

COTTAGE FOOD LAW REPORT

Mercer County

Missouri · Princeton · FIPS 29129 · Population 3,452 ·
Crosodo Index #1456*

STATE BASELINE

Mo. Rev. Stat. §196.298

STATE TIER

Great

ANNUAL SALES CAP (STATE)

—

CONFIDENCE

MEDIUM

LAST VERIFIED

2026-05-06

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.

MISSOURI: MERCER COUNTY

CROSODO INDEX #1456* · FIPS 29129 · Princeton

Mercer County

Population 3,452 · State baseline: Mo. Rev. Stat. §196.298 · **MEDIUM**

QUICK VIEW FOR BAKERS IN THIS COUNTY

HOME KITCHEN ALLOWED?

Yes (Missouri Cottage Law is narrow: only nonperishable baked goods, canned jams/jellies, and dried herbs/mixes are permitted. All other foods require food establishment licensing. Direct sales only; no consignment or wholesale. Online/in-state shipping allowed since 2022 amendment. No sales cap. Local health departments prohibited from regulating cottage food production per §196.298(3)(1).)

SEPARATE KITCHEN REQUIRED?

No

PETS ALLOWED?

No explicit state restriction; standard food safety practices apply.

HOME OCCUPATION PERMIT?

Yes (Mercer County typically requires a home occupation permit for home-based businesses in residential zones. Business must be secondary to residential use. Common conditions: no on-site employees beyond household members, no external signage, limited customer visits, no hazardous materials. Missouri Cottage Law (§196.298) prohibits local health departments from regulating production, but zoning/home occupation permits are a separate local requirement. Many rural Missouri counties have limited formal zoning in unincorporated areas; verify with the Princeton county courthouse.)

ON-SITE / PORCH PICKUP?

Conditional

INSPECTION REQUIRED?

No (No routine inspections under cottage law. Health departments may investigate foodborne illness reports.)

Home kitchen rules

HOME KITCHEN ALLOWED	Yes — Missouri Cottage Law is narrow: only nonperishable baked goods, canned jams/jellies, and dried herbs/mixes are permitted. All other foods require food establishment licensing. Direct sales only; no consignment or wholesale. Online/in-state shipping allowed since 2022 amendment. No sales cap. Local health departments prohibited from regulating cottage food production per §196.298(3)(1).
SEPARATE DEDICATED KITCHEN	No
PET RESTRICTIONS	No explicit state restriction; standard food safety practices apply.
WATER SUPPLY	Potable water supply required.
HANDWASHING	Adequate handwashing per food safety practices.
FOOD STORAGE	Shelf-stable storage for baked goods, jams, jellies, dried herbs.

Inspection & permitting

INSPECTION REQUIRED	No — No routine inspections under cottage law. Health departments may investigate foodborne illness reports.
HOME OCCUPATION PERMIT	Yes — Mercer County typically requires a home occupation permit for home-based businesses in residential zones. Business must be secondary to residential use. Common conditions: no on-site employees beyond household members, no external signage, limited customer visits, no hazardous materials. Missouri Cottage Law (§196.298) prohibits local health departments from regulating production, but zoning/home occupation permits are a separate local requirement. Many rural Missouri counties have limited formal zoning in unincorporated areas; verify with the Princeton county courthouse.
LOCAL BUSINESS LICENSE	Varies

Customer-facing rules

ON-SITE CUSTOMER PICKUP	Conditional
ON-SITE SIGNAGE	No
DELIVERY / PICKUP RULES	Direct sales at home and in-state delivery. Farmers markets, online sales with in-state delivery allowed since 2022. No interstate sales.
MAX EMPLOYEES IN HOME	Typically household members only per home occupation permit conditions.

Relevant county code

Mercer County Zoning Ordinance (home occupations, if applicable); Mo. Rev. Stat. §196.298

RESEARCH NOTES

Missouri’s cottage food law (§196.298) is narrow (baked goods, jams/jellies, dried herbs only) with no sales cap and no registration or inspection required. Local health departments are explicitly prohibited from regulating cottage food production. Mercer County is a largely rural county; many unincorporated areas may lack formal zoning, but where residential zoning exists a home occupation permit is typically required as in most Missouri counties. The county seat is Princeton. Defaulted to state baseline with medium confidence due to limited county-specific zoning data found in research. Producers should verify directly with the Mercer County Courthouse or planning/zoning office for current home occupation permit requirements.

SOURCES VERIFIED AT RESEARCH TIME

- <https://health.mo.gov/safety/foodsafety/pdf/home-based-kitchen-food-prod-guidance.pdf>
- <https://revisor.mo.gov/main/OneSection.aspx?section=196.298>

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

Bordering counties — cottage food law

Regulation	Mercer County	Grundy County	Harrison County
HOME KITCHEN ALLOWED	Yes	Yes	Yes
SEPARATE DEDICATED KITCHEN	No	No	No
PETS ALLOWED	No explicit state restriction; standard food safety practices apply.	No explicit state restriction; standard food safety practices apply.	No explicit state restriction; standard food safety practices apply.
INSPECTION REQUIRED	No	No	No
ON-SITE CUSTOMER PICKUP	Conditional	Conditional	Conditional
ON-SITE SIGNAGE	No	No	No
DELIVERY / PICKUP	Direct sales at home and in-state delivery. Farmers markets, online sales with in-state delivery allowed since 2022. No interstate sales.	Direct sales at home and in-state delivery. Farmers markets, online sales with in-state delivery allowed since 2022. No interstate sales.	Direct sales at home and in-state delivery. Farmers markets, online sales with in-state delivery allowed since 2022. No interstate sales.
HOME OCCUPATION PERMIT	Yes	Yes	Yes
LOCAL BUSINESS LICENSE	Varies	Varies	Varies
RESTRICTIONS	Missouri Cottage Law is narrow: only nonperishable baked goods, canned jams/jellies, and dried herbs/mixes are permitted. All other foods r...	Missouri Cottage Law is narrow: only nonperishable baked goods, canned jams/jellies, and dried herbs/mixes are permitted. All other foods r...	Missouri Cottage Law is narrow: only nonperishable baked goods, canned jams/jellies, and dried herbs/mixes are permitted. All other foods r...
FOOD STORAGE	Shelf-stable storage for baked goods, jams, jellies, dried herbs.	Shelf-stable storage for baked goods, jams, jellies, dried herbs.	Shelf-stable storage for baked goods, jams, jellies, dried herbs.
POPULATION	3,517	9,878	8,190

State context — Missouri cottage food law

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

STATUTE	ANNUAL SALES CAP
Mo. Rev. Stat. §196.298	—
REGISTRATION REQUIRED	FOOD HANDLER CERT
No	No
KITCHEN INSPECTION	DIRECT SALES ONLY
No	Yes

INDIRECT SALES

No — Under §196.298, sales must be directly to consumers from the producer's home. Events, farmers markets, restaurants, retail stores, and roadside stands are not permitted under this law. Internet/online sales are allowed but only if both the producer and buyer are located in Missouri. Local health departments are explicitly prohibited from regulating the production of food at cottage food operations. A separate Missouri statute (individual stands law) allows sales at events and roadside stands in counties that have adopted it, permitting most other nonperishable foods.

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

STATE-LEVEL REFERENCES

State statute: <https://revisor.mo.gov/main/OneSection.aspx?section=196.298>

State dept cottage food page: <https://health.mo.gov/safety/foodsafety/cottagefood.php>

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

Questions?

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

<https://crosodo.com/nb/missouri/mercer-county-discuss>
