



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT COTTAGE FOOD

Q. Why can't I find the Cottage Food Permit/Registration documents on the California Department of Public Health Website?

A. The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) does not permit/register Cottage Food Operations (CFO) in California. CDPH maintains the ([Approved Cottage Food List](#)). CFO registrations and permits are the jurisdictions of local enforcement agencies. Don't hesitate to contact your city or county Environmental Health Department for assistance.

Q: Why can't I make salsa?

A. For a food to be nonhazardous, the pH of the product must fall below 4.6. The majority of the ingredients in salsa have a pH well above this level. Even tomatoes vary in pH with a range of 4.3-4.9. Because the pH is inconsistent, cut-tomatoes and mixtures of cut tomatoes are considered potentially hazardous foods. Also, canning or bottling of salsa may result in the toxin formation of *Clostridium botulinum*, which can be deadly. As a result, salsa is not an approved cottage food.

Q. Why can't I make pickles, hot sauce, or other canned foods?

A. When dealing with a low-acid or acidified food, there is the risk of Botulism. When canning these foods, the process creates an environment with less oxygen. This reduced oxygen level is the perfect condition for *Clostridium botulinum*, the bacteria responsible for botulism, to overgrow. Many home canners are safe when producing these foods; however, not everyone is. A simple mistake could create a lifetime of health issues and even death for a consumer. The process to render these food items safe is not approved in the CFO program. This risk is what prevents these products from being approved cottage foods.

Q. Why can't I make sweet potato or pumpkin pie?

A. Custard pies contain potentially hazardous foods like milk and eggs. The finished product has a level of moisture associated with the potential for bacteria growth. The high water content prevents these pies from addition to the approved list.

Q. Why can't I make pepper jelly?

A. Peppers have a pH between 4.8-6.0. They are considered low-acid food, which carries a risk of botulism. Canning foods create a low-oxygen environment that allows the growth of *Clostridium botulinum*, the bacteria responsible for botulism. This risk prevents pepper jelly from becoming an approved cottage food. In addition, only those fruits listed in ([Part 150 of Title 21 of The Code of Federal Regulations](#)) are allowed in fruit butter, jams, and jellies. All other fruit and vegetables are not approved. As a result, pepper jelly is not an approved cottage food.

Q. Can I use eggs in my cookies?

A. Eggs are allowed in baked goods as long as the product is dry once baked and does not require refrigeration. For example, eggs added to a cookie recipe are OK, but eggs added to a custard are not. Eggs added to a cake mix are allowed, but eggs added to a lemon curd are not.