

Cottage Food Safety

Who can register as a cottage food producer?

- A producer of food from a private home selling *directly to consumers*.

Cottage food producers shall only provide food that is not adulterated.

Cottage food producers shall not provide any of the following types of time/temperature control for safety:

- Any part of an animal, vertebrate or invertebrate, or animal byproduct;
- Fluid milk or milk products as defined in the Grade A 12 Pasteurized Milk Ordinance adopted by reference in the Nebraska Milk Act;
- Raw eggs;
- Unpasteurized juice;
- Infused oils or infused honey;
- Sprouts (ALL);
- Low-acid canned food and hermetically sealed acidified food;
- Tofu, tempeh, or similar meat substitutes; or
- Kimchi, kombucha, or similar fermented foods.

Cottage Food Label Requirements

- All labels must include the components in **bold**.
- A product that is time/temperature control for safety must list ingredients in descending order on the label.
- The notification required by the Nebraska Pure Food Act [§81-2,280\(5\)\(a\)](#) is not required to be on the label if it is clearly visible to the consumer by other means.

| Item Name | Quantity/Pack |
|---|---------------|
| Business Name | Location |
| Ingredients in descending order (including allergens) | |
| Notification required by Nebraska Pure Food Act §81-2,280(5)(a) , unless otherwise provided clearly visible to the consumer | |

| | |
|---|--|
| Lemon Bars | 6 Bars |
| Aggie's Bakery | 123 Farm St., Lincoln, NE 68521 |
| Ingredients: Sugar, Flour, Butter, Eggs, Lemon Juice | |
| This food was prepared in a kitchen that is not subject to regulation and inspection by the regulatory authority and may contain allergens. | |

Obtain food from safe sources

- Milk and cheese products shall be obtained pasteurized.
- Eggs shall be obtained clean and sound
 - If eggs are obtained locally, the egg producer must contact the Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) to obtain an egg number.
- Foods in hermetically sealed containers (shelf stable cans/jars, etc.) can be obtained from a permitted food procession establishment and used as an ingredient. For example, using canned black beans from the grocery store in vegetarian burritos.
 - Home-canned salsas, home-canned pickles, or home-canned vegetables may not be sold by cottage food producers.

Food Safety Introduction

Why is food safety important?

For some people, especially preschool age children, older adults in health care facilities and those with impaired immune systems, foodborne illnesses are serious and may be life threatening.

How do foodborne illnesses spread?

- Improper handwashing
- Inadequate cooking temperature
- Improper (cold and hot) holding temperatures
- Contaminated equipment
- Food from unsafe sources
- Food handlers working while sick
 - **Never handle food when you are sick.**

Time and Temperature

Time/temperature-controlled food for safety (TCS) foods, also known as potentially hazardous foods, are foods that require time and temperature control for safety. These foods, when left in the “danger zone” for too long, can grow bacteria and make people sick.

What is the danger zone?

- The “danger zone” is the temperature range where bacteria can multiply quickly. It occurs between **41°F - 135°F**
- TCS foods should not be in the temperature “danger zone” for more than **four hours total**.

Date Marking TCS foods

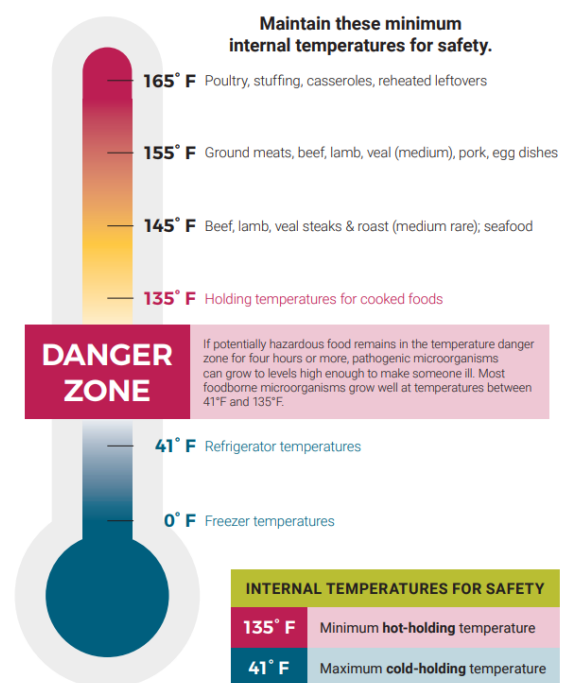
- Serve or discard refrigerated, prepared foods within 7 days.
- Remember the 2-Hour Rule: Perishable food should never be left in the “danger zone” (between 41°F -135°F) for more than 2 hours. This includes both hot food and cold food. If it's been more than 2 hours (or 1 hour in temperatures above 90°F/32.2°C

Thawing

Never thaw food at room temperature

- Thaw food in the refrigerator at 41°F or below.
- Thaw food under (70°F) running water for two hours or less.
- Thaw food as part of the cooking process (continuous cooking with no interruptions).
- Thaw food in the microwave, just before it is cooked.

MINIMUM INTERNAL TEMPERATURES



Cold holding

- Maintain cold foods at 41°F or below.
 - Place a thermometer in the warmest part of your refrigerator to ensure all food in the unit is staying at safe temperatures.
- Keep foods covered.
- Frozen foods must remain frozen solid.
- [Refrigerator Thermometers - Cold Facts about Food Safety | FDA](#)

Hot Holding

- Hold hot foods at 135°F or above.
- Keep covered and stir frequently.

Cooling

- Hot foods should be cooled as fast as possible: from 135°F to 41°F within six hours total.
 - 135°F to 70°F within the first two hours
 - 70°F to 41°F within four more hours
- Do not cool hot foods on the countertop at room temperature.
- Refrigerate or chill food in an ice bath immediately after removing from heat.
 - Stir frequently.
 - When possible, substitute ice for water in a recipe after removing from heat.
- Divide foods into small portions and put into shallow containers.
- Metal containers chill foods fastest.
 - Glass and plastic containers take longer to cool.
- Allow for air circulation in refrigeration units
 - Leave cooling food uncovered, or cover loosely until the food reaches 41°F

Reheating

- Reheat foods quickly, within two hours of removing from cold storage.
- Stir food so that heat evenly distributes throughout.

Instructions for taking food temperatures

- Sanitize the thermometer before and after each use and in between different foods.
- To measure the internal temperature: insert the probe into the center or thickest part of the food item and leave it there for at least ten seconds to ensure the reading has stabilized.
- To measure liquids: (i.e. soups or sauces) stir first before taking readings.
- [More about thermometers & how to calibrate a thermometer](#)
- [FS-1092 How to Calibrate a Thermometer.pdf \(umd.edu\)](#)

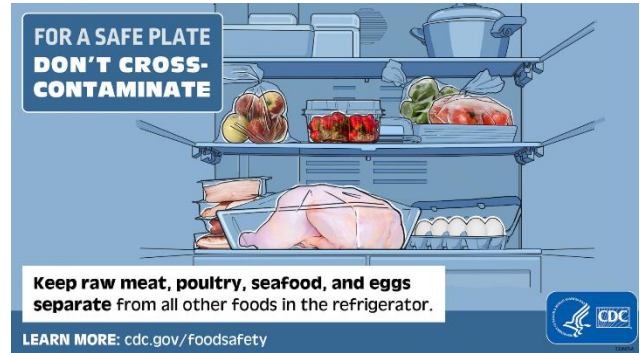


Wash fruits and vegetables

- Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables in running tap water to remove visible dirt and grime.
- Remove and discard the outermost leaves of a head of lettuce or cabbage
- Because bacteria can grow well on the cut surface of fruit or vegetables, be careful not to contaminate these foods while slicing them up on the cutting board. Avoid leaving cut produce at room temperature.

Separate: Avoid contamination

- Keep household cleaners and other chemicals away from food and surfaces used for food.
- Take measures to exclude pests and household pets from the food preparation areas.
 - Protect outer openings, keep outer doors closed, repair screens, and maintain tight fitting doors and openings.
 - Eliminate conditions where pests can hide.
 - Do not allow household animals in the kitchen, on counters, or around food.
 - Keep pets safely in a separate room during food preparation.



Handwashing

- Bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food is discouraged. Use a suitable utensil such as a scoop, spoon, fork, spatula, tongs, deli tissue, single-use gloves, or dispensing equipment.
 - If your hands have any kind of skin abrasion or infection, always use clean disposable gloves. Wash hands (gloved or not) with warm, soapy water.

When to wash hands

- Before, during, and after food preparation.
 - Between handling raw and cooked foods
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- After using the bathroom.
- Before and after caring for someone at home who is sick with vomiting or diarrhea.
- Before and after treating a cut or wound.
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet.
- After touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste.
- After touching garbage.



Single-use gloves

Single-use gloves can provide additional food protection but are only effective if placed on properly washed hands and changed at appropriate times during the food operation.

When single-use gloves are used:

- Wash hands thoroughly before wearing gloves and when removing/changing gloves.
- Change gloves between handling raw foods and cooked or ready-to-eat foods.
- Discard gloves when torn, contaminated, or removed for any reason.
- Change gloves when interruptions occur in the food operation.
- Change gloves frequently.
- Never reuse gloves under any circumstances.

Kitchen Clean-Up

Wash **AND** sanitize.

- Use hot, soapy water and a clean dishcloth (or paper towels) to clean kitchen surfaces and wipe up spills.
- Launder towels and dishcloths after each use and when they become soiled.



Sanitizing

- Only use sanitizing products that are intended for use on cutting boards or utensils that touch food.
- An easy, food-safe homemade sanitizer for cutting boards, knives and other utensils that directly touch food can be made by mixing a solution of:
 - One tablespoon of unscented liquid chlorine bleach with a gallon of water.
- Your dishwasher can also effectively clean and sanitize your utensils and cutting boards if they are dishwasher safe and are made of materials that are non-porous (e.g., acrylic, plastic, glass and some solid wood boards without cracks or scratches).

How to register as a cottage food producer

1. Take an approved food safety training course:
 - [ServSafe](#)
 - [Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department Online Food Safety Training](#)
 - [StateFoodSafety](#)
 - [UNL Cottage Food Law Training - Online Course](#)
 - [ANAB – ANSI National Accreditation Board](#)
2. Test your water if you use a private well. If you are using a private well, provide proof of well water testing for contamination by nitrate or bacteria.
 - [Water Well Testing \(Nebraska Public Health Environmental Lab\)](#)
3. Complete the [registration form](#) on the NDA website. Contact agr.foodsafety@nebraska.gov with any questions or concerns.

If you have questions about a specific cottage food product, please contact the NDA Food Safety & Consumer Protection office at 402-471-3422