



COTTAGE FOOD BASICS FOR FARMERS MARKET VENDORS

Resources:

[Checklist for Starting a Cottage Food Business, MDARD](#)
[Guidelines for Providing Safe Food Sampling, MDARD](#)
[Food Safety Resources for Farmers and Vendors, MIFMA](#)
[Cottage Food Labels: What you Need to Know, MIFMA](#)
[Online Michigan Cottage Food Law Training Program, MSU Extension](#)
[Marketing Your Cottage Foods, University of California](#)

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COTTAGE FOOD BUSINESS BASICS:

Before starting a Cottage Food Business, be sure you can say:

- I understand the Michigan Food Law and Food Code and know to review [MDARD's Cottage Food Information Page](#) when I have questions.
The products I plan to produce are non-hazardous and do not require refrigeration to be safe for consumption.
- I do not intend to sell my Cottage Food products alongside other licensed food products.
Selling licensed and Cottage Food products in the same booth can confuse or mislead customers and should be avoided.
- I understand any local regulations that would impact my business.
I've called my township/city/county to see if there may be other regulations, such as zoning laws, that would impact my ability to make and market products from my home.
- I know my business structure and tax requirements.
I can reference the [Small Business Development Center's Guide to Starting an Operating a Small Business Guide](#) and know how to [find and contact my local Small Business Development Center](#) if I have questions.
- I know the requirements of the farmers market(s) where I plan to sell.
I've read the market's policies and/or have spoken with the market manager to understand the unique application process, fees, and any general and/or liability insurance requirements.
- I plan to keep production, purchasing, and sales records for my Cottage Food business.
These records can help me trace ingredients, business costs and earnings, and my performance at each market I sell at.

PREPARE YOUR KITCHEN TO MAKE COTTAGE FOODS:

Before preparing Cottage Foods, make sure your kitchen is ready with the following tasks:

- My kitchen is cleaned and sanitized.
This includes clean floors, countertops, and sinks, as well as utensils, pots/pans, and other cooking appliances.
- My clothes, hat/hairnet, food service gloves, and apron are clean.
I either use single use items (food services gloves and hairnets), or items that are cleaned between each use and are left in the kitchen if I have to step out to do other tasks.

- I avoid cross-contamination of ingredients and products.
My knives, cutting boards, utensils, and mixing bowls are clean for each ingredient and step of the production process.
- I only prepare Cottage Food products at this time.
I've set aside time to prepare my product and will not make food for myself or others that may contaminate my product.
- All pets and children are out of the kitchen during preparation and packaging.
My product is kept away from animals and children while I am preparing and packaging it all the way until I sell it to consumers at the market to ensure food safety.
- I only produce food when I'm feeling well.
To avoid foodborne illness outbreak, I'll never prepare product when I'm feeling sick.
- All ingredients and finished products are stored properly.
All ingredients are kept at least 6 inches off the floor and are sealed away from pests, household chemicals, and damp or unsanitary conditions.
- The final product is individually securely packaged and properly labeled for sale.
Potential customers will know that the packaging prevents contamination and will be able to read all ingredients and potential allergens.

MARKETING YOUR COTTAGE FOOD PRODUCTS AT A FARMERS MARKET:

Farmers Markets are a great place to market your Cottage Food products! Before you set up at the market, complete these tasks:

- I've searched for new markets using [MIFMA's Find a Farmers Market feature](#).
I know which markets I can travel to, which days of the week they're open, and what currencies they accept at the market.
- I transport my products to market in a clean vehicle and sealed containers.
I'm ensuring dirt, dust, bugs, and other contaminants stay away from my product.
- If I decide to provide samples of my products, I'm prepared to follow best practices to ensure the samples are safe.
I've read the [Guidelines for Providing Safe Food Samples](#), have covered, pre-prepared small samples that can be safely distributed to customers, and have a way to wash my hands throughout the market with soap and water.
- I understand what currencies I can accept for my Cottage Food Products.
By reviewing [MIFMA's Food Assistance Eligibility Guide](#), I know which currencies my business can accept for my products to reach the greatest number of customers.