



COTTAGE FOOD OPERATIONS

Information for New Operators



Cottage Food Operations (CFOs) are designed for operators to make low volumes of very safe food in their kitchen at home.



CFOs may only make “non-potentially hazardous foods” - foods that are unlikely to grow harmful bacteria or other toxic microorganisms at room temperature. These include baked goods, candy, dried or dehydrated foods, mustards, vinegars, and some jams or jellies. View a full list of approved CFO products: <https://bit.ly/CFOList>.



No potentially hazardous foods are allowed under a CFO license/permit. This includes food that requires refrigeration, all liquids, canned foods, hot sauce, and supplements.

The CA Department of Public Health regulates which foods are allowed in CFOs. You can request that they add more foods to their approved list at FDBretail@cdph.ca.gov.

Apply for a Permit

Applications are submitted through MyEHS: smchealth.org/myehs. See the back of this flyer to see more details on the submission process.

Number of Products on Application

There is no limit to the number of products you can submit with your application. However, submissions with more than 5 items, or applications requiring extensive review will be charged additional fees. Each yearly renewal allows up to five additional products at no extra cost.

CFO License/Permit Cost

All applications require an application fee. After approval, you will be charged a yearly permit fee. CFO-B permit fees are higher than CFO-A permits due to additional inspection requirements. Additional fees are also charged for confirmed complaint investigations. A full list of current fees can be found at smchealth.org/ehfees.

Other Types of Permitted Food Businesses

CFO permit not right for you? Other types may be a better fit including catering licenses, microenterprise home kitchen operations, and processed food registration. Contact us for more information.

CFO Approval Time

Approval time depends on the complexity of your food, and how many products you want to produce. Please allow up to 20 working days after each review or revision you submit.

CFO-A & CFO-B Differences

CFO-A permits allow direct sales to consumers, have a lower income limit, and do not require inspection. CFO-B permits allow indirect sales to consumers (such as to other businesses), have a higher income limit, and require yearly inspections. There are no product differences between the two licenses. Inspections will also be conducted for any complaints received.

What to Expect During Inspection

An inspection will consist of evaluating your kitchen for water temperature, food storage conditions (dry storage and refrigeration), food preparation equipment, and packaging materials. We will also check to confirm that your restrooms are functional and that there are no pest issues in your kitchen.

Contact Us:
(650) 372-6200
smchealth.org/cottage-food-operations
homebasedfoodoperation@smcgov.org

Cottage Food Operations Approval Process

