

COTTAGE FOOD LAW REPORT

Whatcom County

Washington · Bellingham · FIPS 53073 · Population 226,523 ·
Crosodo Index #2313*

STATE BASELINE	STATE TIER	ANNUAL SALES CAP (STATE)	CONFIDENCE	LAST VERIFIED
RCW §69.22.010-.040	Good	—	MEDIUM	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.

WASHINGTON: WHATCOM COUNTY

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Whatcom County

Population 226,523 · State baseline: RCW §69.22.010-.040 · **MEDIUM**

QUICK VIEW FOR BAKERS IN THIS COUNTY

HOME KITCHEN ALLOWED?

Yes (Washington state law (RCW §69.22) requires a biennial permit from the Washington State Department of Agriculture for cottage food operations. Permit fee is approximately \$125 (inspection) + \$75 (public health review) + \$30 (processing). Annual kitchen inspection is required. Home kitchen must be the operator’s primary residence. Only the permittee or persons under their direct supervision may handle products or be in the kitchen during processing.)

SEPARATE KITCHEN REQUIRED?

No

PETS ALLOWED?

Washington state cottage food rules prohibit anyone other than the permittee and persons under their direct supervision in the kitchen during processing. Pet presence in the kitchen during production is prohibited; standard food safety rules apply.

HOME OCCUPATION PERMIT?

Conditional (Whatcom County (unincorporated areas): home-based businesses allowed in residential zones as accessory use; home occupation permit and/or business license may be required. Per Whatcom County Code Title 20 (Zoning), amended April 2025 (Ordinance 2025-020), home-based businesses are regulated by type (Type I through IV). Type I (no on-site clients, no permit needed in most zones) may apply to some cottage food operations. Type II/III require conditional use permits. Cities within Whatcom County (Bellingham, Lynden, Ferndale) have their own separate rules.)

ON-SITE / PORCH PICKUP?

Conditional

INSPECTION REQUIRED?

Yes (Annual basic hygiene inspections required by Washington State Department of Agriculture as a condition of permit. Permittee must sign document granting WSDA right of entry to home during normal business hours.)

Home kitchen rules

HOME KITCHEN ALLOWED	Yes — Washington state law (RCW §69.22) requires a biennial permit from the Washington State Department of Agriculture for cottage food operations. Permit fee is approximately \$125 (inspection) + \$75 (public health review) + \$30 (processing). Annual kitchen inspection is required. Home kitchen must be the operator’s primary residence. Only the permittee or persons under their direct supervision may handle products or be in the kitchen during processing.
SEPARATE DEDICATED KITCHEN	No
PET RESTRICTIONS	Washington state cottage food rules prohibit anyone other than the permittee and persons under their direct supervision in the kitchen during processing. Pet presence in the kitchen during production is prohibited; standard food safety rules apply.
WATER SUPPLY	No specific private water testing requirement cited in RCW §69.22 for cottage food; standard water supply requirements apply per Washington food code.
HANDWASHING	Food and beverage service worker’s permit required under RCW chapter 69.06, which implies food handler training and hygiene standards including handwashing.
FOOD STORAGE	Standard food storage requirements per Washington food safety rules; products must be non-potentially hazardous.

Inspection & permitting

INSPECTION REQUIRED	Yes — Annual basic hygiene inspections required by Washington State Department of Agriculture as a condition of permit. Permittee must sign document granting WSDA right of entry to home during normal business hours.
HOME OCCUPATION PERMIT	Conditional — Whatcom County (unincorporated areas): home-based businesses allowed in residential zones as accessory use; home occupation permit and/or business license may be required. Per Whatcom County Code Title 20 (Zoning), amended April 2025 (Ordinance 2025-020), home-based businesses are regulated by type (Type I through IV). Type I (no on-site clients, no permit needed in most zones) may apply to some cottage food operations. Type II/III require conditional use permits. Cities within Whatcom County (Bellingham, Lynden, Ferndale) have their own separate rules.
LOCAL BUSINESS LICENSE	Varies

Customer-facing rules

ON-SITE CUSTOMER PICKUP	Conditional
ON-SITE SIGNAGE	Conditional
DELIVERY / PICKUP RULES	Washington state cottage food law permits direct-to-consumer sales at farmers markets, events, and from home. Online sales and mail order within Washington are limited (statute restricts internet/mail-order/retail sales outside state). Home pickup is allowed.
MAX EMPLOYEES IN HOME	Only the permittee or persons under their direct supervision may be in the kitchen during processing per RCW §69.22. Whatcom County Type I home occupation: no on-site clients; Type II permits up to 2 employees with conditional use permit.

Relevant county code

Whatcom County Code Title 20, Section 20.80.970 (Home-Based Businesses); amended by Ordinance 2025-020 (April 2025)

RESEARCH NOTES

Washington state cottage food law is among the more burdensome: biennial WSDA permit with annual inspections and food handler certification required. Whatcom County zoning amended April 2025 to regulate home-based businesses under Code Title 20 Section 20.80.970 with 4 types. Bellingham (county seat) has its own rules; unincorporated county follows county-level rules. Washington B&O tax may apply to gross receipts. CityRuleLookup summary confirmed county-level home occupation permit requirement.

SOURCES VERIFIED AT RESEARCH TIME

<https://www.whatcomcounty.gov/health>

<https://www.whatcomcounty.gov>

<https://agr.wa.gov/services/business-services/food-safety-and-licensing/cottage-food-operations>

<https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=69.22.040>

<https://whatcom.legistar.com/View.ashx?GUID=E5C51132-6F9B-47F6-B38D-ACEF8D23716A&ID=14108620&M=F>

<https://www.cityrulelookup.com/home-business/cottage-food/whatcom-county-wa>

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

State context — Washington cottage food law

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

STATUTE RCW §69.22.010-.040	ANNUAL SALES CAP —
REGISTRATION REQUIRED Yes	FOOD HANDLER CERT Yes
KITCHEN INSPECTION Yes	DIRECT SALES ONLY Yes
INDIRECT SALES No — Cottage food products may only be sold directly to the consumer. Internet sales, mail order, and retail sale outside Washington state are explicitly prohibited. Products may not be repackaged, sold, or used as an ingredient by a food processing plant, or sold by a food service establishment.	

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

STATE-LEVEL REFERENCES

State statute: <https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=69.22.040>

State dept cottage food page: <https://agr.wa.gov/services/business-services/food-safety-and-licensing/cottage-food-operations>

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

Questions?

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

<https://crosodo.com/nb/washington/whatcom-county-discuss>
