

COTTAGE FOOD LAW REPORT

Carter County

Tennessee · Elizabethton · FIPS 47019 · Population 56,315 ·
Crosodo Index #910*

STATE BASELINE

Tenn. Code §53-1-125 (Tennessee Food Freedom Act, eff. July 1, 2022)

STATE TIER

Good

ANNUAL SALES CAP (STATE)

—

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.

TENNESSEE: CARTER COUNTY

CROSODO INDEX #910* · FIPS 47019 · Elizabethton

Carter County

Population 56,315 · State baseline: Tenn. Code §53-1-125 (Tennessee Food Freedom Act, eff. July 1, 2022) · **MEDIUM**

QUICK VIEW FOR BAKERS IN THIS COUNTY

HOME KITCHEN ALLOWED?

Yes (Broad exemption for all non-TCS homemade foods produced at producer’s private residence. No license, permit, inspection, or sales cap under TN Food Freedom Act.)

SEPARATE KITCHEN REQUIRED?

No

PETS ALLOWED?

No specific TN state or Carter County rule.

HOME OCCUPATION PERMIT?

Varies (TN Food Freedom Act preempts local food-related licensing. Carter County may have general home occupation zoning requirements for home-based businesses. Contact Carter County government in Elizabethton.)

ON-SITE / PORCH PICKUP?

Yes

INSPECTION REQUIRED?

No (Only DOH may investigate foodborne illness; no routine inspections.)

Home kitchen rules

HOME KITCHEN ALLOWED	Yes — Broad exemption for all non-TCS homemade foods produced at producer’s private residence. No license, permit, inspection, or sales cap under TN Food Freedom Act.
SEPARATE DEDICATED KITCHEN	No
PET RESTRICTIONS	No specific TN state or Carter County rule.
WATER SUPPLY	No specific requirement; primary residence kitchen.
HANDWASHING	No formal requirement under TN Food Freedom Act; recommended best practices.
FOOD STORAGE	Products must be non-TCS. No formal storage rules under TN Food Freedom Act.

Inspection & permitting

INSPECTION REQUIRED	No — Only DOH may investigate foodborne illness; no routine inspections.
HOME OCCUPATION PERMIT	Varies — TN Food Freedom Act preempts local food-related licensing. Carter County may have general home occupation zoning requirements for home-based businesses. Contact Carter County government in Elizabethton.
LOCAL BUSINESS LICENSE	Varies

Customer-facing rules

ON-SITE CUSTOMER PICKUP	Yes
ON-SITE SIGNAGE	Conditional
DELIVERY / PICKUP RULES	No restrictions on sales channels. Direct, online, delivery, pickup, and indirect sales all permitted.
MAX EMPLOYEES IN HOME	Not specified in TN statute.

Relevant county code

Tenn. Code §53-1-125; no Carter County-specific ordinance identified

RESEARCH NOTES

Carter County is in the Tri-Cities area of northeast Tennessee. TN Food Freedom Act is extremely permissive for non-TCS foods. No county-specific rules found. TCS foods (meat, poultry, dairy requiring refrigeration) require commercial food establishment licensing.

SOURCES VERIFIED AT RESEARCH TIME

<https://www.tn.gov/agriculture/businesses/food/food-manufacturing/domestic-kitchen.html>

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

Bordering counties — cottage food law

Regulation	Carter County	Washington County	Sullivan County
HOME KITCHEN ALLOWED	Yes	Yes	Yes
SEPARATE DEDICATED KITCHEN	No	No	No
PETS ALLOWED	No specific TN state or Carter County rule.	Not prohibited by state statute.	No specific state restriction on pets in home for cottage food.
INSPECTION REQUIRED	No	No	No
ON-SITE CUSTOMER PICKUP	Yes	Yes	Yes
ON-SITE SIGNAGE	Conditional	Conditional	Conditional
DELIVERY / PICKUP	No restrictions on sales channels. Direct, online, delivery, pickup, and indirect sales all permitted.	Sales permitted from home, farmers markets, events, online, retail, and restaurants. Broad allowance under Tennessee Food Freedom Act.	Sales allowed anywhere — direct, online, retail, wholesale, restaurant sales all permitted under the Food Freedom Act for non-TCS foods. No...
HOME OCCUPATION PERMIT	Varies	Varies	Varies
LOCAL BUSINESS LICENSE	Varies	Varies	Varies
RESTRICTIONS	Broad exemption for all non-TCS homemade foods produced at producer’s private residence. No license, permit, inspection, or sales cap under...	Tennessee Food Freedom Act (2022) broadly deregulates non-TCS homemade food production and sales. No licensing, permit, inspection, or labe...	Tennessee Food Freedom Act (eff. July 1, 2022) broadly allows all non-TCS homemade foods from a private residence. No license, permit, insp...
FOOD STORAGE	Products must be non-TCS. No formal storage rules under TN Food Freedom Act.	Non-TCS foods only; stored in food-safe containers.	Non-TCS foods only; proper storage practices recommended.
POPULATION	56,315	133,282	158,722

State context — Tennessee cottage food law

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

STATUTE	ANNUAL SALES CAP
Tenn. Code §53-1-125 (Food Freedom Act)	—
REGISTRATION REQUIRED	FOOD HANDLER CERT
No	No
KITCHEN INSPECTION	DIRECT SALES ONLY
No	No

INDIRECT SALES

Yes — The Tennessee Food Freedom Act (Public Chapter 862, effective July 1, 2022) broadly exempts production and sale of non-TCS homemade food items from all licensing, permitting, inspecting, packaging, and labeling laws. Sales may be direct to consumer in person or remotely. Local government ordinances restricting homemade food sales are preempted. Note: Prior to the 2022 Food Freedom Act, the older domestic kitchen regulations (TDA Chapter 0080-4-11) required a permit, inspection, and food safety certification, and limited sales to 100 units/week; the Food Freedom Act supersedes these requirements for qualifying non-TCS homemade foods.

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

STATE-LEVEL REFERENCES

State statute: <https://law.justia.com/codes/tennessee/2021/title-53/chapter-8/>

State dept cottage food page: <https://www.tn.gov/agriculture/businesses/food/food-manufacturing/domestic-kitchen.html>

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

Questions?

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

<https://crosodo.com/nb/tennessee/carter-county-discuss>
