



City of Cambridge

Community Development Department

Cottage Food Operations Permit

RESOURCE GUIDE

I. INTRODUCTION

What is a Cottage Food Operation Permit?

A Cottage Food Operation Permit is a type of food handler permit required to operate a Cottage Food Operation in Cambridge.

A Cottage Food Operation is defined as a person who produces cottage food products only in the residential kitchen of that person's primary residence and only for sale directly to the consumer. "Direct to the consumer" includes events like farmers markets, craft fairs, and sales by internet or mail. The end food product must be prepackaged prior to sale with an ingredient label.

[See Massachusetts State Sanitary Code Chapter X \(105 CMR 590.10\)](#) for more information.

If you are interested in selling your product(s) to a Food Establishment (an establishment who will then resell the product to the end user) such as a retail shop or restaurant, then you must receive a Wholesale Food Processor License obtained by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts's Food Protection Program and not the City of Cambridge. Contact the Food Protection Program at 617/983-6770 or <https://www.mass.gov/food-safety> for information about how to obtain that License.

What Type of Food Can I Prepare?

Under State Sanitary Code Chapter X (105 CMR 590.001(C); FC 1-201.10 (B), cottage food means non-time/temperature control for safety (i.e. foods that can be safely held at room temperature and don't require refrigeration) are allowed under a Cottage Food Operation Permit.

Items in this category that are allowed:

- **baked goods (such as cakes and cookies), confectioneries, jams, and jellies**

Items in this category that are NOT allowed:

- cream-filled pastries, cheesecake, custard, cut fruit and vegetables, tomato and barbeque sauce, pickled products, relishes, and salad dressings
 - see codes [105 CMR 590.001(C); FC 1-201.10(B)], 105 CMR 500.015(D)(1) and (3).

Cannabis baked goods are not permitted under the Cottage Food Operations Permit under any circumstances.

II. REQUIRMENTS & RESTRICTIONS

Cottage Food Operations are allowed per the Cambridge Zoning Code Section 4.21. Questions about zoning, can be directed to the Inspectional Services Department.

Every residential kitchen being used for Cottage Food Operations is required to meet [105 CMR 590.00, Retail Food Code Standards for Permitted Residential Kitchens](#). Review these codes carefully, as they explain regulations for how food is prepared and labeled, but also how food is stored, the personal health and hygiene of the person preparing the food, and cleaning and sanitation of the kitchen. **We have highlighted a selection of regulations that may be new or unexpected. Applicants should consult 105 CMR 590.00 as the following is an incomplete list.**

Regulations that apply to the physical, residential kitchen space:

- Only one (1) person per residence can produce food at a time.
- Pets on premise must be out of the preparation area during prep times.
- Premise must be insect and rodent proof.
- Toilet room must be clean and in sanitary condition.
- Food contact surfaces must be smooth and easily cleanable.
- Equipment must be in good repair.
- If using a domestic or home-style dishwasher, a Maximum Registering Thermometer or a Temp Thermolabel is required to determine the internal temperature of the machine is held at 150°F after the final rinse and dry cycle.

Regulations that apply to the food preparation and packaging:

- Section 105 CMR 500.00: Good Manufacturing Practices
- Section 105 CMR 520.000: Labeling

Additional permits, licenses, or certificates that may be required:

- [Allergy Awareness Certificate](#)
- [Food Protection Managers Certification](#)
- [Cambridge Hawkers and Peddlers License](#) (for selling at a Farmers Market)

III. BEFORE YOU START

The Cottage Food Operations Permit is available online through the city's Viewpoint platform. Paper copies of the application are available through the Inspectional Services Department (ISD). If you don't already have one, [register for a ViewPoint User account](#) then [log into the online portal](#) to begin your application.

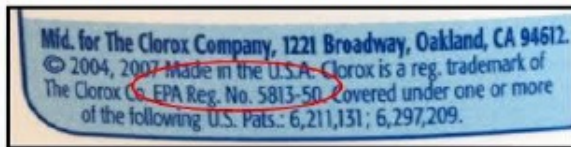
The following information is required as part of a complete Cottage Food Operations Permit. **We recommend gathering this information ahead of time and to save your documents as PDFs for easy upload to the Viewpoint platform.**

Supporting documents required for a complete Cottage Food Operations Permit:

- A signed letter from the property owner/manager, if applicant is a renter (see model landlord letter for example).
- A full list of all food item(s) that will be produced and distributed.
- A full list of sources for all ingredients used.
- Photographs and/or drawings showing where food is stored.
- The type and brand of sanitizer that will be used. Please note, two kinds of sanitizer are allowed:

Option #1: Bleach (Sodium Hypochlorite)

Scented bleach or bleach which do not state "for food contact use" are not approved. Always read the label. Approved sanitizers will have an EPA Registration Number on the container



Bleach can be used as a Sanitizer as long as it states on the label it can be used on Food Contact Surfaces.

Option #2: Quaternary Ammonium



Concentration for Quaternary Sanitizers is 200 ppm or 150 / 200 – 400 ppm for multi-use Quaternary. Follow the concentration directions on the label.

Water temperature should be 65 °F – 75 °F in order for the test strips to accurately measure the concentration.

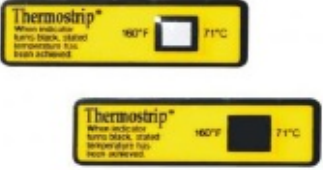
Contact time = One (1) minute



Photos courtesy of City of Framingham Cottage Food Operations Permit application


- Photographs of Maximum Registering Thermometer or Thermolabel results proving minimum 150°F after final rinse and dry cycle can be achieved (if using a domestic or home-style dishwasher).

Option #1: Thermolabels – Below are examples of 160°F however for a Residential Dish Machine use 150°F labels.




← Label BEFORE use in the dish machine

← Label AFTER use in the dish machine – The color change indicates the surface temperature inside the dish machine reached the minimum temperature as stated on the label.



Option #2: Maximum Registering Thermometer



Photos courtesy of City of Framingham Cottage Food Operations Permit application

IV. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [State Sanitary Code 105 CMR 590.000](#)
- [Retail Food Code Standards for Permitted Residential Kitchens](#) (Last updated 4/2019)
- [State Residential Kitchen Question and Answers Brochure](#) (last updated 10/2016)
- [Minimum Requirements for Packaged-food labeling](#)
- [Food Allergen Labeling](#)
- [Model landlord letter](#)