

Artisan Cheese Maker Level I Audit

Purpose:

To develop and agree upon a Level I (Basic) food safety standard for cheesemakers, primarily artisan/farmstead to be used by retailers.

Background:

Retailers are working in collaboration with local artisan cheese makers to develop minimum food safety standards. The minimum Level I (Basic) standard includes regulatory requirements and adds additional food safety criteria. The Level I criteria can be used as a first step towards a GFSI benchmarked standard (similar categories). HACCP was included in the Level I (Basic) for cheese makers.

Audit:

The initial audit *will not* be scored and the emphasis for the initial audit will be placed on the corrective actions required to correct the deficiencies. Subsequent audits (6-12 months) will be scored and a score of at least 75 is required to receive an 'acceptable' score (the acceptable score may increase over time). The audit criteria that are designated as 'critical' for food safety and a deficiency in any of these criteria will automatically score the audit as 'unacceptable.' Cheesemakers participating in a Level I audit should receive no critical deficiencies (*this includes the initial unscored audit*). **All deficiencies** require corrective actions to be submitted within 30 days of completion of the audit that address the root cause and include a timeline on implementation of the corrective actions. Critical deficiencies must be corrected before accepting product from a supplier.

The audit will be freely available for designated auditing companies to use and will be 'owned and maintained' by the Retail Consortium. The audit results should be adequate for all retailers and allow a cheese maker to be audited once (in a given time period) and use the results for multiple retailers (once certified, accepted everywhere). An audit to a GFSI benchmarked scheme can take the place of the Level I audit.

The Retail Consortium has and will continue to partner with the Innovation Center for US Dairy® on our artisan/farmstead supplier food safety training and education programs.

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**Artisan/Farmstead Cheese Supplier
Compliance Checklist
Level 1**

This documentation is used by _____ to review a new or existing local supplier. Please provide a copy of ALL documentation including any plans to address any deficiencies.

Date: _____
 Supplier Name: _____
 Address: _____
 Phone Number: _____
 Owner/Manager Name: _____
 Hours of Operation: _____
 Buyer: _____
 Region/Store: _____
 Products Made and being considered for review: _____

| Section 1 – FOOD SAFETY MANAGEMENT: | | | | | |
|--|---|-----|----|----------|----------|
| | | yes | no | n/a | value |
| 1.01 | Are all ingredients and sub-ingredients in the products to be sold at _____ compliant with the _____ Quality Standards? | | | | 0 |
| 1.02 | Is the milk supply used to make _____ product rBST free? Please provide documentation and any additional steps taken to support an rBST free claim. | | | | 0 |
| 1.03 | Does the milk used for cheese production meet all regulatory requirements for antibiotic testing? What test are being conducted to verify the milk does not contain antibiotic residue? | | | | CRITICAL |
| 1.04 | Does the facility use its own dairy producing animals to provide milk used in products? Please tell us how many dairy animals are in the operation. If the milk used for making cheese is NOT produced on-site, please answer next question | | | | 0 |
| 1.05 | Please provide source for the milk used to make cheese products. If milk is supplied from on-site animals, please describe the milking procedures used and how contamination is controlled or minimized. What type of systems are in place to verify the milk meets the Food Safety and regulatory standards? | | | | 4 |
| 1.06 | How many stores will you be supplying product to? Provide a list of stores you are or will be providing. | | | | 0 |
| 1.07 | Provide a list of products produced and production capabilities Provide a list and the possible amount of product that you may produce safely without exceeding your production capacity | | | | 0 |
| 1.08 | Is an owner operated facility used to produce the product? If this is an owner operated facility, the owner/operator must complete this questionnaire and attach or provide all supporting documents | | | | 0 |
| 1.09 | Does the owner use an off-site facility, shared kitchen or Co-Packer to produce, store or hold product? If yes, provide more information The supplier must provide information on any facility being used to process, package, or store the product for _____ The supplier and/or facility must assume responsibility for compliance with all requirements set forth including liability and insurance indemnification. | | | | 0 |
| 1.10 | Does the facility have the required insurance for your products? We request all _____ supplier partners to carry insurance. The type of coverage and amount depends on a products risk level. Please check with your _____ contact to get specific insurance requirements. _____ and its subsidiaries must be named as an additional insured by endorsement to your insurance policy. We will request a copy of the endorsement with your certificate of insurance on an annual basis. | | | | 0 |
| 1.11 | Does the facility participate in third party auditing? A supplier that participates in a third party audit system is a lower risk than one that doesn't. All suppliers participating in third party audits should make the reports available for review by authorized _____ Team Members. | | | | 0 |
| 1.12 | Is the facility compliant with the Reportable Food Registry requirements? http://www.fda.gov/food/foodsafety/FoodSafetyPrograms/FRF/default.htm | | | | 0 |
| 1.13 | What is the water source used in the facility? Provide documentation of testing. | | | | 4 |
| 1.14 | Do you have means of disposing of waste? Waste disposal must meet all regulatory requirements and be conducted at a frequency to mitigate pest activity. | | | | 4 |
| 1.15 | Do you have a record retention policy in place? A record retention policy must meet a minimum standard of 2 years and/or shelf life if longer than 2 years, with records available upon request. | | | | 4 |
| 1.16 | Does the facility have finished product testing done? (Independent lab or state obtained samples) Finish product testing is highly recommended for all high-risk items. These should be done on a monthly basis look for pathogenic strains of microorganisms. Ideally the facility would test and hold each batch of product, but the shelf life of the product may not allow for this in some cases. Some state agencies may pick up samples for regular testing such as in fluid milk and dairy products. | | | | 0 |
| | | | | Subtotal | 20 |

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Section 2 – PREREQUISITE PROGRAMS and GMPs:

| | | yes | no | n/a | value |
|----------|--|-----|----|-----|-----------------|
| 2.01 | Is this a raw milk cheese product? | | | | |
| | If milk is supplied from a vendor/coop, please describe how its evaluated for safety before its use. Provide and verify SOPs and other documentation to ensure a minimum of 60 day aging of the product before sale. Are records maintained? | | | | CRITICAL |
| 2.02 | Is this a pasteurized cheese product? | | | | |
| | Please describe the pasteurization system used and any relevant time/ temperature requirements that must be met. The facility must have a SOP on their system. Are all charts and records maintained? | | | | CRITICAL |
| 2.03 | Does the facility have current Good Manufacturing Practices (cGMPs) implemented? | | | | |
| | A supplier should take every precaution along the way to ensure they have a safe product in the end. Good Manufacturing Practices and Good Agricultural Practices are an industry standard to follow. If this is a Farmstead Cheese operation, steps must be taken to prevent people/children, clothing, shoes, tools, and such from entering the cheese making room without adequate sanitation steps taken. | | | | 4 |
| 2.04 | Does the facility provide food safety training for all food employees? | | | | |
| | It is the responsibility of the supplier to ensure that all food employees are properly trained in the safe handling of food, Good Manufacturing Practices and HACCP where appropriate. Is it documented? Annual training is required. Training includes internal training specific to the job being performed and external training such as Extension Service courses. | | | | 4 |
| 2.05 | Does the facility have a written employee illness policy? | | | | |
| | It is the responsibility of the supplier to have a written employee illness policy. Employee illness is the number one cause of foodborne illness. | | | | 3 |
| 2.06 | Does the facility participate in an environmental monitoring program that screens the facility for pathogenic microorganisms such as E. Coli, Listeria Sp., etc | | | | |
| | The facility should be conducting environmental sampling/testing verification on a monthly basis. Sampling areas should include a minmum of food contact equipment, aging rooms walls, condensate drains, floor drains, wheels on equipment etc. FDA or the State conducts sampling and screening for pathogens on a routine basis. It is best for the facility operator to have a good method of surveillance to detect and mitigate any organisms of concern. | | | | 4 |
| 2.07 | Does the facility have a pest management program implemented to control pests in the facility? | | | | |
| | If done by a service company, please ask for reports, insurance certification, and license. If done by owner/operator, please review records and logs for license(if using pesticides), pest monitoring and measures taken to control pest. | | | | 3 |
| 2.08 | If providing perishable Cheese (fresh, soft ripened, etc) that requires temperature control, does the facility have the necessary equipment to produce and hold | | | | |
| | You must have the cooking, pasteurization, cooling and cold holding capacity for the product that is being made. If volume exceeds capacity, adjustments must be made and possibly more equipment added. | | | | 4 |
| 2.09 | How will the products be delivered to the stores: direct to the stores, through the _____ distribution system or other? | | | | |
| | Please explain how the product will be delivered to the store. If delivering cold product, it must be delivered under temperature control through refrigeration or other effective method. Please explain how traceability and cold chain integrity will be maintained. | | | | 4 |
| 2.10 | Are labels in compliance with ingredient and nutrition requirements? | | | | |
| | If nutritional information is being disclosed, the facility must have an accredited lab or use other industry standards to generate the information. If any health claims ("low fat", "fat free" etc.) are made, they must be in compliance with the NLEA standards. | | | | 0 |
| 2.11 | Are all allergens disclosed on the labels in accordance with Law? FALCPA (Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act)? | | | | |
| | The Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act require that ALL major food allergens (the Big 8) be clearly identified on the label. | | | | 4 |
| 2.12 | Are all ingredients and sub-ingredients clearly identified in English on the label? | | | | |
| | All product sold in the United States must have all information at minimum in the English language. This also includes Name and Address of Distributor or Manufacturer. | | | | 3 |
| 2.13 | Are any naturally occurring or potential physical hazards present that should be disclosed to the consumer? (pits, husk, stones...) | | | | |
| | Disclosing hazards such as pits, seeds, or other common items found in the product may reduce liability and insurance claims. (Note: SOME VENDORS ADD FRUIT, NUTS, OLIVES, Etc to cheese) | | | | 0 |
| 2.14 | Are any organic label claims made or icons used? Products which only identify organic ingredients in the "ingredients: _____" listing, but do not use the word "organic" elsewhere on the label, are not subject to this requirement. | | | | |
| | | | | | 0 |
| 2.15 | If providing perishable Cheese (fresh, soft ripened, etc) that requires temperature control, does the label state "Keep Refrigerated" or "Keep Frozen"? | | | | |
| | It is important to have clear instructions for the retailer and consumer. | | | | 3 |
| SUBTOTAL | | | | | 36 |

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| Section 3 - Control of Food Hazards and Food Safety Plans (HACCP) | | | | yes | no | n/a | value |
|--|--|--|--|-----|----|-----|----------|
| 3.01 | FSMA requires a validated FSP plan be implemented for all Milk and Dairy related items including Cheeses. | | | | | | |
| | Ensure that the facility has a strong FSP plan and verification documents for cooking temperatures, Pasteurization temperatures, cooling temperatures, holding temperatures and transportation. Ask for copies of calibration logs as well as all other CCPs. The plan must be reviewed annually. What was the last review date? | | | | | | 7 |
| | Facility should have a FSP team in place with a FSP Coordinator identified. The Coordinator should have gone through training and have a certificate. | | | | | | 2 |
| | The FSP should reference regulatory pasteurization requirements if applicable. | | | | | | 3 |
| | Food Safety Plan should reference Prerequisite programs such as GMP's, Cleaning and Sanitizing schedules & procedures, and other quality procedures being used. | | | | | | 3 |
| | The Critical Control Points (CCPs) should be validated, verified and documented. | | | | | | 3 |
| 3.02 | Do the cheeses produced meet all of the 21 CFR 133 "Standards of Identity"? | | | | | | |
| | If so, which standards do they fall under? | | | | | | 0 |
| 3.03 | Is there an allergen control program (gluten, dairy, soy, egg, etc.)? | | | | | | |
| | The facility must have an allergen control plan in place as part of their HACCP plan. | | | | | | |
| | The facility should conduct initial allergen screening on all products and random allergen testing after that to ensure adherence to tolerance levels. | | | | | | |
| | The facility should also validate its cleaning program via testing. | | | | | | |
| | The employees must have been well trained on allergen control in their facility. | | | | | | 3 |
| 3.04 | Does the facility use a reduced oxygen or vacuum type package for its product? Is the procedure approved by a recognized process authority? | | | | | | |
| | Reduced Oxygen packaging has been implicated in many foodborne illness outbreaks including some caused by <i>Clostridium botulinum</i> and <i>Listeria monocytogenes</i> . | | | | | | |
| | Facility must have a HACCP plan to control the hazards associated with this type of packaging. | | | | | | 4 |
| 3.05 | Are any of the Cheese products being provided sold or re-packed in _____ brand containers or out of an in-store bulk display? | | | | | | |
| | Ensure that there is a good lot traceability program established from facility through retail sale. | | | | | | 4 |
| 3.06 | Have the facilities products ever been implicated in a foodborne illness outbreak? | | | | | | |
| | A history of foodborne illness outbreak could be caused by a poor food safety management structure. Ensure that all corrective actions have been made and no pending investigations are in operation. | | | | | | |
| | Have facility share results of any product testing done after incident. | | | | | | 0 |
| 3.07 | Have the facilities products ever been the subjects of a Class 1 Recall? | | | | | | |
| | Facility must show three consecutive negative test results for pathogens of concern for each batch of products being sold to _____ | | | | | | |
| | 3rd Party audit is required prior to selling products to _____. | | | | | | |
| | A history of recall should be studied and corrective actions verified for compliance prior to allowing product into the _____ product mix. | | | | | | 0 |
| 3.08 | Does the facility have a recall system/procedure in place including mock recalls? Please provide the date of last mock recall | | | | | | |
| | Any supplier producing items for sale at _____ must be able to recall any item that may have been adulterated, mislabeled, misbranded or otherwise negatively affected. | | | | | | |
| | Have the supplier or operator demonstrate or share their history of mock recall test. | | | | | | |
| | Have the supplier or operator demonstrate compliance with traceability requirements. All product (100%) from a lot or production date must be accounted for in a two hour period to be considered a successful Mock Recall. | | | | | | 4 |
| 3.09 | Does the facility have all required regulatory permits? (State/Local Health/Ag permit, Milk and Dairy, tax id, etc) | | | | | | |
| | Regulatory permits may be administered by the State and/or Local Health departments (Manufactured Food, Retail Foods, Meat safety, Dept of Ag) or FDA and/or USDA (if the facility operates under Interstate Commerce). | | | | | | |
| | All permits must be current and in good standing or the product will become misbranded and detainable. If a supplier goes out of business, the product also become misbranded and cannot be offered for sale | | | | | | 4 |
| 3.10 | Are all official audits/inspections available for review? | | | | | | |
| | It is important to be able to verify that the products being produced in the facility are safe and the facility or operation is in good standing with Regulatory agencies. | | | | | | 3 |
| 3.11 | If providing Organic product, does the facility have the necessary certification? | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | 0 |
| 3.12 | Does the product label have a clear code "Best By" date and any other recall information applied? Provide an example | | | | | | |
| | All items must have easily identifiable information on each individual retail package or bulk container to ensure that if a recall is initiated, the product can be identified and pulled. | | | | | | |
| | The identification system used on the package must be permanent in nature and have the required information to trace back the item to a production lot or batch. | | | | | | 4 |
| | | | | | | | Subtotal |
| | | | | | | | 44 |
| | | | | | | | Total |
| | | | | | | | 100 |