, food preparation, packaging, or labeling facilities for a cottage food operation.

## **How often will a CFO be inspected?**

- Class A operations are not subject to initial or routine inspection.\*
- Class B operations are inspected initially prior to permit issuance and then annually thereafter.\*

\* Environmental Health may access Class A or B CFOs on the basis of consumer complaints, suspicions that adulterated or otherwise unsafe food has been produced, or in the event the operation is found to be in violation of the California Food Safety laws regarding CFOs. Inspections can occur at a private home, community events, farmers markets, bake sales, swap meets, or any third-party retailer.

## **What are the labeling requirements for CFO food products?**

All CFO products must be labeled per the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act. The minimum label requirements include:

- The CFO Business Name and phone number
- The common name of the food product or an adequately descriptive name
- Ingredients listed in descending order of predominance by weight
- Allergen statement if the product contains ANY of the Big 8 Food allergens: Wheat, Milk, Peanuts, Tree Nuts, Eggs, Soy, Fish, Shellfish
- The net quantity (count, weight, or volume) of the food product, stated in pounds and grams
- The words "Made in a Home Kitchen" in 12-point font
- The Registration (Class A) or Permit (Class B) number
- The city, state, and zip where the CFO is located
- The words "Issued in Placer County"

## Example Label:

**Sally's Cookie Co.**  
(530)765-4321

**Chocolate Chip Cookie with Walnuts**

Ingredients: Enriched flour (Wheat flour, niacin, reduced iron, thiamine, mononitrate, riboflavin and folic acid), butter (milk, salt), sugar, egg, chocolate chips (sugar, chocolate, cocoa butter, milkfat, soy lecithin, natural flavors), walnuts, salt, artificial vanilla extract, baking soda.

Contains: Wheat, milk, eggs, soy, tree nuts  
**Net Wt. 5 oz. (141 g)**

**Made in a Home Kitchen**  
Registration or Permit # PRXXXXXXX  
Auburn, CA 95603  
Issued by Placer County

### **Do I need to make a label for each individual CFO product?**

Yes. Every CFO product must have its own label including all the information specified in the example. Each CFO product label must reviewed and approved by Placer County Environmental Health prior to production and sales.

### **Can I add more CFO products after the initial application review process?**

Yes. Proposed product labels can be emailed to PCEH at [environmentalhealth@placer.ca.gov](mailto:environmentalhealth@placer.ca.gov). The label will be reviewed by an inspector and you will notified via email if the label is approved or requires corrections.

### **I want to start my own Cottage Food Operation, what do I do now?**

Submit a completed Cottage Food Operation Application including the following attachments to [business@placer.ca.gov](mailto:business@placer.ca.gov):

- Floor plan of kitchen & storage area
- A complete product list and a label for each product
- Food Safety Manager Certificate or CA Food Handlers Card
- Water quality test results & signed Private Well Food Facility Testing Agreement (For CFOs on private wells only) \*

\*CFOs on private wells must fill out and sign a Private Well Food Facility Testing Agreement and submit test results for bacteria, nitrate, and nitrite. Routine testing must be conducted thereafter (quarterly for bacteria, annually for nitrate, every three years for nitrite). For further information or questions regarding water testing please email [drinkwater@placer.ca.gov](mailto:drinkwater@placer.ca.gov).

After your application and payment has been processed, an EH specialist will contact you regarding the status of your application.

**Applications and forms are available on the Placer County Environmental Health website under "Permits, Forms, Fees". If you need assistance, contact our office at (530)745-2300.**