

COTTAGE FOOD LAW REPORT

Merced County

California · Merced · FIPS 06047 · Population 282,290 ·
Crosodo Index #2182*

STATE BASELINE

Cal. Health & Safety Code §113758; Class A (direct sales, \$75,000 cap) and Class B (direct and indirect, \$150,000 cap); annual registration/permit required; food handler card required

STATE TIER	ANNUAL SALES CAP (STATE)	CONFIDENCE	LAST VERIFIED
Good	Tiered (see notes)	HIGH	2026-05-05

IMPORTANT – NOT LEGAL ADVICE

This report compiles publicly-available statutes, regulations, and county zoning rules into a research reference. It is **not legal advice** and is provided **without warranty** as to accuracy, completeness, or current applicability.

Cottage food law changes frequently. Counties may amend zoning, health departments may issue new permits, and state legislatures may update statutes after the publication date shown above.

Always verify rules directly with your state department of health/agriculture and your county health and planning offices before relying on them for any business or regulatory decision. Consult a licensed attorney for advice specific to your situation.

CALIFORNIA: MERCED COUNTY

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QUICK VIEW FOR BAKERS IN THIS COUNTY

HOME KITCHEN ALLOWED?

Yes (CDPH-approved food list only; annual Class A registration or Class B permit required from Merced County Environmental Health; food handler card required within 3 months; Class B requires initial and annual kitchen inspection; \$75,000/\$150,000 annual cap; no TCS foods)

SEPARATE KITCHEN REQUIRED?

No

PETS ALLOWED?

Not specified in available sources; general sanitation and clean kitchen required

HOME OCCUPATION PERMIT?

Yes (California Homemade Food Act (AB 1616) requires planning/zoning approval from local city or county planning department for all CFOs. Merced County planning department approval must be obtained; some municipalities may also require city business license)

ON-SITE / PORCH PICKUP?

Yes

INSPECTION REQUIRED?

Depends-on-volume (Class A: inspection upon consumer complaint or reported foodborne illness only. Class B: initial inspection before permit issuance and annual inspections, plus complaint-based)

Home kitchen rules

HOME KITCHEN ALLOWED	Yes — CDPH-approved food list only; annual Class A registration or Class B permit required from Merced County Environmental Health; food handler card required within 3 months; Class B requires initial and annual kitchen inspection; \$75,000/\$150,000 annual cap; no TCS foods
SEPARATE DEDICATED KITCHEN	No
PET RESTRICTIONS	Not specified in available sources; general sanitation and clean kitchen required
WATER SUPPLY	Potable water at residence
HANDWASHING	Standard handwashing; Class B inspection will verify
FOOD STORAGE	CDPH-approved non-TCS foods stored in sanitary conditions

Inspection & permitting

INSPECTION REQUIRED	Depends-on-volume — Class A: inspection upon consumer complaint or reported foodborne illness only. Class B: initial inspection before permit issuance and annual inspections, plus complaint-based
HOME OCCUPATION PERMIT	Yes — California Homemade Food Act (AB 1616) requires planning/zoning approval from local city or county planning department for all CFOs. Merced County planning department approval must be obtained; some municipalities may also require city business license
LOCAL BUSINESS LICENSE	Varies

Customer-facing rules

ON-SITE CUSTOMER PICKUP	Yes
ON-SITE SIGNAGE	Conditional
DELIVERY / PICKUP RULES	Class A: direct sales only (at home, farmers markets, events). Class B: direct and indirect sales including retail stores and online. Max 1 non-family FTE employee
MAX EMPLOYEES IN HOME	1 full-time equivalent (excluding family or household members)

Relevant county code

Merced County Environmental Health CFO Registration/Permit; countyofmerced.com/1636/Applications-Forms-Permits

RESEARCH NOTES

Merced County confirmed: county has its own CFO registration/permitting form and Environmental Health application process. Zoning approval from planning department required per CA law. Class A \$75,000 cap, Class B \$150,000 cap. Food handler card required within 3 months of approval.

SOURCES VERIFIED AT RESEARCH TIME

<https://www.countyofmerced.com>

<https://www.countyofmerced.com/DocumentCenter/View/31479/Cottage-Food-Application>

<https://www.countyofmerced.com/1636/Applications-Forms-Permits>

<https://www.countyofmerced.com/DocumentCenter/View/5348/Cottage-Food-Law-FAQs-2012>

Questions? Join the Crosodo Forum to discuss your county’s specific zoning rules at <https://crosodo.com/nb/california/merced-county-discuss>

State context — California cottage food law

Merced County’s rules sit on top of California’s state cottage food framework. The state law sets the floor — counties can add but cannot remove protections.

STATUTE Cal. Health & Safety Code §113758	ANNUAL SALES CAP Tiered (see notes)
REGISTRATION REQUIRED Yes	FOOD HANDLER CERT Yes (specific course)
KITCHEN INSPECTION No	DIRECT SALES ONLY No
INDIRECT SALES Limited (see notes) — Class B permit holders may sell indirectly through retail stores and restaurants statewide; Class A registrants are limited to direct sales only and may not sell through any retail or wholesale venue.	

For the full state-level analysis including the verbatim statute text, see the [California cottage food law report](#).

STATE-LEVEL REFERENCES

State statute: https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=HSC§ionNum=113758

State dept cottage food page: https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CEH/DFDCS/CDPH%20Document%20Library/FDB/FoodSafetyProgram/Cottage%20Food%20Operations/CFO_Faq.pdf

Forrager.com: <https://forrager.com/law/california/>

Questions?

Join the Crosodo Forum to discuss Merced County's specific zoning rules, permits, and what other home bakers are seeing locally.

<https://crosodo.com/nb/california/merced-county-discuss>
