

## COTTAGE FOOD LAW REPORT

# Johnson County

Iowa · Iowa City · FIPS 19103 · Population 153,360 · Crosodo  
Index #762\*

## STATE BASELINE

Iowa Code §137F.1 / §137F.20

## STATE TIER

Good

## ANNUAL SALES CAP (STATE)

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## CONFIDENCE

MEDIUM

## LAST VERIFIED

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.

**IOWA: JOHNSON COUNTY**

CROSODO INDEX #762\* · FIPS 19103 · Iowa City

# Johnson County

Population 153,360 · State baseline: Iowa Code §137F.1 / §137F.20 · **MEDIUM**

**QUICK VIEW FOR BAKERS IN THIS COUNTY**

**HOME KITCHEN ALLOWED?**

Yes (Iowa has two pathways: (1) cottage food exemption under §137F.20 — no license, no cap, direct sales only, most non-TCS foods including pH-tested acidified foods (pH ≤4.6 or aw ≤0.85); (2) Home Food Processing Establishment (HFPE) registration allows broader foods including perishables and indirect retail sales. State law explicitly prohibits local government from adding restrictions under §137F.20(1).)

**SEPARATE KITCHEN REQUIRED?**

No

**PETS ALLOWED?**

No specific state restriction on pets in home for cottage food exemption.

**HOME OCCUPATION PERMIT?**

Conditional (State law prohibits local governments from adding restrictions on cottage food operations under §137F.20(1). However, Johnson County/Iowa City may have general home occupation requirements for business licensing purposes. Local zoning rules may still apply for non-food-specific aspects.)

**ON-SITE / PORCH PICKUP?**

Yes

**INSPECTION REQUIRED?**

No (Iowa DIAL may inspect upon complaint. No routine inspection for exempt operations.)

**Home kitchen rules**

<b>HOME KITCHEN ALLOWED</b>	Yes — Iowa has two pathways: (1) cottage food exemption under §137F.20 — no license, no cap, direct sales only, most non-TCS foods including pH-tested acidified foods (pH ≤4.6 or aw ≤0.85); (2) Home Food Processing Establishment (HFPE) registration allows broader foods including perishables and indirect retail sales. State law explicitly prohibits local government from adding restrictions under §137F.20(1).
<b>SEPARATE DEDICATED KITCHEN</b>	No
<b>PET RESTRICTIONS</b>	No specific state restriction on pets in home for cottage food exemption.
<b>WATER SUPPLY</b>	No specific requirement under Iowa cottage food exemption.
<b>HANDWASHING</b>	Good manufacturing practices apply.
<b>FOOD STORAGE</b>	Non-TCS foods only under exemption. Acidified foods (pickles, salsas) allowed if each batch pH-tested (≤4.6) or water activity tested (aw ≤0.85) with production date on label.

**Inspection & permitting**

<b>INSPECTION REQUIRED</b>	No — Iowa DIAL may inspect upon complaint. No routine inspection for exempt operations.
<b>HOME OCCUPATION PERMIT</b>	Conditional — State law prohibits local governments from adding restrictions on cottage food operations under §137F.20(1). However, Johnson County/Iowa City may have general home occupation requirements for business licensing purposes. Local zoning rules may still apply for non-food-specific aspects.
<b>LOCAL BUSINESS LICENSE</b>	Varies

### Customer-facing rules

ON-SITE CUSTOMER PICKUP	Yes
ON-SITE SIGNAGE	Conditional
DELIVERY / PICKUP RULES	Direct-to-consumer sales only under exemption. From home, at farmers markets, events, roadside stands. HFPE pathway allows indirect retail sales. No out-of-state sales under either pathway.
MAX EMPLOYEES IN HOME	Not specified by state law; local rules may apply but state preempts added cottage food restrictions.

### Relevant county code

Johnson County Zoning Code; Iowa Code §137F.20

#### RESEARCH NOTES

Verified-large county. State baseline governs. Iowa explicitly prohibits local government from adding restrictions under §137F.20(1). Johnson County is home to University of Iowa and Iowa City. No county-specific cottage food code identified. County URL verified.

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#### SOURCES VERIFIED AT RESEARCH TIME

<https://www.johnsoncountyiowa.gov>

<https://dia.iowa.gov/food-safety/home-food-establishment>

<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/code/137F.pdf>

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

## State context — Iowa cottage food law

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

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<b>STATUTE</b>	<b>ANNUAL SALES CAP</b>
Iowa Code §137F.1 / §137F.20	—
<b>REGISTRATION REQUIRED</b>	<b>FOOD HANDLER CERT</b>
No	No
<b>KITCHEN INSPECTION</b>	<b>DIRECT SALES ONLY</b>
No	Yes
<b>INDIRECT SALES</b>	
Limited (see notes) — Cottage food direct-to-consumer sales only; however, a separate Home Food Processing Establishment (HFPE) license allows indirect retail and wholesale sales of almost any food including perishables.	

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

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### STATE-LEVEL REFERENCES

State statute: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/code/137F.pdf>

State dept cottage food page: <https://dia.iowa.gov/food-safety/home-food-establishment>

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

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## Questions?

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

<https://crosodo.com/nb/iowa/johnson-county-discuss>

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