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Bite-Sized Food Safety

Food safety resources
for front-line managers
to train food workers

What About Cottage Foods?

Question: What are cottage foods?

Answer: Cottage foods are foods produced in a home, farm, or community kitchen that is not regulated and inspected by the health department.

Question: Are there any limitations on what kinds of cottage foods can be produced?

Answer: Yes, only non-potentially hazardous foods may be produced unless the producer prepares the food under Department of Agriculture regulation and the food is sold by the producer only at farmers markets.

Example of an unapproved cottage food



Example of non-potentially hazardous baked goods



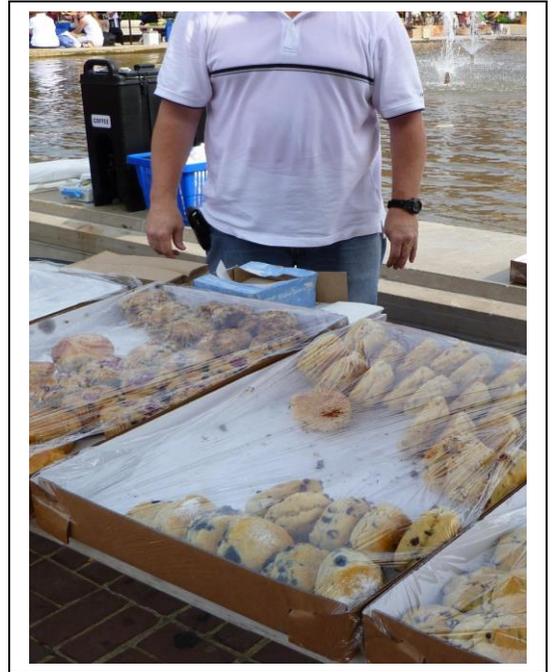
Question: What are non-potentially hazardous foods?

Answer: Non-potentially hazardous foods are shelf-stable foods that don't need to be refrigerated or acidified. Examples include baked goods without cream, custard, cheese, or meat fillings. Non-potentially hazardous foods also include caramel corn, cereals, chocolates, churros, coffee, confections, cotton candy, crackers, dried herbs, dried pasta, dry baking mixes, popcorn, fruit empanadas, fruit pies, fruit tamales, fudge, granola, honey, jams, jellies, apple butter, molasses, nuts, dried fruits, pretzels, seasoning blends, seeds, syrups, tea blends, tortillas, and trail mixes.

Question: Where can non-potentially hazardous cottage foods be sold?

Answer: Non-potentially hazardous cottage foods may be sold:

- Directly to the consumer
- At an on-farm market or farm stand
- At a traditional farmers market
- At a mobile farmers market
- On-line directly to in-state consumers
- At a fair or festival where farm and food products are sold
- To a third-party vendor such as a retail shop, grocery store, or convenience store



Question: Can cottage foods be sold to food establishments such as restaurants, schools, health care facilities, or day care centers?

Answer: No. Cottage foods may not be sold to or served at food establishments regulated by the health department such as restaurants, schools, health care facilities, or day care centers. They only may be sold in their original packaging at retail shops, grocery stores, and convenience stores.

Question: For cottage foods, what product information must be provided to the consumer on the label?

Inadequate label information



Answer: All cottage foods must have labeling that includes the following information:

- ◆ The common name of the product
- ◆ Either the weight or liquid volume in standard measurements, followed by metric equivalents in parentheses. This should be located on the bottom third of the main panel of a label. (Honey is measured by weight; maple syrup as a liquid.)
- ◆ Name and address - business name, city, state, and zip of the producer or distributor. (Unless the name is the actual producer, it must contain a qualifying phrase, such as "distributed by.")
- ◆ A list of ingredients in descending order of weight. Sub-ingredients must be listed in parentheses after an ingredient. (Be on the lookout for hidden allergens in sub-ingredients. For example, Worcestershire sauce often includes anchovies, a fish allergen.)



- ◆ An allergen statement - Any of the nine major food allergens recognized by FDA must be stated. For example, "Contains: milk, egg, fish (species), crustacean shellfish (species), tree nuts (species), peanuts, wheat, soy, and sesame." Fish, crustacean shellfish, and tree nuts must also include the common species name in parentheses. For example, "Contains: tree nuts (walnuts).
- ◆ The following statement: "*This product was made in a non-commercial kitchen that may not be subject to inspection and may contain cross-contact allergens not included in the allergen statement.*"
- ◆ Honey labels must say "Do not feed to infants under one year of age" or similar.

Question:

Who should I contact for more information about producing cottage foods in West Virginia?

Answer:

West Virginia Department of Agriculture, Regulatory & Environmental Affairs Division - (304) 558-2227
farmersmarkets@wvda.us



Remember, cottage foods can not be sold or served in schools, restaurants, day care centers, or health care facilities.