

Alabama Cottage Food Law

Food Safety

► Food safety should be your first consideration in preparing food for your family or for your customers. Before you start to prepare your product to sell, consider these recommendations to make the safest food you can.

Kitchen—Clean Your Kitchen from Top to Bottom

Cleaning Solutions

- Detergents and warm water make a great cleaning solution. Do not clean food contact surfaces with chemicals that are not approved for food contact use.
- Clean all surfaces before you sanitize.

Chlorine Sanitizing Solutions

- Use 1 teaspoon of unscented chlorine bleach per gallon of water.
- DO NOT use chlorine with added fragrances.
- Chlorine acts quickly.
- Chlorine becomes inactive quickly.
- Chlorine solutions in an open container like a bucket should be discarded daily.
- Chlorine in a tightly closed bottle will last about a week.
- Store chlorine in any form in a cool dark place to keep its strength.

How Often Should You Clean & Sanitize?

- Before starting your preparation.
- After using an allergen such as milk, raw eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, soy, wheat, and sesame.
- When moving from one task to another.



Counter Tops and Other Work Spaces

- Clean counter tops with hot, soapy water.
- Rinse surfaces with clean water to remove soap residue.
- Wipe with a sanitizing solution stored in a sanitizing bucket.
- Allow to air dry.

Floors

- Sweep floors to remove any loose dirt.
- Mop the swept floors with a cleaning solution to ensure food safety.

Utensils and Equipment

- Clean and sanitize pots, pans, bowls, spoons, measuring cups, etc., used in your process.

Personal Hygiene for You and Helpers

- Put on clean clothes.
- Wear a hair restraint, such as a cap, or tie back hair.
- Remove nail polish and jewelry.
- Cover cuts or sores on hands with a bandage and wear single-use gloves.
- Wash your hands (20 seconds with soap and warm water) after touching your face, handling allergens, after using the bathroom, or anytime your hands

become contaminated. Do not wash your hands over food or cooking utensils.

- DO NOT prepare food while experiencing symptoms of vomiting or diarrhea.
- DO NOT allow eating or smoking while you are preparing cottage food products.
- Do NOT let small children or babies in the kitchen area while preparing the food.
- Do NOT have pets in the kitchen during food preparation.

Allergens

- A food allergen is a naturally occurring protein in an ingredient or food that people can be sensitive to. Major food allergens include milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, soy, wheat, and sesame. It is recommended to list all allergens on the label but not required under Alabama Cottage Law. It is required to state on the label: This product may contain allergens.
- Consumers may have food allergies other than the ones addressed as major allergens, and allergic reactions can be fatal. As a producer, you must be able to answer questions about your products and ingredients for consumers with any food allergy.
- To avoid transferring allergens from one product to another, known as cross-contact, prepare foods that do not include major allergens before preparing foods that do contain any of the major food allergens. As an example, cook chocolate chip cookies before you cook peanut butter cookies. Pans and equipment must be thoroughly washed, rinsed, and sanitized between products. Parchment paper must be discarded between products.

Water Supply

- Use water from an approved and maintained public water system or from a well that has been properly tested. You should consult with your Health Department about testing frequency for a private water supply, but this should be done at least annually.
- If you do not have a safe water supply, use bottled water.

Storage of Food Supplies

- Store cleaning supplies separate from your food items.
- Store ingredients for your food processing business separate from household food supplies.
- Store utensils and other equipment used specifically for food processing in a separate area from household equipment.

Quality

- Develop a standard recipe so you will have a consistent product each time.

Handling the Finished Product

- When handling a ready-to-eat product, always wear gloves. Consider single-use nonlatex gloves to avoid allergen cross contact.
- Do not handle ready-to-eat foods with bare hands.

Storage of Your Finished Product

- Make a place to store your finished product.
- Store on shelves or off the floor.
- Store your food in a dry, cool place.
- Develop a storage rotation system of FIFO (First In First Out).

Required Labeling in A Minimum of 10-point Font:

- Name of the individual or business.
- Physical address or Post Office Box of the individual or business.
- Common name of the food.
- Statement: **This food is not inspected by the Health Department. This product may contain allergens.**
- List of ingredients: Ingredients and sub-ingredients must be listed in descending order of predominance by weight.
- Note: Every package must have a label.

Recommended Labeling Should Include:

- Name of the product in bold print
- Contains statement to include a list of allergens such as Contains: Milk, Eggs, Peanuts
- Weight of the product or volume (8 ounces or 1 pint)

Packaging

- Purchase food-grade packaging material.
- Cover all products for safe transport by the customer.



Revised by **Alice Moore**, *Regional Extension Agent*, Food Safety and Quality. Originally written by **Jean Weese**, *Extension Food Safety Specialist*, Auburn University Food Systems Institute, and **Christiana Mendoza**, *Regional Extension Agent*, Food Safety, Preparation, and Preservation, al with Auburn University

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