

COTTAGE FOOD LAW REPORT

San Diego County

California · San Diego · FIPS 06073 · Population 3,289,701 ·
Crosodo Index #2167*

STATE BASELINE

Cal. Health & Safety Code §113758

STATE TIER

Good

ANNUAL SALES CAP (STATE)

Tiered (see notes)

CONFIDENCE

HIGH

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.

How to start — 60-second path

San Diego County, California — permit, pickup, and label steps before the full county rules.

HOME KITCHEN ALLOWED?

Yes

STATE SALES CAP

Tiered (see notes)

HOME OCCUPATION PERMIT?

Varies by city

ON-SITE / PORCH PICKUP?

Yes

INSPECTION

Yes

PETS

State baseline applies

BEFORE YOU SELL FROM THIS ADDRESS

- ☐ **1. Menu** — Confirm each product under California cottage food rules (county cannot expand a state ban).
- ☐ **2. Pickup & zoning** — Home occupation and porch pickup cells above; HOA/lease may still block customer traffic.
- ☐ **3. Local tax / license** — Business license or sales tax certificate if your city/parish requires it (common even with no state food permit).
- ☐ **4. Training** — Food handler or state registration before market day.
- ☐ **5. Labels** — Disclaimer, allergens, ingredients, net quantity, producer info.
- ☐ **6. Call if unclear** — County health and planning for your exact address.

LABEL FIELDS TO INCLUDE

- ☐ Product name · producer name · address (or allowed alternative)
- ☐ Ingredients by weight · major allergens · net weight/quantity
- ☐ California home-kitchen disclaimer (see live label one-pager)

CONTINUE ONLINE

Open the live county page →

California label one-pager →

Local notes & questions →

Planning path only — not legal advice. Rules change. Always verify with state and local offices before selling.

CALIFORNIA: SAN DIEGO COUNTY

CROSODO INDEX #2167* · FIPS 06073 · San Diego

San Diego County

Population 3,289,701 · State baseline: Cal. Health & Safety Code §113758 · **HIGH**

QUICK VIEW FOR BAKERS IN THIS COUNTY

HOME KITCHEN ALLOWED?

Yes (San Diego County opted into the permanent MEHKO program (effective January 5, 2024), administered by the Department of Environmental Health and Quality (DEHQ). Standard CFO Class A (direct sales only) and Class B (indirect retail allowed, inspection required) registrations/permits also available. For cities within SD County, operators must also check city-specific permit/license requirements.)

SEPARATE KITCHEN REQUIRED?

No

PETS ALLOWED?

State baseline applies

HOME OCCUPATION PERMIT?

Varies by city (DEHQ refers operators to city-specific permit/license requirements. For unincorporated county areas, state preemption (Gov. Code §51035) prohibits zoning restrictions on CFOs. MEHKO operators must verify HOA approval before applying.)

ON-SITE / PORCH PICKUP?

Yes

INSPECTION REQUIRED?

Yes (MEHKO: initial inspection required before permit issuance; annual inspections thereafter; additional fees for justified complaint response and re-inspections. CFO Class B: pre-inspection required before permit. CFO Class A: no routine inspection; upon-complaint only.)

Home kitchen rules

HOME KITCHEN ALLOWED

Yes — San Diego County opted into the permanent MEHKO program (effective January 5, 2024), administered by the Department of Environmental Health and Quality (DEHQ). Standard CFO Class A (direct sales only) and Class B (indirect retail allowed, inspection required) registrations/permits also available. For cities within SD County, operators must also check city-specific permit/license requirements.

SEPARATE DEDICATED KITCHEN

No

PET RESTRICTIONS

State baseline applies

WATER SUPPLY

Specific county requirement: private well users must submit full panel water testing results with MEHKO application; San Diego County Cottage Food Potable Water Requirements PDF available from DEHQ.

HANDWASHING

State baseline applies

FOOD STORAGE

State baseline applies

Inspection & permitting

INSPECTION REQUIRED

Yes — MEHKO: initial inspection required before permit issuance; annual inspections thereafter; additional fees for justified complaint response and re-inspections. CFO Class B: pre-inspection required before permit. CFO Class A: no routine inspection; upon-complaint only.

HOME OCCUPATION PERMIT

Varies by city — DEHQ refers operators to city-specific permit/license requirements. For unincorporated county areas, state preemption (Gov. Code §51035) prohibits zoning restrictions on CFOs. MEHKO operators must verify HOA approval before applying.

LOCAL BUSINESS LICENSE

Varies by city

Customer-facing rules

ON-SITE CUSTOMER PICKUP	Yes
ON-SITE SIGNAGE	Conditional
DELIVERY / PICKUP RULES	MEHKO permits on-site dining, pickup, and delivery by operator/staff. CFO allows in-home direct sales and online orders. State preemption bars local sales restrictions.
MAX EMPLOYEES IN HOME	State baseline applies (1 non-family employee for CFO; MEHKO limited to 1 FTE equivalent)

Relevant county code

San Diego County Board of Supervisors MEHKO resolution (permanent program, effective January 5, 2024); Cal. Health & Safety Code §113758 (CFO) and §114367 (MEHKO)

RESEARCH NOTES

San Diego County is a MEHKO opt-in county (permanent program since January 5, 2024). DEHQ is the local enforcement agency for both MEHKOs and CFOs. Initial CFO applications require at least 1 product label per category; initial fee covers up to 10 label reviews. Food processor training course must be completed within 3 months of CFO approval. MEHKO operators must display their permit during hours of operation and are listed at SDFoodInfo.org.

SOURCES VERIFIED AT RESEARCH TIME

<https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/hhsa.html>

<https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/pds.html>

<https://www.sandiegocounty.gov>

<https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/deh/fhd/food/cottagefood.html>

<https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/deh/fhd/food/homekitchenoperations.html>

<https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/deh/fhd/food/mehko/mehkofaqs.pdf>

Questions about this county? Local notes and a place to leave a question: crosodo.com/nb/california/san-diego-county-discuss

Bordering counties — cottage food law

Regulation	San Diego County	Orange County	Riverside County
HOME KITCHEN ALLOWED	Yes	Yes	Yes
SEPARATE DEDICATED KITCHEN	No	No	No
PETS ALLOWED	State baseline applies	State baseline applies	State baseline applies
INSPECTION REQUIRED	Yes	Conditional	Conditional
ON-SITE CUSTOMER PICKUP	Yes	Yes	Yes
ON-SITE SIGNAGE	Conditional	Conditional	Conditional
DELIVERY / PICKUP	MEHKO permits on-site dining, pickup, and delivery by operator/staff. CFO allows in-home direct sales and online orders. State preemption b...	Direct and indirect sales fulfilled in person, via mail, or third-party delivery within California only. Operator may hire up to 1 full-tim...	Direct/indirect sales within California only. State baseline applies. Operator may hire up to 1 full-time employee.
HOME OCCUPATION PERMIT	Varies by city	Varies by city	Varies by city
LOCAL BUSINESS LICENSE	Varies by city	Varies by city	Varies by city
RESTRICTIONS	San Diego County opted into the permanent MEHKO program (effective January 5, 2024), administered by the Department of Environmental Health...	Orange County Environmental Health administers CFO Class A (direct sales, no inspection) and Class B (indirect/retail, annual inspection) r...	Riverside University Health System – Environmental Health administers CFO Class A and Class B registrations/permits. No MEHKO opt-in confir...
FOOD STORAGE	State baseline applies	Food may only be made and stored in the kitchen and an attached storage room used only for the home operation (state baseline).	State baseline applies
POPULATION	3,289,701	3,175,227	2,429,487

State context — California cottage food law

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

STATUTE

Cal. Health & Safety Code §113758

ANNUAL SALES CAP

Tiered (see notes)

REGISTRATION REQUIRED

Yes

FOOD HANDLER CERT

Yes (specific course)

KITCHEN INSPECTION

No

DIRECT SALES ONLY

No

INDIRECT SALES

Limited (see notes) — Class B permit holders may sell indirectly through retail stores and restaurants statewide; Class A registrants are limited to direct sales only and may not sell through any retail or wholesale venue.

For the full state-level analysis including the verbatim statute text, see the **California cottage food law report** on Crosodo, or open the live guide: crosodo.com/states/california.

STATE-LEVEL REFERENCES

State statute: https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=HSC§ionNum=113758

State dept cottage food page: https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CEH/DFDCS/CDPH%20Document%20Library/FDB/FoodSafetyProgram/Cottage%20Food%20Operations/CFO_Faq.pdf

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

Questions about San Diego County? Local notes and a place to leave a question are on Crosodo. We monitor new threads — start with zoning, permits, or porch pickup.

crosodo.com/nb/california/san-diego-county-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 San Diego County, California. 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/california/san-diego-county-discuss

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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