

# Illinois Cottage Food Regulations: Top Questions and Answers

## 1. What is a “cottage food operation”?

Someone who operates a “cottage food operation” produces or packages food in his or her kitchen (located in his or her primary residence) so that he or she or a family member may sell the food directly to a consumer.

## 2. Where may a cottage food operator sell product?

Products of a cottage food operation may only be sold at farmer’s markets in Illinois.

## 3. What kinds of foods may a cottage food operation sell?

In general, a cottage food operation may sell “non-potentially hazardous food.” This includes dry herbs, dry herb blends, and dry tea blends as well as some baked goods (not including cream, cheese, or custard based pies such as pumpkin or sweet potato), some fruit butters, and some jams, jellies and preserves. The law contains a list of items that are specifically permitted and prohibited (see table on back). Additional requirements apply to items that are not specifically allowed.

## 4. Are there special labeling requirements?

The labels on items produced by a cottage food operation must contain the name and address of the operation, the common name of the product, all ingredients (listed in descending order by weight), production date, whether the product contains any allergens (milk, eggs, wheat, peanuts, soybeans, fish or tree nuts), and the following statement:

“This product was produced in a home kitchen not subject to public health inspection that may also process common food allergens.”

## 5. Is there a limit to how much a cottage food operation may sell?

A cottage food operation may sell up to \$25,000 in product each calendar year.

## 6. Does a cottage food operation have to be registered?

A cottage food operation must register with the local public health department where the operator lives and produces or packages the food.

## 7. What are the requirements for registration?

To register a cottage food operation, the operator must hold a Food Service Sanitation Manager Certificate: [http://www.idph.state.il.us/about/fdd/fdd\\_faq\\_fssmanagercert.htm](http://www.idph.state.il.us/about/fdd/fdd_faq_fssmanagercert.htm)  
In addition, the local public health department may charge a “reasonable fee” for registration as a cottage food operation.

## 8. Will my kitchen be inspected?

Cottage food operations kitchens will not be inspected as a requirement for registration. However, the law allows a local public health department to require a cottage food operation to, as a condition of registration, agree to allow the health department to inspect the operation in the event of a consumer complaint or foodborne illness outbreak.

## Quick Reference Chart

Type of Fruit	Jams, Jellies, Preserves	Fruit Butter	Fruit Pies
Apple	OK	OK	OK
Apricot	OK	OK	OK
Banana	*	PROHIBITED	*
Blackberry	OK	*	OK
Blueberry	OK	*	OK
Boysenberry	OK	*	OK
Cherry	OK	*	OK
Cranberry	OK	*	OK
Grape	OK	OK	OK
Nectarine	OK	*	OK
Orange	OK	*	OK
Peach	OK	OK	OK
Pear	*	PROHIBITED	*
Pepper	PROHIBITED	*	*
Plum	OK	OK	OK
Prune	*	OK	*
Pumpkin	*	PROHIBITED	PROHIBITED
Quince	OK	OK	OK
Raspberry	OK	*	OK
Red Currant	OK	*	OK
Rhubarb	PROHIBITED	*	*
Strawberry	OK	*	OK
Tangerine	OK	*	OK
Sweet Potato	*	*	PROHIBITED
Tomato	PROHIBITED	*	*

Operators may combine specifically allowed products. For example, an apple-cranberry jelly or pie is allowed, as is a peach-apricot butter, but a strawberry-rhubarb jelly is prohibited.

An asterisk (\*) means the product is neither specifically allowed nor prohibited. A cottage food operation seeking to produce and sell such a product (for example, a strawberry-rhubarb pie) must, at its own expense, submit the recipe to a commercial laboratory to be tested and documented as non-potentially hazardous (less than 4.6 pH).

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