

COTTAGE FOOD LAW REPORT

Polk County

Iowa · Des Moines · FIPS 19153 · Population 493,378 ·
Crosodo Index #184*

STATE BASELINE

Iowa Code §137F.1 / §137F.20

STATE TIER

Good

ANNUAL SALES CAP (STATE)

—

CONFIDENCE

HIGH

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: POLK COUNTY

CROSODO INDEX #184* · FIPS 19153 · Des Moines

Polk County

Population 493,378 · State baseline: Iowa Code §137F.1 / §137F.20 · **HIGH**

QUICK VIEW FOR BAKERS IN THIS COUNTY

HOME KITCHEN ALLOWED?

Yes (Non-TCS foods (§137F.20 exemption), no license, no cap, direct sales only. Acidified foods allowed if each batch pH-tested (pH ≤4.6) or water activity tested (aw ≤0.85). Alternatively, Home Food Processing Establishment (HFPE) license under §137F.8B allows broader foods including perishables and indirect retail sales.)

SEPARATE KITCHEN REQUIRED?

No

PETS ALLOWED?

No specific state cottage food pet restriction

HOME OCCUPATION PERMIT?

No (Iowa Code §137F.20(1) explicitly prohibits local governments from imposing restrictions on cottage food exemption activities. No local home occupation permit required for cottage food operations. This is one of the strongest preemption provisions in the country.)

ON-SITE / PORCH PICKUP?

Yes

INSPECTION REQUIRED?

No (Iowa §137F.20 explicitly prohibits local governments from adding restrictions; no inspection required for cottage food exemption)

Home kitchen rules

HOME KITCHEN ALLOWED	Yes — Non-TCS foods (§137F.20 exemption), no license, no cap, direct sales only. Acidified foods allowed if each batch pH-tested (pH ≤4.6) or water activity tested (aw ≤0.85). Alternatively, Home Food Processing Establishment (HFPE) license under §137F.8B allows broader foods including perishables and indirect retail sales.
SEPARATE DEDICATED KITCHEN	No
PET RESTRICTIONS	No specific state cottage food pet restriction
WATER SUPPLY	No specific water testing requirement in state cottage food law
HANDWASHING	No specific requirement in state cottage food law
FOOD STORAGE	Standard home kitchen storage for approved non-TCS foods

Inspection & permitting

INSPECTION REQUIRED	No — Iowa §137F.20 explicitly prohibits local governments from adding restrictions; no inspection required for cottage food exemption
HOME OCCUPATION PERMIT	No — Iowa Code §137F.20(1) explicitly prohibits local governments from imposing restrictions on cottage food exemption activities. No local home occupation permit required for cottage food operations. This is one of the strongest preemption provisions in the country.
LOCAL BUSINESS LICENSE	No

Customer-facing rules

ON-SITE CUSTOMER PICKUP	Yes
ON-SITE SIGNAGE	Yes
DELIVERY / PICKUP RULES	Direct sales only within Iowa. Farmers markets, roadside stands, home pickup/delivery, events. No retail/restaurant wholesale under the §137F.20 exemption. HFPE license allows broader sales including indirect retail. No annual cap under §137F.20.
MAX EMPLOYEES IN HOME	Not restricted by state cottage food law

Relevant county code

Iowa Code §137F.20 (cottage food exemption with local preemption). Polk County has no authority to add restrictions.

RESEARCH NOTES

Iowa is a Good-tier state with unusually strong local preemption. Iowa Code §137F.20(1) explicitly prohibits local governments from adding restrictions to the cottage food exemption. No license, no inspection, no cap, no training required. Polk County (Des Moines) cannot impose additional requirements. Acidified foods allowed with pH/water activity testing. HFPE license is available for broader foods. Confidence high: state preemption is unambiguous in statute.

SOURCES VERIFIED AT RESEARCH TIME

<https://www.polkcountyiowa.gov>

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

<https://ij.org/issues/economic-liberty/homemade-food-seller/iowa/>

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

Bordering counties — cottage food law

Regulation	Polk County	Dallas County	Story County
HOME KITCHEN ALLOWED	Yes	Yes	Yes
SEPARATE DEDICATED KITCHEN	No	No	No
PETS ALLOWED	No specific state cottage food pet restriction	No specific state restriction for cottage food exemption.	No specific restriction under Iowa cottage food exemption.
INSPECTION REQUIRED	No	No	No
ON-SITE CUSTOMER PICKUP	Yes	Yes	Yes
ON-SITE SIGNAGE	Yes	Conditional	Conditional
DELIVERY / PICKUP	Direct sales only within Iowa. Farmers markets, roadside stands, home pickup/delivery, events. No retail/restaurant wholesale under the §13...	Direct-to-consumer sales only under cottage food exemption. Home pickup, farmers markets, events permitted. HFPE pathway allows indirect re...	Direct sales only to end consumers from home, farmers markets, events. No indirect retail/wholesale under cottage food exemption. Separate ...
HOME OCCUPATION PERMIT	No	Conditional	No
LOCAL BUSINESS LICENSE	No	Varies	No
RESTRICTIONS	Non-TCS foods (§137F.20 exemption), no license, no cap, direct sales only. Acidified foods allowed if each batch pH-tested (pH ≤4.6) or wat...	Iowa's cottage food exemption (§137F.20): No license required, no sales cap, direct sales only. Virtually all non-TCS foods permitted, incl...	Iowa cottage food exemption (§137F.20): no license, no cap, no registration, direct sales only to end consumers. Most non-TCS foods allowed...
FOOD STORAGE	Standard home kitchen storage for approved non-TCS foods	Non-TCS foods allowed. Acidified foods allowed with pH test (pH ≤4.6 or water activity ≤0.85) and production date on label. Perishable bake...	Non-TCS shelf-stable foods; acidified foods must be batch pH-tested.
POPULATION	493,378	100,367	98,573

State context — Iowa cottage food law

Polk 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.

STATUTE	ANNUAL SALES CAP
Iowa Code §137F.1 / §137F.20	—
REGISTRATION REQUIRED	FOOD HANDLER CERT
No	No
KITCHEN INSPECTION	DIRECT SALES ONLY
No	Yes
INDIRECT SALES	
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.	

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

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/>

Questions?

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

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