



Agricultural Marketing Service Commodity Procurement Program
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**USDA COMMODITY REQUIREMENTS
PASTEURIZED PROCESS AMERICAN CHEESE
AND
KOSHER CERTIFIED PROCESS CHEESE PRODUCT
FOR USE IN DOMESTIC PROGRAMS**

Effective Date: May 2023

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USDA COMMODITY REQUIREMENTS

PASTEURIZED PROCESS AMERICAN CHEESE AND KOSHER CERTIFIED PROCESS CHEESE PRODUCT

FOR USE IN DOMESTIC PROGRAMS

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Part 1 COMMODITY SPECIFICATIONS

Section 1.1 PASTEURIZED PROCESS AMERICAN CHEESE AND KOSHER CERTIFIED PROCESS CHEESE PRODUCT REQUIREMENTS

A. Product Requirements

- (1) The natural cheese and skim milk for processing shall have been manufactured in plants approved by the Dairy Grading Branch, Dairy Programs, Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) from pasteurized, heat-treated, or raw milk produced in the United States. Ingredients shall not have been previously owned by the Government.
- (2) The process cheese, blended cheese¹, or **kosher certified process cheese product** shall be made from commercial styles of cheddar cheese, cheddar cheese for manufacturing, Colby cheese, Colby cheese for manufacturing, granular (stirred curd) cheese, granular cheese for manufacturing, or any mixture of two or more of these cheeses. Blended cheese may use reduced-fat cheddar cheese, skim milk, or skim milk cheese. The flavor of the natural cheese and skim milk shall be free of all flavor defects except feed, acid, and bitter which are permitted to a slight degree.
- (3) Skim milk cheese for manufacturing with an emulsifying agent may be used in the manufacturing of blended cheese as a non-standardized product only.
- (4) Cheese trimmings from the cutting of natural cheese at AMS-approved cheese packaging operations may be used in the blend provided that satisfactory arrangements are made at the contractor's expense for unannounced AMS inspections to check and verify that:
 - a. the kind of cheese and the cheese quality conforms to section A.1; and
 - b. the trimmings are clean and free of mold, soft spots, etc.

B. Production Requirements

- (1) When ready for grinding, the natural cheese or cheeses used to produce process cheese, blended cheese, or **kosher certified process cheese product** shall be properly cleaned; free from all impurities, mold, rind rot, thick dry rind, paraffin, soft spots, cheese pests, and any objectionable surface flavor or condition which may detract from the quality of the finished product.
- (2) Dairy ingredients used in the manufacture of cheese shall originate from a plant that has been approved by the Dairy Grading Branch (DGB), Dairy Programs (DP), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), USDA. The USDA AMS plant approval code must match the appropriate product or operation code for the dairy ingredient being used.
- (3) Except for cheeses used in the processing of ribbon-sliced, the weighted average age of all the natural cheeses in a blend shall be at least 20 days old or greater.

¹ "Blended cheese" refers to USDA's reduced-fat process cheese, and does not reflect requirements in FDA 21 CFR 133.167

- (4) The process cheese, blended cheese, or **kosher certified process cheese product** shall be pasteurized at a temperature of not less than 165° F for a period of not less than 30 seconds.
- (5) “Rework” process cheese, which was generated at the same plant from production runs intended for sale to the Government, may be used in the blend of natural cheeses in limited amounts so as to not adversely affect the finished product.
- (6) The process cheese, blended cheese, or **kosher certified process cheese product** shall be processed in plants which are approved by AMS. The USDA AMS plant approval code must match the appropriate product or operation code for the commodity being offered.

C. Product Age and Temperature Requirements

- (1) Process cheese, blended cheese, or **kosher certified process cheese product** shall not be manufactured more than 60 days prior to delivery to the Government.
- (2) Process cheese, reduced-fat blended cheese (other than ribbon-sliced), or **kosher certified process cheese product**, immediately after filling and closing containers, shall be stored in such a manner as to permit ample circulation of air between the individual packages to effectuate rapid cooling. The temperature of the cheese shall be cooled to 100° F or less within 24 hours from the time the cheese is packaged. Immediately after the rapid cooling, the cheese shall be further cooled to 60° F or lower prior to loading for shipment in accordance with shipping instructions or placed in a cooler space with an approximate temperature of 40° F in order to reduce further the temperature of the cheese. At the time of delivery, the cheese shall have a temperature of no higher than 45°F.
- (3) Ribbon-sliced process cheese, blended cheese, or **kosher certified process cheese product** shall be stored immediately after packaging at a temperature no higher than 40°F. At the time of delivery, the cheese shall have a temperature no higher than 45°F.

D. Composition Requirements

Pasteurized process American cheese and **kosher certified process cheese product** shall comply with the following composition requirements:

Composition	Pasteurized Process American Cheese & Kosher Certified Process Cheese Product	Blended Cheese	Report test results to the nearest:
Milkfat %	Not less than 50% by weight of the solids	Range 13-17% by total weight	0.1%
Moisture %	Not more than 40%	Not more than 51%	0.1%
Salt %	Not more than 2.0%	Not more than 2.7%	0.1%
pH Value	Range 5.3 – 5.8	Range 5.4 - 5.8	0.01 value

Sodium (reduced sodium cheese only)	Range 200 – 300mg per 28-gram serving	Range 200 – 300mg per 28-gram serving	Not required
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E. Physical Requirements

Pasteurized process American cheese, blended cheese, and **kosher certified process cheese product** physical analysis requirements shall comply with the following:

Pasteurized Process American Cheese, Blended Cheese Loaves, Slices, Blended Cheese Slices, and Kosher Certified Process Cheese Product	
Flavor	Its flavor shall be pleasing, and characteristic of process cheese made from mild to medium cured American cheese and shall be free from undesirable flavors and odors.
Body & Texture	The body shall be smooth, medium firm, resilient, and free of pinholes, crystals, or openings except those caused by trapped steam. Its texture shall be close and free from lumps, graininess, or uncooked particles must slice freely, show not more than slight brittleness or roughness, and the cheese shall not stick to the knife or break when cut into approximately 1/8-inch slices. Ribbon-sliced cheese shall contain 160 half-ounce slices. The slices shall be staggered stacked and shall easily separate from the stack.
Color	The cheese shall have a uniform medium yellow color and an attractive sheen or a white color . No visible signs of mold shall be permitted.
Meltability	The cheese shall have been tested for meltability in accordance with the Schreiber Meltability Test and shall be at Number 3 or higher.²

- F. Manufacturer's/Distributor's Product Assurance. The manufacturer/distributor shall certify that the cheese provided shall meet the requirement of this Commodity Requirements Document (CRD), conforms to their own specifications, standards, and quality assurance practices, and be the same cheese offered for sale in the commercial market. The USDA reserves the right to require proof of conformance.

G. Regulatory Requirements.

- (1) The delivered cheese shall comply with:
 - (a) all applicable Federal and State mandatory requirements and regulations relating to the preparation, packaging, labeling, storage, distribution, and sale of cheese within the commercial marketplace, and
 - (b) all applicable Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations including but not limited to provisions of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, the Fair Packaging and Labeling Act, and regulations promulgated thereunder (e.g., 21 CFR Parts 1-199). **Kosher certified process cheese product shall be produced according to FDA**

² Contact USDA AMS Dairy Standards Division for a copy of the AMS Process Cheese Meltability Test.

standardized product, *Pasteurized Process Cheese*, with the exception to replace an insignificant amount³ of lecithin with an insignificant amount of olive oil in the formulation in order to receive kosher certification. When olive oil is used in place of a lecithin ingredient, as an exception with a Temporary Marketing Permit (TMP) from FDA, the food shall be labeled as “cheese product.” Manufacturers who are issued a TMP may label the food as “cheese” for the timeframe authorized through the TMP.

H. Liability

The contractor shall be liable for losses due to excessive deterioration, mold development, spoilage, foreign material, and/or extraneous material which are discovered within 180 days of the date of delivery to the Government.

Section 1.2 KOSHER CERTIFIED PROCESS CHEESE PRODUCT

“Kosher Only” products shall comply with applicable dietary (kosher) laws as established by the “613 Vaad.” Manufacturing plants shall be certified for compliance with the aforementioned requirement by contacting the Rabbinical Committee at the phone number listed in the New York State (NYS) Kosher Commodities Co-op Resource linked below. **Additional information regarding practices and protocols required for kosher certified production for the NYS Kosher Commodities Co-op can be found at the following link: [NYS Kosher Commodities Co-op Resource \(usda.gov\)](https://www.usda.gov/nys-kosher-commodities-co-op-resource).**

At no cost to the vendor, a rabbinic supervisor shall be sent to certify compliance of the manufacturing plant with the dietary (kosher) laws.

Note that this level of kosher is stricter than many other nationally accepted kosher certifications (such as “O-U” of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, or “O-K” of the Organized Kashrus Laboratories). Failure to obtain such certification will result in an offer being deemed non-responsive. Additionally, there are kosher requirements applicable to the ingredients used to manufacture the final end product; this requires adherence to kosher requirements throughout the supply chain. [...regardless of whether earlier steps in the supply chain are the direct responsibility of the Governments’ prime contractor.]

“613 Vaad” certification to produce **kosher certified process cheese product** requires continuous rabbinical supervision to ensure the following at the appropriate point in the supply chain:

- Kosher milk production
- Kosher natural cheese manufacturing

³ The optional alternative anti-sticking agent olive oil may be used as a food additive according to the Good Manufacturing Practices as a generally recognized as safe (GRAS) ingredient and must meet the requirements in [21 CFR 184.1](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-21/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-184/subpart-184.1).

- **Olive oil must be kosher extra-virgin**
- Conversion of kosher natural cheese into kosher process cheese product

Sliced **kosher certified process cheese product** shall be a vertical or horizontal stack, at the option of the vendor. **Kosher certified process cheese product will meet the requirements as outlined in section 1.1, with the exception of olive oil used in place of the lecithin, which is required for kosher certification.**

Minimum Order. When the Government requires kosher supplies covered by this contract in an amount of less than two truckloads, the Government is not obligated to purchase, nor is the Contractor obligated to furnish, those supplies under the contract.

Offeror shall certify that their manufacturing plant is capable of meeting applicable dietary (kosher) laws as established by the “613 Vaad” and that certification had been obtained.

Section 1.3 QUALITY ASSURANCE

A. For Process Cheese

- (1) All processing operations shall be under continuous inspection by AMS. The quality, date(s) of manufacture, and weight of the process cheese will be evidenced by grading certificates issued by AMS **known as Certificates of Analysis (COA).**
- (2) The meltability, percentage of moisture, milk fat, salt, and pH value will be evidenced by certificates **(COAs)**, issued by AMS, an independent commercial laboratory using AOAC International approved methodology, or the contractor's laboratory that complies with the inspection clause of the contract. Procedures and a schedule of fees for inspection services are available at:
<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grading/request-service#dairy>
- (3) If the process cheese fails to meet contract specifications on one or more factors on the first inspection, the contractor may arrange with AMS for subsequent inspections of the cheese. The inspections may be conducted at the origin or a subsequent point of delivery if the provisions of 7 CFR 58.22 through 58.32 issued under the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946, as amended, with respect to retest, appeal, and new inspections can be met.
At the option of the contractor, rejected lots may be reworked including correcting packaging deficiencies and removing unsatisfactory containers, and such reworked lots may be resubmitted for AMS inspection. When subsequent inspections of the cheese are made, the results of the last inspection will be used as the basis of payment under the contract.
- (4) Examination and certification of the cheese by AMS does not relieve the contractor of its responsibility to deliver cheese which complies with all contractual and specification requirements.

B. For Blended Cheese

- (1) The contractor shall perform the product testing and quality analysis to ensure that the product meets the specifications. The results shall be

evidenced by a contractor's own **COA**. The meltability, percentage of moisture, milkfat, salt, and pH value will be evidenced by COAs issued by AMS, an independent commercial laboratory using AOAC International approved methodology, or the contractor's laboratory, that complies with the inspection clause of the contract. The quality, date(s) of manufacture, and weight of the process cheese will be evidenced by grading certificates (**COAs**) issued by the contractor.

- (2) In the event of quality, performance, or processing concerns, AMS Dairy Grading Branch and/or Commodity Procurement Program reserves the right to perform quality assurance at the source. The source includes, but is not limited to: the contractor's manufacturing facility; packaging facility; warehouse; in-house laboratory; subcontractor's facilities; etc. (for additional information, refer to the AMS Master Invitation for Bids available at: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food/solicitations>).

C. For Kosher Certified Process Cheese Product

- (1) **The use of olive oil is approved for the certified process cheese product only on the sliced 5-pound loaves. Pasteurized process cheese in the form of slices or cuts in consumer-sized packages may contain olive oil as an optional anti-sticking agent in an insignificant amount.**
- (2) **Product shall be labeled as "cheese product" with the use of olive oil in place of the lecithin.**
- (3) **Kosher certified process cheese product for use in Child Nutrition Programs is provided a targeted exception and may be credited the same meat alternate meal contribution that is established for Pasteurized Process Cheese (1.0 oz of product credits as 1 oz equivalent meat alternate). This exception is only applicable to schools served by the NYS Kosher Commodities Co-op district for product 100038.**
- (4) **All processing operations shall be evidenced by a contractor's COA. The quality, date(s) of manufacture, and weight of the kosher certified process cheese product will be evidenced by a contractor's COA.**
- (5) **The meltability, percentage of moisture, milkfat, salt, and pH value will be evidenced by an independent commercial laboratory using AOAC International approved methodology or the contractor's laboratory that complies with the inspection clause of the contract. The quality, date(s) of manufacture, and weight of the process cheese will be evidenced by the contractor's own COA. Procedures and a schedule of fees for inspection services are available at: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grading/request-service#dairy>.**
- (6) **If the kosher certified process cheese product fails to meet contract specifications on one or more factors on the first inspection, the contractor may arrange with AMS for subsequent inspections of the cheese. The inspections may be conducted at origin or a subsequent point of delivery if the provisions of 7 CFR 58.22 through 58.32 issued under the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946, as amended, with respect to retest, appeal, and new inspections can be met. At the option of the contractor, rejected lots may be reworked including correcting**

packaging deficiencies and removing unsatisfactory containers, and such reworked lots may be resubmitted for AMS inspection. When subsequent inspections of the cheese are made, the results of the last inspection will be used as the basis of payment under the contract.

- (7) In the event of quality, performance, or processing concerns, AMS Dairy Grading Branch and/or Commodity Procurement Program reserves the right to perform quality assurance at the source. The source includes, but is not limited to the contractor's manufacturing facility; packaging facility; warehouse; in-house laboratory; subcontractor's facilities; etc. (for additional information, refer to the AMS Master Invitation for Bids available at <https://www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food/solicitations>).
- (8) Examination and certification of the cheese by AMS does not relieve the contractor of its responsibility to deliver cheese which complies with all contractual and specification requirements.

D. General

- (1) The contractor may ship the cheese prior to receipt of the commodity testing and analysis results. In this event, the contractor assumes risk and liabilities, which arise with respect to the failure of the shipped process cheese, blended cheese, or **kosher certified process cheese product** to meet contract specifications.
- (2) Manufacturer's/distributor's certification. When the contractor performs quality assurance, the manufacturer/distributor will certify that the cheese distributed meets the requirements of this CRD.
- (3) USDA certification. When AMS performs quality assurance, the USDA, AMS, DP, DGB, shall be the certifying program. DGB inspectors shall certify the quality and acceptability of the cheese in accordance with DGB procedures which include selecting random samples of the cheese, evaluating the samples for conformance with the salient characteristics of this CRD and other contractual requirements, and documenting the findings on official DGB certificates. In addition, when required in the solicitation, contract, or purchase order, DGB inspectors will examine the cheese for conformance to the United States Standards for Condition for Food Containers in effect on the date of the solicitation. To qualify for this option the plant must be listed in Dairy Plants Surveyed and Approved for USDA Grading Service. The USDA AMS plant approval code must match the appropriate product or operation code for the commodity being manufactured.
- (4) USDA INSPECTION NOTES. USDA certification shall include evaluation of the quality and condition of samples of the cheese and compliance with requirements in the following areas:
 - Pasteurized Process American Cheese Requirements (Sec 1.1).
 - Composition Requirements (Sec. 1.1 D). When USDA testing of cheese is specified, DGB inspection personnel shall select samples and submit them to the USDA, Science and Technology Programs (S&TP) laboratory for analysis.
 - Packaging requirements (Part 2).
- (5) Contractors shall notify the Government immediately of lots that fail

- to meet contract requirements.
- (6) The contracting officer may require the submission of COAs representing contract performance.
 - (7) **All COAs, whether issued by AMS, the contractor, or a third party, shall be retained by the contractor. USDA requires the contractor to retain all COAs for a minimum of seven years from the date of issuance.**

Section 1.4 WEIGHT REQUIREMENTS

- A. The cheese shall be packaged in five (5) pound loaves, five (5) pound ribbon-sliced loaves, or two (2) pound loaves, as specified in the solicitation.
- B. Individual shipping containers packed with 6/5-pound packs of cheese shall weigh not less than 29.85 pounds net weight. Individual shipping containers packed with 12/2-pound packs shall weigh not less than 23.88 pounds net weight. The total net weight of all shipping containers test weighed from a lot shall not vary more than one-tenth (0.1) of one percent under the aggregate marked net weight of all shipping containers within the lot.

Part 2 CONTAINER AND PACKAGING REQUIREMENTS

Section 2.1 GENERAL

This part provides the container specifications and packaging materials requirements used under this contract.

Section 2.2 COMMERCIAL PACKAGING REQUIREMENTS

- A. Contractors shall supply commercial brand products only and shall certify at the time of submission of an offer that the commercial product being delivered has a history of successful distribution and use in domestic commercial channels and is sold on the commercial market with an established level of consumer acceptance.
- B. Container and packaging requirements are those used in the current commercial shipping practices and shall comply with:
 - (1) Unitization requirements in the [Master Invitation for Bids](#).
 - (2) At the contractor's option, a statement such as "Not for Retail Sale" may be printed on the principal display panel of the food label.
 - (3) The manufacturer's lot code/lot identification number shall be shown on the commercial bill of lading.
 - (4) Shipping containers shall be marked to show the maximum safe stacking height. It is the responsibility of the contractor in cooperation with the shipping container manufacturers to determine the safe stacking height.
 - (5) For identification upon receipt at delivery warehouses, all commercial-labeled product shipping documents shall specify "FOR USDA FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROGRAMS."
- C. A company name or brand name shall be shown on all shipping containers.

Section 2.3 CONTAINERS AND MATERIALS

- A. Constructed to meet the requirements of the FDA for safe contact with the packaged product. The contractor shall obtain and maintain documentation from the container or packaging material manufacturer to verify that the containers and packaging materials used in this contract were in compliance with the Government's regulatory requirements for safe contact with food products as required in "Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act" (21 U.S.C. 301 et. seq.), as amended, and the relevant regulations.
- B. If the contractor purchases packaging from a foreign country and/or the package and container is manufactured in a foreign country, the package and container SHALL NOT display country of origin labeling. Phrases including, but not limited to, "Made in [Name of Foreign Country.]" or "Product of [Name of Foreign Country.]" are strictly prohibited.

Section 2.4 MONTH/YEAR OF PACK

- A. The month/year of pack or actual pack date shall be shown on all primary packaging (immediate containers) and shipping containers.
- B. A date fill code may be applied in addition to, but not in lieu of, the month/year of pack.

Section 2.5 LOT CODE/CERTIFICATE NUMBER

A lot code or official inspection certificate number shall be legibly marked on all primary shipping materials. Contractors may use any type of lot coding system provided a unique code is used to identify each lot under a contract. When requested contractors shall provide the Government with an explanation of the lot coding system utilized.

Section 2.6 MATERIALS

100017	CHEESE PROCESS LVS-6/5 LB	Full fat, reduced sodium
100018	CHEESE PROCESS YEL SLC LVS-6/5 LB	Full fat, reduced sodium
100019	CHEESE PROCESS WHT SLC LVS-6/5 LB	Full fat, reduced sodium
100038	K CHEESE PROCESS WHT SLC LVS-6/5 LB	Full fat, reduced sodium, kosher
100035	CHEESE BLEND AMER SKM LVS-12/2 LB	Reduced fat, reduced sodium
100036	CHEESE BLEND AMER SKM YEL SLC LVS-6/5 LB	Reduced fat, reduced sodium
100037	CHEESE BLEND AMER SKM WHT SLC LVS-6/5 LB	Reduced fat, reduced sodium
110198	CHEESE BLND AMER SKMYEL REGSLC LVS-6/5LB	Reduced fat, regular sodium
110199	CHEESE PROCESS REG LVS-6/5 LB	Full fat, regular sodium
111111	CHEESE PROCESS LVS-12/2 LB	Full fat, regular sodium