USDA COMMODITY REQUIREMENTS

DPPC1
PASTEURIZED PROCESS AMERICAN CHEESE
FOR USE IN DOMESTIC PROGRAMS

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Part 1 COMMODITY SPECIFICATIONS

Section 1.1 COMMODITIES

A. Quality of Product

(1) Except as otherwise required, the pasteurized process American cheese, including blended cheese, must comply with 21 CFR Part 133.169 and with all applicable Federal regulations issued pursuant to the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, relevant to process cheese (21 CFR Parts 1-199), including those contained in 21 CFR Part 101.62 for nutrient content claims for fat, and 21 CFR Part 130.10 for foods named by use of a nutrient content claim and a standardized term.

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. The cheese used for processing shall not have been previously owned by the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC).

(2) The process cheese or blended cheese 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 cheese 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 nonstandardized 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 or blended cheese 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. The cheese shall be pasteurized at a temperature of not less than 165˚ F for a period of not less than 30 seconds.

(2) 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.

(3) "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.

(4) The process cheese or blended cheese 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 and blended cheese shall not be manufactured more than 60 days prior to delivery.

(2) Process cheese or blended cheese (other than ribbon-sliced), immediately after filling and closing containers, shall be stored in such 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 cooler space with an approximated 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 60˚ F.

(3) Ribbon-sliced process cheese or blended cheese shall be stored immediately after packaging between 30˚ and 45˚ F.

D. Composition Requirements

Pasteurized process American cheese and blended cheese composition requirements shall comply with the following:

Composition	**Process Cheese**	**Blended Cheese**
Milkfat %	Not less than 50% by weight of the solids	Range 13-17% by total weight
Moisture %	Not more than 40%	Not more than 51%
Salt %	Not more than 2.0%	Not more than 2.7%
pH Value	Range 5.3 – 5.8	Range 5.4 – 5.8

E. Physical Requirements

Pasteurized process American cheese and blended cheese physical analysis requirements shall comply with the following:

Pasteurized Process American Cheese And Blended Cheese

Loaves, Slices, and Blended Cheese Slices

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 process cheese shall have a uniform medium yellow color and an attractive sheen. No visible signs of mold shall be permitted.
Meltability	The cheese shall have been tested for meltability in accordance with AMS Methods of Laboratory Analysis, **DA Instruction No. 918-RL, section D.1.j.,** and shall be at Number 3 or higher.

F. Liability

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

Section 1.2 KOSHER ONLY PRODUCTS

"Kosher Only" products must be certified by the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York (BJENY) in accordance with the applicable dietary (kosher) laws as established by the "613 Council of Kashruth." 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). Potential offerors' manufacturing plants must be certified by BJENY for compliance with the aforementioned requirement. 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 through out the supply chain. […regardless if whether earlier steps in the supply chain are the direct responsibility of the Governments' prime contractor.] (See bullets below.) Interested offerors should contact the USDA at 816 926-6050, to arrange for a rabbinic supervisor to be sent to certify compliance of the manufacturing plant with the dietary (kosher) laws. Contractor is not liable for fees associated with initial BJENY certification or with fees associated with the kosher certification of the plant or product.

"613 Council of Kashruth" certification to product kosher only process cheese requires continuous rabbinical supervision by BJENY to ensure the following at the appropriate point in the supply chain:

Kosher milk production

- **BJENY Council of Rabbi's certification of kosher milk production and transportation to the kosher natural cheese plant**
    1. **Milk obtained from an approved kosher dairy cow herd segregated to produce kosher milk with no cows in the herd having undergone any procedure for Displaced Abomasum (DA) whatsoever.**
    2. **Kosherization consisting of sanitizing all vessels and silos with boiling hot water and caustic chemicals after a 24 hour shut down where all the equipment has been left idle.**
    3. **Constant and continuous supervision of milking from the very beginning until completion.**
    4. **Rabbinical supervision throughout transportation of milk from farm to kosher natural cheese manufacturing plant.**

Kosher natural cheese manufacturing

- **BJENY Council of Rabbi's certification of natural cheese.**
    1. **Ingredients required: frozen kosher cultures and microbial rennet meeting 613 rabbinical councils approval, kosher supervised milk.**
    2. **613 Rabbinical approval of ingredients.**
    3. **24 hours of equipment down-time prior to Kosherization.**
    4. **Kosherization sanitizing of pasteurizer with caustic chemicals and then kosherizing using boiling water at 212 degrees which includes the dismantling of all machinery and immersing in 212 degree water after a 24 hour shut down where all equipment is left idle.**
    5. **Segregation of kosherized product from non-kosher products (including within silos).**
    6. **Rabbinical supervision of transportation of bulk cheese to cheese conversion (processing) facility.**

Conversion of kosher natural cheese into kosher process cheese

- **613 Council of Rabbi's certification of kosher process cheese**
    1. **ingredients required: Special Kosher Cheddar Cheese, water, sodium citrate, salt,, ascorbic acid**
    2. **Rabbinical approval of ingredients**
    3. **Kosherization consisting of sanitizing with caustic chemicals and then kosherizing with boiling water at 212 degrees which includes the dismantling of all machinery and immersing 212 degree water**

4. **other plant production lines and equipment, if any, must be shut down from the beginning of plant Kosherization through production of the kosher product**
5. **labeling and coding of the packaged product stamp of approval "613"**

Offeror shall certify that their manufacturing plant is capable of meeting applicable dietary (kosher) laws as established by the "613 Council of Kashruth" and that certification by BJENY 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.

(2) The meltability, percentage of moisture, milk fat, salt, and pH value will be evidenced by certificates issued by AMS, an independent commercial laboratory using AOAC International approved methodology, or the contactors laboratory that complies with the inspection clause of the contract. Procedures and a schedule of fees for inspection services are available at: http://www.ams.usda.gov/dairy/grade.htm.

(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 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 Certificate of Analysis. The meltability, percentage of moisture, milkfat, salt, and pH value will be evidenced by certificates issued by AMS, an independent commercial laboratory using AOAC International approved methodology, or the contactors 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 issued by the contractor.

(2) The contactor 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 or blended cheese to meet contract specifications.

C. Contractors shall notify the Government immediately of lots that fail to meet contract requirements.

D. The contracting officer may require submission of COAs representing contract performance.

Section 1.4 WEIGHT REQUIREMENTS

A. The cheese shall be packaged in five (5) pound loaves, five (5) pound ribbon-sliced loaves, two (2) pound loaves, or forty (40) pound blocks 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 by AMS 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 Section 2.4.

(2) At 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 Food and Drug Administration (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 the Master Solicitation, Part 3, Section A, Number 3.

B. Questions concerning the containers and materials should be directed to:

USDA/FSA/DACO
Room 5755 – South Bldg, STOP 0551
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250-0551
ATTN: Packaging

C. 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 similar to but not inclusive of, "Made in [Name of Foreign Country.]" or "Product of [Name of Foreign Country.]" are strictly prohibited.

Section 2.4 UNITIZATION REQUIREMENT

Shipments shall comply with the following unitization requirements:

A. Unless otherwise specified by the Government, all shipments of packaged products shall be unitized (palletized and stretch wrapped).

B. Pallets shall be:

(1) Constructed to facilitate the safe handling and transportation of the packaged product, as a unit, without loss or damage.
(2) A Number 2, four-way, reversible flush stringer with no broken runners or slats.
(3) Suitable for use in the shipment of food products.

C. Plastic stretch wrap shall be:

(1) Constructed of a plastic film which is to be stretched a minimum of 50 percent beyond its original length when stretched around the pallet load.
(2) Applied as tightly as possible around all tiers of the palletized shipping containers. The shipping containers shall be held firmly in place by the stretch wrap.

D. Pallet loads shall be:
(1) Stacked in such a way as to minimize the amount that shipping containers overhang the edges of pallets.
(2) Blocked and braced or otherwise loaded into the conveyance in a manner that prevents shifting during transit.

Section 2.5 MONTH/YEAR OF PACK

A. The month/year of pack shall be shown on all shipping containers.

B. A date fill code may be applied in addition to, but not in lieu of, the month/year of pack.

Section 2.6 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 an explanation of the lot coding system utilized.