

METRIC

A-A-20253B

September 30, 2021

SUPERSEDING

A-A-20253A

May 8, 2008

COMMERCIAL ITEM DESCRIPTION

CREAM CHEESE, NEUFCHÂTEL CHEESE, AND RELATED PRODUCTS

**The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has authorized
the use of this Commercial Item Description (CID).**

1. SCOPE. This CID covers cream cheese, Neufchâtel cheese, and related products (cream cheese), packed in commercially acceptable containers, suitable for use by Federal, State, local governments, and other interested parties. **Please note: This document does not guarantee purchase of this item by USDA.**¹

2. PURCHASER NOTES.

2.1 Purchasers *must specify* the following:

- Type(s), class(es), container size(s) and agricultural practice(s) of cream cheese required (Sec. 3).
- When analytical requirements are different than specified (Sec. 7.1).
- When compliance with analytical requirements must be verified (Sec. 7.2).
- Manufacturer's/distributor's certification (Sec. 10.2) or USDA certification (Sec. 10.3).

2.2 Purchasers *may specify* the following:

- Manufacturer's quality assurance and plant survey (Sec. 10.1).
- Packaging requirements other than commercial (Sec. 11).

3. CLASSIFICATION. The cream cheese must conform to the following list which must be specified in the solicitation, contract, or purchase order.

¹ USDA purchase specifications are available at: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food/product-specs>.

A-A-20253B

Types, classes, container sizes and agricultural practices.²

Type I - Cream cheese

Class A - Cream cheese

Class B - Reduced fat cream cheese

Class C - Low fat cream cheese

Type II - Cream cheese with other foods (e.g., strawberries, chives, salmon, etc.) (*as specified by the purchaser*)

Class A - Cream cheese with other foods

Class B - Reduced fat cream cheese with other foods

Class C - Low fat cream cheese with other foods

Type III - Neufchâtel cheese

Type IV - Neufchâtel cheese with other foods (e.g., strawberries, chives, salmon, etc.) (*as specified by the purchaser*)

Container size 1 - 28.3 grams (g) (1 ounce (oz)) individual serving

Container size 2 - Multiple servings (check with manufacturer for the number of servings per container)

Container size 3 - Other (*as specified by the purchaser*)

Agricultural practice a - Conventional

Agricultural practice b - Organic

4. MANUFACTURER'S/DISTRIBUTOR'S NOTES. Manufacturer's/distributor's products must meet the requirements of the:

- Processing guidelines (Sec. 5).
- Salient characteristics (Sec. 6).
- Analytical requirements: *as specified by the purchaser* (Sec. 7).
- Manufacturer's/distributor's product assurance (Sec. 8).
- Regulatory requirements (Sec. 9).
- Quality assurance provisions: *as specified by the purchaser* (Sec. 10).
- Packaging requirements other than commercial: *as specified by the purchaser* (Sec. 11).

5. PROCESSING GUIDELINES.

5.1 Processing. The cream cheese must be processed in accordance with *Current Good Manufacturing Practice, Hazard Analysis, and Risk-Based Preventive Controls for Human Food*

² Not all options are available from every manufacturer. Check with the manufacturer/distributor for availability.

(21 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 117). The manufacturing plants must be eligible for Section I listing in the most recent version of the publication *Dairy Plants Surveyed and Approved for USDA Grading Service*.³

5.2 Pasteurization. The dairy ingredients used in the manufacture of cream cheese and the final product must be subjected to such temperatures and holding periods in approved systems as it will assure proper pasteurization or ultra-pasteurization of the product. The heat treatment by either process will be sufficient to ensure public health safety and to assure adequate shelf life yet retaining the most desirable flavor and body characteristics of the finished product in accordance with *Grading and Inspection, General Specifications for Approved Plants and Standards for Grades of Dairy Products* (7 CFR Part 58).

5.3 Food defense. The cream cheese must be processed and transported in accordance with *Mitigation Strategies to Protect Food Against Intentional Adulteration* (21 CFR Part 121). This regulation identifies the kinds of preventive measures food manufacturers, processors, or handlers may take to minimize the risk that food under their control will be subject to tampering or other malicious, criminal, or terrorist actions. The implementation of enhanced food defense preventive measures provides for the security of a plant's production processes and includes the storage and transportation of pre-production raw materials, other ingredients, and post-production finished product.

5.4 Organic ingredients. When organic cream cheese is specified in the solicitation, contract, or purchase order, the cream cheese must be produced, handled, and labeled in accordance with the USDA organic regulations by an operation that is certified organic in accordance with the requirements of the National Organic Program (7 CFR Part 205). A Certificate of Organic Production or Handling must be provided to verify that the product was processed and handled in accordance with the USDA organic regulations.

5.5 Storage temperature. Once the cream cheese is packaged, the cream cheese must be maintained at a temperature of 7.2 °C (45 °F) or lower.

5.6 Shelf life. Once the cream cheese is packaged, the cream cheese must have a remaining shelf life of at least 60 days.

6. SALIENT CHARACTERISTICS.

6.1 Definitions.

6.1.1 Cream cheese (Type I, Class A). The cream cheese must comply with all applicable Federal regulations including those contained in 21 CFR §133.133 for cream cheese.

³ The Dairy Plants Surveyed and Approved for USDA Grading Service is available at: <https://apps.ams.usda.gov/dairy/ApprovedPlantList/>.

A-A-20253B

6.1.2 Reduced fat and low fat cream cheese (Type I, Class B and Class C). The cream cheese must comply with all applicable Federal regulations including those contained in 21 CFR §133.133 for cream cheese, 21 CFR §101.62 for food nutrient content claims for fat, and 21 CFR §130.10 for foods named by use of a nutrient content claim and a standardized term.

6.1.3 Cream cheese with other foods (Type II, Class A). The cream cheese with other foods such as strawberries, chives, and salmon must comply with all applicable Federal regulations including those contained in 21 CFR §133.134.

6.1.4 Reduced fat and low fat cream cheese with other foods (Type II, Class B and Class C). The cream cheese and related products with other foods such as strawberries, chives, and salmon must comply with all applicable Federal regulations including those contained in 21 CFR §133.134 for cream cheese with other foods, 21 CFR §101.62 for food nutrient content claims for fat, and 21 CFR §130.10 for foods named by use of a nutrient content claim and a standardized term.

6.1.5 Neufchâtel cheese (Type III) and Neufchâtel cheese with other foods (Type IV). The Neufchâtel cheese and Neufchâtel cheese with other foods must comply with all applicable Federal regulations including those contained in 21 CFR §133.162. Neufchâtel cheese with other foods must be labeled to identify any foods added.

6.2 Labeling. All ingredients must be declared by their common or usual name in descending order of predominance by weight (21 CFR §101.4) unless exempted by 21 CFR §101.100.

6.3 Ingredients.

6.3.1 Raw ingredients. All dairy ingredients used in the manufacture of cream cheese must originate from plants approved by the Dairy Grading and Standards Division (DGSD), Dairy Program (DP), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), USDA. All dairy products used as ingredients must be free from all undesirable flavors and odors.

6.3.2 Additional processing ingredients. When used, all additional ingredients must meet the standards specified in the Food Chemicals Codex (FCC) or, in the absence of FCC specification at a minimum, meet the specifications for quality set by the U.S. Pharmacopeia (USP)-National Formulary. The additional ingredients must be approved food additives (21 CFR Part 170) or meet Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS) requirements (21 CFR Parts 182 and 184) for those uses by Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

6.4 Finished product.

6.4.1 Flavor and aroma. The cream cheese may possess a slight lactic acid and cultured diacetyl flavor and aroma but must be free from bitter, chalky, flat, sulfide, yeasty or other

objectionable flavors and odors. When other food is added, the finished product must possess a clean characteristic flavor of the added fruits, chives, vegetables, or other options as specified by the purchaser. The flavor of the added ingredients used must be natural and represent the intended flavor and intensity desired in the finished product.

6.4.2 Color. The cream cheese must have a uniform white to light cream color. When other food is added, it must be uniformly distributed and impart the desirable characteristic color to the finished product. The cream cheese must be free from visible mold or other surface discolorations.

6.4.3 Texture. The cream cheese must be smooth, and free from lumps or grittiness. Reduced fat cream cheese may be slightly weak or pasty. Low fat cream cheese may be weak or pasty to a pronounced degree. Droplets or beads of moisture on the surface of the cheese are permissible. When labeled as “Soft”, the cream cheese may contain less than 1 gram of moisture droplets that have run together or pooled. The cream cheese must not show evidence of cracking, serum separation, or wheying off. The cream cheese must be medium firm when cold 7.2 °C (45 °F) and be spreadable at room temperature 20.0 °C (68 °F). When labeled as “Soft”, the cream cheese must be spreadable at refrigeration temperature 7.2 °C (45 °F).

6.5 Foreign material. All ingredients added to the cream cheese that have Defect Action Levels must not exceed those tolerances specified in 21 CFR §117.110. All other ingredients must be clean, sound, wholesome, and free from foreign material, such as, but not limited to, extraneous plant material, dirt, plastic, evidence of rodent or insect infestation, and metal contaminants.

7. ANALYTICAL REQUIREMENTS.

7.1 Analytical and microbiological requirements. Unless otherwise specified in the solicitation, contract or purchase order, the following analytical and microbiological requirements for the cream cheese must conform to those in Table I:

TABLE I. Analytical and microbiological requirements

Test	Type	Class	Requirement
Milkfat ⁴	I	A	Not less than 33 percent
Milkfat ⁴	I, II	B	16.5 - 20 percent
Milkfat ⁴	III, IV		20 - 33 percent
Milkfat ⁴	I, II	C	Not to exceed 10 percent
Milkfat ⁴	II	A	Not less than 27 percent
Moisture ⁴	I	A	Not to exceed 55 percent
Moisture ⁴	II	A	Not to exceed 60 percent
Moisture ⁴	III		Not to exceed 65 percent
Moisture ⁴	I, II, IV	B, C	Not to exceed 70 percent
Salt ⁴	I, II, III, IV	A, B, C	Not to exceed 1.4 percent
pH	I, II, III, IV	A, B, C	4.4 - 5.2
Yeast and Mold	I, II, III, IV	A, B, C	Less than 100 Colony Forming Units (CFU) per g or Most Probable Number (MPN) per g ⁵
Coliform	I, II, III, IV	A, B, C	Less than 10 CFU per g or MPN per g ⁵
<i>Salmonella</i>	I, II, III, IV	A, B, C	Must be negative
<i>Escherichia coli (E. coli)</i>	I, II, III, IV	A, B, C	Less than 10 CFU per g or MPN per g ⁵

7.2 Analytical verification. Purchaser must specify manufacturer’s/distributor’s certification (Sec. 10.2) or USDA certification (Sec. 10.3).

7.3 USDA verification procedures. When USDA certification (Sec. 10.3) is specified in the solicitation, contract, or purchase order, analytical testing must be performed as follows.

⁴ By weight of finished food

⁵ Findings indicate zero colonies (CFU) per plate or zero tubes producing gas for MPN.

7.3.1 Product verification sampling. When USDA verification of analytical requirements is specified in the solicitation, contract, or purchase order, analytical testing must be performed on subsamples of packages randomly selected from the lot. The number of subsamples must be based on USDA inspection service sampling procedures and plans. The contents of each will be used to create a composite sample that will be used in the analytical testing.

7.3.2 Analytical testing and reporting. When specified in the solicitation, contract, or purchase order, the analyses must be made in accordance with the following methods from the Association of Official Analytical Collaboration (AOAC) International Official Methods of Analysis (OMA) or as specified in Table II. Any result not conforming to the analytical requirements may be cause for rejection of the lot.

TABLE II. Analytical and microbiological testing and reporting

Test	Method	Reported as
Fat	AOAC 933.05	Nearest 0.1 percent
Moisture	AOAC 926.08, 977.11	Nearest 0.1 percent
Salt	AOAC 935.43, 983.14, 975.20	Nearest 0.1 percent
pH	AOAC 943.02, 945.27, 981.12	Nearest 0.01 value
Yeast and Mold	AOAC 995.21, 997.02	Nearest 10 CFU or MPN per g
Coliform	AOAC 992.30, 966.24, 991.14, 2000.15, or BAM Ch 4 ⁶	Nearest 10 CFU or MPN per g
<i>Salmonella</i>	AOAC 967.26, 967.28, 996.08, 2003.09, 2004.03, 2011.03, 2011.17, 2013.09, or BAM Ch 5 ⁶	Must be reported as positive or negative
<i>E. coli</i>	AOAC 991.14, 2011.17, or BAM Ch 4 ⁶	Nearest 10 CFU or MPN per g

8. MANUFACTURER'S/DISTRIBUTOR'S PRODUCT ASSURANCE. The manufacturer/distributor must certify that the cream cheese provided meets the salient characteristics of this CID, conform to their own specifications, standards, and quality assurance practices, and be the same cream cheese offered for sale in the commercial market. The purchaser reserves the right to require proof of conformance.

⁶ 8th Edition, FDA Bacteriological Analytical Manual (BAM) or the FDA BAM Online. <https://www.fda.gov/food/laboratory-methods-food/bacteriological-analytical-manual-bam>

A-A-20253B

9. REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS. The delivered cream cheese must comply with all applicable Federal, State, and local mandatory requirements and regulations relating to the preparation, packaging, labeling, storage, distribution, and sale of the cream cheese in the commercial marketplace. Delivered cream cheese must comply with all applicable provisions of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic (FD&C) Act, the Fair Packaging and Labeling Act, Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act (FALCPA), and regulations promulgated thereunder. The allergen statement must be provided in a format which complies with FALCPA for any product which contains wheat, fish, milk, soy, tree nuts, eggs, peanuts, and Crustacean shellfish or those in effect on the date of the solicitation, contract, or purchase order.

10. QUALITY ASSURANCE PROVISIONS. *Purchaser must specify 10.2 or 10.3.*

10.1 Manufacturer's quality assurance and plant survey. When required in the solicitation, contract, or purchase order, the manufacturer must be required to have their facilities inspected by USDA, AMS, DP, DGSD, and be eligible for listing in Section I of the AMS publication *Dairy Plants Surveyed and Approved for USDA Grading Service*.³ An AMS DP plant survey verifies that at the time of the survey, the manufacturer produces products in a clean sanitary environment in accordance with *Current Good Manufacturing Practice, Hazard Analysis, and Risk-Based Preventive Controls for Human Food* (21 CFR Part 117) and the requirements contained in 7 CFR Part 58 *Grading and Inspection, General Specifications for Approved Plants and Standards for Grades of Dairy Products*.

10.2 Manufacturer's/distributor's certification. When required in the solicitation, contract, or purchase order, the manufacturer/distributor must certify that the cream cheese delivered meets or exceeds the requirements of this CID. The manufacturer/distributor must certify via a Certificate of Conformance or other adequate documentation (*as specified by the purchaser*) that the cream cheese meets analytical requirements specified in Sec. 7 of this CID.

10.3 USDA certification. When required in the solicitation, contract, or purchase order that product quality and acceptability or both be determined, the USDA, AMS, DP, DGSD, must be the certifying program. DGSD inspectors must certify the quality and acceptability of the cream cheese in accordance with DGSD procedure which include selecting random samples of the cream cheese, evaluating the samples for conformance with the salient characteristics of this CID and other contractual requirements, and documenting the findings on official DGSD certificates. In addition, when required in the solicitation, contract, or purchase order, DGSD inspectors will examine the cream cheese for conformance to the Standards for Condition of Food Containers (7 CFR Part 42) 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* (See Sec. 10.1).

11. PACKAGING. Preservation, packaging, packing, labeling, and case marking must be commercial unless otherwise specified in the solicitation, contract, or purchase order.

12. USDA INSPECTION NOTES. When Sec. 10.3 is specified in the solicitation, contract, or purchase order, USDA certification must include evaluation of the quality and condition of samples of cream cheese and compliance with requirements in the following areas:

- Processing guidelines (Sec. 5).
- Salient characteristics (Sec. 6).
- Analytical requirements *when specified in the solicitation, contract, or purchase order* (Sec. 7). When USDA analytical testing is specified, SCI Division inspection personnel must select samples and submit them to the USDA, AMS, Science and Technology Program (S&TP) laboratory for analysis.
- Packaging requirements (Sec. 11).

13. REFERENCE NOTES.

13.1 USDA services.

13.1.1 USDA plant surveys and certification. For USDA plant surveys and certification contact: **Grading and Standards Division, DP, AMS, USDA, Room 2968 South Building, STOP 0225, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-0225, telephone (202) 720-3171, via E-mail: DairyNFO@usda.gov or on the internet at: www.ams.usda.gov/services/auditing/dairy-plant-survey-program.**

13.1.2 Analytical testing and technical information. For USDA technical information on analytical testing, contact the **Laboratory Approval and Testing Division, S&TP, AMS, USDA, STOP 0272, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-0272, telephone (202) 690-4089 or via E-mail: LATD@usda.gov.** Samples for specified USDA analytical testing should be sent to the USDA, AMS, S&TP laboratory for analysis at: **USDA, AMS, S&T, National Science Laboratory, 801 Summit Crossing Place, Suite B, Gastonia, NC 28054.**

13.2 Sources of documents.

13.2.1 Sources of information for nongovernmental documents are as follows:

Copies of the AOAC International OMA may be obtained from: **AOAC International, 2275 Research Boulevard, Suite 300, Rockville, MD 20850-3250, telephone (301) 924-7077.** Internet address: <http://www.aoac.org> for nonmembers and <http://www.eoma.aoac.org> for members and AOAC OMA subscribers.

Copies of the Food Chemicals Codex and U.S. Pharmacopeia may be purchased from: **United States Pharmacopeia Convention, 12601 Twinbrook Parkway, Rockville, MD 20877,**

A-A-20253B

telephone (800) 227-8772 or (301) 881-0666, fax (301) 816-8148 or on the Internet at: <http://www.usp.org>.

Copies of the Standard Methods for the Examination of Dairy Products may be purchased from: **American Public Health Association, 800 I Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001, telephone (202) 777-2742 or on the Internet at: <http://apha.org>.**

13.2.2 Sources of information for governmental documents are as follows:

Applicable provisions of the Standards for Condition of Food Containers are contained in 7 CFR Part 42, the National Organic Program are contained in 7 CFR Part 205, the Fair Packaging and Labeling Act are contained in 16 CFR Parts 500 to 503, and the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act are contained in 21 CFR Parts 1 to 199. These documents may be purchased from: **Superintendent of Documents, New Orders, P.O. Box 979050, St. Louis, MO 63197-9000. Credit card (Visa, MasterCard, Discover/NOVUS, and American Express) purchases may be made by calling the Superintendent of Documents at (866) 512-1800, (202) 512-1800. These documents may also be obtained free of charge on the Internet at: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/browse/collectionCfr.action?collectionCode=CFR>.**

Copies of the FDA Bacteriological Analytical Manual (BAM) are available online from: **FDA, Center of Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (CFSAN) on the Internet at: <https://www.fda.gov/food/laboratory-methods-food/bacteriological-analytical-manual-bam>.**

Copies of this CID and the Standards for Condition of Food Containers (7 CFR Part 42) are available from: **Director, SCI Division, SCP, AMS, USDA, Room 1536 South Building, STOP 0240, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-0240, via E-mail: CIDS@usda.gov or on the Internet at: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/grades-standards/cids> and <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2019-title7-vol2/pdf/CFR-2019-title7-vol2-part42.pdf>.**

CIVIL AGENCY COORDINATING ACTIVITY:

DOJ - BOP
HHS - FDA
USDA - SCP
VA - OSS

PREPARING ACTIVITY:

USDA - SCP

Non-Discrimination Policy: In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.