

COTTAGE FOOD LAW REPORT

District of Columbia

A comprehensive guide to the cottage food statute, sales rules, and county-level zoning and health-department overlays for home bakers operating under D.C. Code §7-742.02.

STATUTE	TIER	IJ GRADE	COUNTIES COVERED	LAST VERIFIED
D.C. Code §7-742.02	Okay	D	1	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.

How to start — 60-second path

District of Columbia cottage food: the order of steps, then statute and county detail in the pages that follow.

STATE TIER

Okay

ANNUAL SALES CAP

—

REGISTRATION

Yes

KITCHEN INSPECTION

Yes

HOME KITCHEN

See counties

ONLINE / INDIRECT SALES

Yes

START PATH (DO THESE IN ORDER)

- ☐ **1. Products** — Confirm every SKU is on District of Columbia's allowed list (not banned as TCS / high-risk).
- ☐ **2. Channels** — Farmers market, home pickup, delivery, or retail only if your statute and local rules allow it.
- ☐ **3. Local** — Zoning, home occupation, business license, and sales tax before you print your address.
- ☐ **4. Training / registration** — Finish food handler or state registration if required.
- ☐ **5. Labels** — Product name, producer, ingredients, allergens, net quantity, and the home-kitchen disclaimer.
- ☐ **6. Verify** — Call the state agency and your county health / planning office before first sale.

LABEL FIELDS TO INCLUDE

- ☐ Product name · business/producer name · address (or allowed alternative)
- ☐ Ingredients by weight · major allergens · net weight/quantity
- ☐ Required home-kitchen / "not inspected" disclaimer for District of Columbia

CONTINUE ONLINE

[Open the live District of Columbia guide →](#)

[District of Columbia label one-pager →](#)

[Local notes & questions →](#)

Planning path only — not legal advice. County and city rules can add requirements. Always verify before you sell.

OFFICIAL STATE HANDOUT

District of Columbia Cottage Food Law — Official Guidance Summary

DC Department of Health · D.C. Code §7-742.02 · DC Department of Health · <https://dchealth.dc.gov/service/cottage-food-businesses>

District of Columbia's cottage food rules are set by D.C. Code §7-742.02. The summary below is drawn from Crosodo's verified statute research and official agency guidance. Always confirm current requirements on the state agency website before you sell.

Program basics

What law governs cottage food in District of Columbia?

- Code of the District of Columbia §7-742.02 (Cottage food businesses); implementing Cottage Food Amendment Act of 2013 (D.C. Law 20-63)

What is the annual sales cap?

- None

Is registration or a permit required?

- Yes

Is a food handler certificate required?

- Yes (specific course)

Are kitchen inspections required?

- Yes

Allowed products and sales channels

What foods are allowed?

- DC allows most non-potentially hazardous foods including baked goods, candies, condiments (honey, syrups, vinegars), dry goods, pastries, preserves, and snacks. The approved food list is specified in 25-K DCMR 103.5. Products not on the approved list may be submitted for department review with lab testing.

What foods are prohibited?

- Prohibited items include perishable baked goods, acidified foods, low-acid canned foods, pickles, fruit butters, salsas, sauces, ketchup, mustards, juices, meat jerkies, and pet food. All TCS (time/temperature control for safety) foods are prohibited.

Can I sell to retailers or restaurants (indirect sales)?

- As of 2020 amendments, DC allows direct, online, retail (excluding restaurants and grocery stores), and wholesale sales to food establishments (expanded further in 2025 by B26-0025); sales must remain within the District.

Labeling

What labeling is required?

- Labels must include the cottage food business identification number, product name, ingredients in descending order by weight, net weight/volume, allergen information per federal requirements, and the statement 'Made by a cottage food business that is not subject to the District of Columbia's food safety regulations' in at least 10-point contrasting type.

Statute excerpt

D.C. Code §7-742.02

What does the District of Columbia cottage food statute say?

- (b)(1) A cottage food business shall register with the Cottage Food Business Registry within the Department before beginning operation. (2) The Department may perform an inspection of the cottage food business before that business may sell its cottage food products. (3) The Department shall issue a cottage food business identification number and certificate to each registered cottage food business.
- Upon receipt of a cottage food business identification number and certificate, the cottage food business shall be authorized to produce, package, and sell the temperature control for safety food products on the approved food products list issued by the Department, set forth in section 103.5 of Title 25-K of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (25-K DCMR 103.5).
- The cottage food business shall not produce, package, or sell any food products that are not allowed by the Department nor use any processes and activities that are not allowed by the Department.
- (c) The owner of a cottage food business may sell only cottage food products that are: (1) Stored on the premises of the cottage food business; and (2) Prepackaged with a label that contains the following information: (A) The cottage food business identification number; (B) The name of the cottage food product; (C) The ingredients of the cottage food product in descending order of the amount of each ingredient by weight; (D) The net weight or net volume of the cottage food product; (E) Allergen information as specified by federal labeling requirements; (G) The following statement printed in 10-point or larger type in a color that provides a clear contrast to the background of the label: 'Made by a cottage food business that is not subject to the District of Columbia's food safety regulations.'

Official sources

Where should I verify these rules?

- State agency cottage food page: <https://dchealth.dc.gov/service/cottage-food-businesses>
- Statute: <https://code.dccouncil.us/dc/council/code/sections/48-110.01.html>

Summarized from official District of Columbia cottage food statute research and agency guidance. Agency rules change — verify on the official site before relying on this information.

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Crosodo Index* ranks counties by how baker-friendly the combined state + county rules look in our research model (1 = most friendly). See methodology at the end of this report.

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Executive summary

This report covers the District of Columbia cottage food framework — the state statute, the regulatory body administering it, what producers can and cannot sell, and county-level rules layered on top of state law for the 1 District of Columbia county included in this dataset.

ANNUAL SALES CAP

—

FOOD HANDLER CERTIFICATION

Yes (specific course)

DIRECT SALES ONLY

No

REGISTRATION REQUIRED

Yes

KITCHEN INSPECTION

Yes

INDIRECT SALES (RETAIL/ONLINE/WHOLESALE)

Yes — As of 2020 amendments, DC allows direct, online, retail (excluding restaurants and grocery stores), and wholesale sales to food establishments (expanded further in 2025 by B26-0025); sales must remain within the District.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The original enabling legislation is D.C. Law 20-63 (Cottage Food Amendment Act of 2013), codified at D.C. Official Code §7-742.01 et seq. The statute_url in the input (§48-110.01) appears to be an older citation; the current operative section is §7-742.02. DC underwent significant expansions: 2020 amendments (B23-0192 and B23-0269) removed the sales limit and allowed online and retail sales; 2025 B26-0025 added wholesale to food establishments. To register, operators must: (1) pay \$50 fee (valid 2 years), (2) complete a food safety manager course (not just a food handler course — must be CFPM-level), (3) obtain a Home Occupation Permit from DCRA/DLCP, and (4) apply for a Certified Food Protection Manager ID card (\$35, valid 3 years). DC is unusual in requiring manager-level food safety certification (not just a basic food handler course) and allowing optional pre-operational inspection. The input citation §48-110.01 may be from an earlier codification; verified current code is §7-742.02.

TOP QUESTIONS HOME BAKERS ASK ABOUT DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

SEPARATE KITCHEN REQUIRED?

Not specified in state data — check county

PETS ALLOWED?

Varies by county — see below

STATE REGISTRATION REQUIRED?

Yes

HEALTH DEPT INSPECTION?

Yes

SALES CAP

—

ONLINE / SHIPPING ALLOWED?

Yes (As of 2020 amendments, DC allows direct, online, retail (excluding restaurants and grocery stores), and wholesale sales to food establishments (expanded further in 2025 by B26-0025); sales must remain within the District.)

ON-SITE / PORCH PICKUP?

Varies by county — see county details below

HOME KITCHEN BASELINE

Varies by county

County rules can add restrictions on top of the state baseline. Always verify with your local health department and planning office.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR BAKERS IN DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

- District of Columbia (Okay tier) — annual sales cap: see statute.
- Home kitchen rules vary by county — use the county sections below for permits, inspections, and zoning overlays.
- Check whether your county requires a separate dedicated kitchen, home occupation permit, or local business license.
- Labeling and registration requirements are set by state law; confirm exact wording with DC Department of Health.
- Registration required: Yes.
- Direct vs indirect sales: Yes (As of 2020 amendments, DC allows direct, online, retail (excluding restaurants and grocery stores), and wholesale sales to food establishments (expanded further in 2025 by B26-0025); sales must remain within the District.).

PORCH / ON-SITE SALES

These are frequently more restricted by local zoning than by cottage food law. Check the county-level "On-site / porch pickup" answers and confirm with county planning.

RECOMMENDED FIRST STEPS

1. Confirm your county rules using the county sections below or the standalone county PDF.
2. Check if you need any local business license or home occupation permit (most don't).
3. Prepare labels with the required home-kitchen disclosure (wording varies by state/county).
4. Register with the state if your projected sales or product type requires it (check the registration field).
5. Start with direct sales at farmers markets or on-site — often the easiest path in District of Columbia.

Code of the District of Columbia §7-742.02 (Cottage food businesses); implementing Cottage Food Amendment Act of 2013 (D.C. Law 20-63)

CITATION

D.C. Code §7-742.02

ENACTED

2014

LAST AMENDED

2025

CONFIDENCE

HIGH

Allowed foods

DC allows most non-potentially hazardous foods including baked goods, candies, condiments (honey, syrups, vinegars), dry goods, pastries, preserves, and snacks. The approved food list is specified in 25-K DCMR 103.5. Products not on the approved list may be submitted for department review with lab testing.

Prohibited foods

Prohibited items include perishable baked goods, acidified foods, low-acid canned foods, pickles, fruit butters, salsas, sauces, ketchup, mustards, juices, meat jerkies, and pet food. All TCS (time/temperature control for safety) foods are prohibited.

Labeling requirements

Labels must include the cottage food business identification number, product name, ingredients in descending order by weight, net weight/volume, allergen information per federal requirements, and the statement 'Made by a cottage food business that is not subject to the District of Columbia's food safety regulations' in at least 10-point contrasting type.

Statutory text — verbatim excerpt

STATUTE EXCERPT — VERBATIM

(b)(1) A cottage food business shall register with the Cottage Food Business Registry within the Department before beginning operation. (2) The Department may perform an inspection of the cottage food business before that business may sell its cottage food products. (3) The Department shall issue a cottage food business identification number and certificate to each registered cottage food business. Upon receipt of a cottage food business identification number and certificate, the cottage food business shall be authorized to produce, package, and sell the temperature control for safety food products on the approved food products list issued by the Department, set forth in section 103.5 of Title 25-K of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (25-K DCMR 103.5). The cottage food business shall not produce, package, or sell any food products that are not allowed by the Department nor use any processes and activities that are not allowed by the Department. (c) The owner of a cottage food business may sell only cottage food products that are: (1) Stored on the premises of the cottage food business; and (2) Prepackaged with a label that contains the following information: (A) The cottage food business identification number; (B) The name of the cottage food product; (C) The ingredients of the cottage food product in descending order of the amount of each ingredient by weight; (D) The net weight or net volume of the cottage food product; (E) Allergen information as specified by federal labeling requirements; (G) The following statement printed in 10-point or larger type in a color that provides a clear contrast to the background of the label: 'Made by a cottage food business that is not subject to the District of Columbia's food safety regulations.'

Source: <https://code.dccouncil.gov/us/dc/council/code/sections/7-742.02.html>

Official sources

Statute <https://code.dccouncil.us/dc/council/code/sections/48-110.01.html>

State dept page <https://dchealth.dc.gov/service/cottage-food-businesses>

Registration <https://dchealth.dc.gov/service/cottage-food-businesses>

Forrager.com <https://forrager.com/law/district-of-columbia/>

State dept of agriculture / health: **DC Department of Health**

County-level rules

The state statute above sets the floor. Each county may add a home-occupation permit, business license, or zoning rule on top of state law. The 1 District of Columbia county below are listed alphabetically (Crosodo Index* shown for reference — see methodology at end of report). The Crosodo Index ranks U.S. counties by how permissive the combined state + county rules appear for home cottage food operations in our research model.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA: DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

CROSODO INDEX #2170* · FIPS 11001 · Washington

District of Columbia

Population 670,587 · State baseline: D.C. Code §7-742.02; 25-K DCMR 103.5 (approved foods list); no annual cap · **HIGH**

QUICK VIEW FOR BAKERS IN THIS COUNTY**HOME KITCHEN ALLOWED?**

Yes (DC cottage food requires: (1) \$50 registration fee (valid 2 years) from DC Health; (2) Certified Food Protection Manager (CFPM) certification — not just food handler card; (3) Home Occupation Permit from DCRA/DLCP; (4) CFPM ID card (\$35, valid 3 years). Optional pre-operational inspection available. Kitchen must meet sanitation standards.)

SEPARATE KITCHEN REQUIRED?

No

PETS ALLOWED?

Not specified; standard sanitation applies

HOME OCCUPATION PERMIT?

Yes (DC requires a Home Occupation Permit from DCRA (Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs) / DLCP (Department of Licensing and Consumer Protection) as part of the cottage food registration process. This is a mandatory step. Contact DLCP at 1100 4th Street SW, Washington DC, or online at dlcp.dc.gov.)

ON-SITE / PORCH PICKUP?

Yes

INSPECTION REQUIRED?

Conditional (Optional pre-operational inspection available (not required). DC Health may inspect upon complaint. No routine inspections.)

Home kitchen rules

HOME KITCHEN ALLOWED	Yes — DC cottage food requires: (1) \$50 registration fee (valid 2 years) from DC Health; (2) Certified Food Protection Manager (CFPM) certification — not just food handler card; (3) Home Occupation Permit from DCRA/DLCP; (4) CFPM ID card (\$35, valid 3 years). Optional pre-operational inspection available. Kitchen must meet sanitation standards.
SEPARATE DEDICATED KITCHEN	No
PET RESTRICTIONS	Not specified; standard sanitation applies
WATER SUPPLY	Municipal water (DC Water) standard; potable water required
HANDWASHING	CFPM certification implies comprehensive knowledge of handwashing/sanitation
FOOD STORAGE	Standard food storage per DC cottage food regulations; 25-K DCMR 103.5

Inspection & permitting

INSPECTION REQUIRED	Conditional — Optional pre-operational inspection available (not required). DC Health may inspect upon complaint. No routine inspections.
HOME OCCUPATION PERMIT	Yes — DC requires a Home Occupation Permit from DCRA (Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs) / DLCP (Department of Licensing and Consumer Protection) as part of the cottage food registration process. This is a mandatory step. Contact DLCP at 1100 4th Street SW, Washington DC, or online at dlcp.dc.gov .
LOCAL BUSINESS LICENSE	Yes

Customer-facing rules

ON-SITE CUSTOMER PICKUP	Yes
ON-SITE SIGNAGE	Conditional
DELIVERY / PICKUP RULES	Online and retail sales allowed (2020/2025 amendments). Direct-to-consumer, online, retail stores permitted. 2025 B26-0025 added wholesale to food establishments. No annual sales cap. Sales within DC.
MAX EMPLOYEES IN HOME	Unknown

Relevant county code

D.C. Code §7-742.02; 25-K DCMR 103.5; DLCP Home Occupation Permit regulations

QUICK COMPARISON — BORDERING COUNTIES

Regulation	District of Columbia	Prince George's County	Montgomery County
HOME KITCHEN ALLOWED	Yes	Yes	Yes
SEPARATE DEDICATED KITCHEN	No	No	No
PETS ALLOWED	Not specified; standard sanitation applies	Not specified; standard sanitation applies	State baseline applies
INSPECTION REQUIRED	Conditional	Upon-complaint	Upon-complaint
ON-SITE CUSTOMER PICKUP	Yes	Conditional	Yes
ON-SITE SIGNAGE	Conditional	Conditional	Conditional
DELIVERY / PICKUP	Online and retail sales allowed (2020/2025 amendments). Direct-to-consumer, online, retail stores permitted. 2025 B26-0025 added wholesale ...	State baseline: direct-to-consumer at farmers markets, fairs, festivals; customer pickup from home allowed per MDH 2025 guidelines; retail ...	State baseline applies: direct-to-consumer sales. Cottage food cannot be sold outside Maryland. Montgomery County requires a Farmer's Marke...
HOME OCCUPATION PERMIT	Yes	Conditional	Conditional
LOCAL BUSINESS LICENSE	Yes	Varies	Varies by city
RESTRICTIONS	DC cottage food requires: (1) \$50 registration fee (valid 2 years) from DC Health; (2) Certified Food Protection Manager (CFPM) certificati...	Prince George's County explicitly allows cottage food production at home for sale at farmers markets and temporary events only. County zoni...	Montgomery County follows Maryland state baseline for cottage food (COMAR 10.15.03.27). The state \$50,000 annual cap applies. Montgomery Co...
FOOD STORAGE	Standard food storage per DC cottage food regulations; 25-K DCMR 103.5	Standard food storage per COMAR 10.15.03; no additional county-specific requirements found	State baseline applies
POPULATION	670,587	957,189	1,056,910

RESEARCH NOTES

DC is unusual in requiring CFPM (Certified Food Protection Manager) certification — not just a basic food handler course — for cottage food operators. The Home Occupation Permit is a mandatory step in the registration process, making DC one of the clearer cases of explicit home occupation permit requirement for cottage food. No annual sales cap (removed in 2020 amendments). The 2025 amendment (B26-0025) added wholesale to food establishments. DC's cottage food law was created by D.C. Law 20-63 (2013) and significantly amended in 2020 and 2025.

SOURCES VERIFIED AT RESEARCH TIME

<https://dchealth.dc.gov/service/cottage-food-businesses>

<https://dlcp.dc.gov>

<https://dc.gov>

<https://dchealth.dc.gov/service/cottage-food-businesses>

Questions about this county? Local notes and a place to leave a question: crosodo.com/nb/district-of-columbia/district-of-columbia-discuss

Crosodo Index methodology: The Crosodo Index is a 1–N ranking of U.S. counties by how friendly the combined state + county rules are for home-based cottage food bakers. Score components (higher = better): home kitchen allowed (30/15/5), no dedicated kitchen required (25), pets allowed (15), no home occupation permit (15), on-site pickup allowed (10), no inspection (10), no local business license (5), high data confidence (5), plus state tier bonus (Freedom +20, Great +15, Good +10, Okay +5). Data drawn from county zoning codes, health department rules, and state cottage food statutes (last verified ~2026). Ranks cover roughly 3,000 counties. Counties with sparse or missing data receive lower or default scores. This is a research and prioritization tool only — always verify current rules with your state department of agriculture/health and your county planning and health offices.

Questions about District of Columbia? Local notes and a place to leave a question are on Crosodo. We monitor new threads — you do not need a busy forum to start.

crosodo.com/nb/district-of-columbia-discuss

Classifieds

Resources for cottage food & home bakers · crosodo.com/advertise

NATIONAL

SUPPLIES

Advertise here — Supplies

Reach home bakers across the country. crosodo.com/advertise

COURSES

Advertise here — Courses

Reach home bakers across the country. crosodo.com/advertise

INSURANCE

Advertise here — Insurance

Reach home bakers across the country. crosodo.com/advertise

LOCAL

Advertise here

Reach home bakers in District of Columbia. Supply stores, farmers markets, kitchen rentals, and bakery services welcome.

crosodo.com/advertise

Your business here

Local cottage food listings, kitchen rentals, co-packer referrals, and community events — post yours on Crosodo.

crosodo.com/nb/district-of-columbia

Free ad space available

Let us know if you're a non-profit or community organization. Farmers markets, kitchen rentals, and cottage food events near you welcome.

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