

COTTAGE FOOD LAW REPORT

Mercer County

New Jersey · Trenton · FIPS 34021 · Population 383,732 ·
Crosodo Index #2814*

STATE BASELINE

N.J.A.C. 8:24-11 et seq.

STATE TIER

Poor

ANNUAL SALES CAP (STATE)

50000

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.

NEW JERSEY: MERCER COUNTY

CROSODO INDEX #2814* · FIPS 34021 · Trenton

Mercer County

Population 383,732 · State baseline: N.J.A.C. 8:24-11 et seq. · **MEDIUM**

QUICK VIEW FOR BAKERS IN THIS COUNTY

HOME KITCHEN ALLOWED?

Conditional (New Jersey requires a state Cottage Food Operator Permit (\$100 fee, valid 2 years) from NJ Department of Health. Requirements: (1) local zoning must allow cottage food business; (2) Food Protection Manager Certification; (3) proof of water potability; (4) product questionnaire for each item. Annual gross sales cap \$50,000. Home kitchen not inspected routinely. Only non-TCS foods permitted from approved list. Direct sales only within New Jersey.)

SEPARATE KITCHEN REQUIRED?

No

PETS ALLOWED?

Not specified in state rule; standard food safety GMP applies.

HOME OCCUPATION PERMIT?

Conditional (NJ state permit process requires applicant to first confirm local zoning allows cottage food business. Mercer County municipalities (Trenton, Princeton, Hamilton Township, etc.) have their own zoning ordinances. Contact local zoning board before applying to state.)

ON-SITE / PORCH PICKUP?

Yes

INSPECTION REQUIRED?

Upon-complaint (Health authority may inspect upon complaint or suspected foodborne illness; no routine inspection.)

Home kitchen rules

HOME KITCHEN ALLOWED	Conditional — New Jersey requires a state Cottage Food Operator Permit (\$100 fee, valid 2 years) from NJ Department of Health. Requirements: (1) local zoning must allow cottage food business; (2) Food Protection Manager Certification; (3) proof of water potability; (4) product questionnaire for each item. Annual gross sales cap \$50,000. Home kitchen not inspected routinely. Only non-TCS foods permitted from approved list. Direct sales only within New Jersey.
SEPARATE DEDICATED KITCHEN	No
PET RESTRICTIONS	Not specified in state rule; standard food safety GMP applies.
WATER SUPPLY	Proof of water potability required: microbiological coliform analysis if private well; recent water bill if public water.
HANDWASHING	Standard food safety practices required.
FOOD STORAGE	Non-TCS shelf-stable food storage only.

Inspection & permitting

INSPECTION REQUIRED	Upon-complaint — Health authority may inspect upon complaint or suspected foodborne illness; no routine inspection.
HOME OCCUPATION PERMIT	Conditional — NJ state permit process requires applicant to first confirm local zoning allows cottage food business. Mercer County municipalities (Trenton, Princeton, Hamilton Township, etc.) have their own zoning ordinances. Contact local zoning board before applying to state.
LOCAL BUSINESS LICENSE	Varies

Customer-facing rules

ON-SITE CUSTOMER PICKUP	Yes
ON-SITE SIGNAGE	Conditional
DELIVERY / PICKUP RULES	Sales from home, at NJ farmers markets and events (with local health dept approvals). No wholesale. No sales outside NJ.
MAX EMPLOYEES IN HOME	Production must occur in private residential kitchen only.

Relevant county code

N.J.A.C. 8:24-11 (state Cottage Food Operator rules); local Mercer County municipal zoning codes vary.

RESEARCH NOTES

NJ state cottage food rules well-documented from .gov sources. Mercer County (Trenton) follows state NJ framework with no county-level cottage food program. Local municipal zoning approval required first. Food Manager Certification (not just food handler) required. Confidence medium: state law high-confidence; Mercer County municipal zoning rules not individually researched.

SOURCES VERIFIED AT RESEARCH TIME

<https://www.mercercounty.org>

<https://www.nj.gov/health/cottagefood/rules-resources/rules>

<https://www.nj.gov/health/cottagefood/apply-renew>

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

Bordering counties — cottage food law

Regulation	Mercer County	Somerset County	Burlington County
HOME KITCHEN ALLOWED	Conditional	Yes	Conditional
SEPARATE DEDICATED KITCHEN	No	No	No
PETS ALLOWED	Not specified in state rule; standard food safety GMP applies.	Pets excluded from production area during food preparation	Not specified in state rule; standard food safety GMP applies.
INSPECTION REQUIRED	Upon-complaint	No	Upon-complaint
ON-SITE CUSTOMER PICKUP	Yes	Yes	Yes
ON-SITE SIGNAGE	Conditional	Conditional	Conditional
DELIVERY / PICKUP	Sales from home, at NJ farmers markets and events (with local health dept approvals). No wholesale. No sales outside NJ.	Direct to consumer only; no sales to retailers or restaurants; farmers markets and events allowed	Sales allowed from home, at farmers markets, and NJ events. Local health department approvals required for market/event sales. No sales out...
HOME OCCUPATION PERMIT	Conditional	Varies	Conditional
LOCAL BUSINESS LICENSE	Varies	Varies	Varies
RESTRICTIONS	New Jersey requires a state Cottage Food Operator Permit (\$100 fee, valid 2 years) from NJ Department of Health. Requirements: (1) local zo...	Registration with NJ Dept of Health required; \$50,000 annual sales cap; food handler certificate required; direct to consumer only (no reta...	New Jersey requires a state Cottage Food Operator Permit (\$100 fee, valid 2 years) from NJ Department of Health. Applicant must: (1) first ...
FOOD STORAGE	Non-TCS shelf-stable food storage only.	Non-TCS foods stored appropriately	Non-TCS shelf-stable food storage only. No TCS (refrigerated) foods permitted.
POPULATION	383,732	344,978	461,853

State context — New Jersey cottage food law

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

STATUTE N.J.A.C. 8:24-11 et seq.	ANNUAL SALES CAP 50000
REGISTRATION REQUIRED Yes	FOOD HANDLER CERT Yes
KITCHEN INSPECTION No	DIRECT SALES ONLY Yes

INDIRECT SALES

No — Cottage food products may only be delivered or relinquished at: the operator's home (not for onsite consumption), the consumer's NJ home, a NJ farmers market or other permitted NJ location. Products cannot be sold to wholesale establishments, retail food establishments, or shipped out of state. Online and phone order-taking is allowed as an ancillary activity, but physical delivery must occur in New Jersey person-to-person or at permitted locations. Charitable bake sales remain exempt under separate provisions.

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

STATE-LEVEL REFERENCES

State statute: https://www.nj.gov/health/ceohs/documents/phfpp/njac8_24.pdf

State dept cottage food page: <https://www.nj.gov/health/ceohs/phfpp/cottage-food-operator/>

Forrager.com: <https://forrager.com/law/new-jersey/>

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/new-jersey/mercer-county-discuss>
