



Agricultural Marketing Service
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USDA COMMODITY REQUIREMENTS

NATURAL SWISS CHEESE

FOR USE IN DOMESTIC PROGRAMS

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Part 1 COMMODITY SPECIFICATIONS

Section 1.1 COMMODITIES

I. Product Requirements

A. Swiss cheese. The product shall:

- (1) Comply with all applicable Federal regulations including, but not limited to, those contained in 21 CFR § 133.195 for Swiss and Emmentaler Cheese.
- (2) Be U.S. Grade A and conform to the United States Standards for Grades of Swiss Cheese, Emmentaler Cheese.
- (3) Be prepared and packaged in accordance with good manufacturing practices (21 CFR Part 117).
- (4) Comply with all applicable Federal and State mandatory requirements and regulations relating to the preparation, packaging, labeling, storage, distribution, and sale of the cheese within the commercial marketplace.

B. For sliced cheese (material code 111312), individual cheese slices shall weigh 0.5 to 1.0 ounce. Slice weights must be consistent within a package and within a truckload.

C. For sliced cheese, individual shipping containers packed with 6/24-oz packs shall weigh not less than 8.85 pounds net weight.

D. For cheese blocks, individual shipping containers packed with 12/1-lb packs shall weigh not less than 11.85 pounds net weight.

E. 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.

II. Production Requirements

A. The cheese delivered to the Government shall have been manufactured from pasteurized milk that was produced in the United States and not previously owned by the Government, and in plants that were inspected and 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 commodity being offered. All manufacturers are required to give at least seven days advance notice of Commodity Procurement production schedules to Dairy Grading Branch.

B. All dairy ingredients shall be pasteurized at a temperature of not less than 71.7°C (161°F) for a period of not less than 15 seconds, or for a time and at a temperature equivalent thereto in

phosphatase destruction.

- C. 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.
- D. Cheese used for cutting shall be clean, free from impurities, mold, rind rot, soft spots, salt spots, pests, and other similar defects.
- E. A mold inhibitor may be applied in accordance with the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act.
- F. Cheese which deviates from the specifications contained herein will be rejected, or, at the discretion of the contracting officer, accepted at discounts to be determined by the Government.
- G. Notwithstanding the other provisions of this section, the presence of any extraneous material in the Swiss cheese will be the basis for rejection.

III. Product Age and Temperature Requirements

Cheese product age and temperature requirements shall comply with the following:

Requirement	Description
Product Age	Cheese shall be at least 60 days old and conform to the provisions of 21 CFR 133.195. The cheese shall be stored at 36° to 38°F (2.2° to 3.3°C) prior to inspection.
Temperature	At the time of delivery, the cheese shall have a temperature of no higher than 41°F.

IV. Composition Requirements

Swiss cheese shall meet the composition requirements in Section 1.1, Product Requirements, Part A.

Composition	Swiss Cheese
pH	5.3-5.9
Moisture	36-41%
Fat (dry basis)	43-54%
Salt	0.3-1.2%

V. Microbiological Requirements

The product prior to conversion to slices and blocks shall meet the following microbiological requirements:

Coliform or EB (Enterobacteriaceae)	Coliform: ≤100 cfu/g or EB: ≤100 cfu/g
Yeast & Mold	<100 cfu/g
E. coli	<10 cfu/g
Staphylococcus aureus	<10 cfu/g
Listeria	Negative in 125 grams
Salmonella	Negative in 375 grams
Shiga-toxin producing E. coli	Negative in 375 grams

VI. Physical Analysis

Swiss cheese physical analysis requirements shall comply with the following:

Swiss Cheese
<p>Flavor: Shall be a pleasing and desirable characteristic Swiss cheese flavor, consistent with the age of the cheese, and free from undesirable flavors. A flavor profile that includes a sweet, nutty flavor profile, balanced with sour flavors from lactic acid fermentation. There may be some minor bitterness, but should not be a pronounced part of the flavor. Excessive bitter and unclean Swiss cheese flavor shall be rejected.</p>
<p>Body: Shall be uniform, firm, and smooth.</p>
<p>Eyes and Texture: The cheese shall be properly set and shall possess well-developed round or slightly oval-shaped eyes which are relatively uniform in size and distribution. The majority of the eyes shall be 3/8 to 13/16 inch in diameter. The cheese may possess the following eye characteristics to a very slight degree: dull, rough, and shell; and the following texture characteristics to a very slight degree: checks, picks, and streuble. For sliced Swiss cheese there is a minimum expectation of at least 1 eye per every 2 slices in each package of 3/8 to 13/16 inch in diameter. There shall not be an excessive number of individual Swiss cheese slices without eyes per package.</p>
<p>Finish, Appearance: (i) <i>Rind</i>. The rind shall be sound, firm, and smooth, providing good protection to the cheese. The surface of the cheese may exhibit mold to a very slight degree. There shall be no indication that mold has penetrated into the interior of the cheese. (ii) <i>Rindless</i>. Rindless blocks of Swiss cheese should be reasonably uniform in size, and well-shaped. The wrapper or covering shall adequately and securely envelop the cheese, be neat, unbroken, and fully protect the surface of the cheese, but may be slightly wrinkled. The surface of the cheese may exhibit mold to a very slight degree. There shall be no indication that mold has penetrated into the interior of the cheese.</p>
<p>Color: Shall be natural, attractive, and uniform. The cheese shall be white to light yellow in color.</p>

- A. The cheese shall be evaluated through a qualitative procedure to measure the characteristics of the melting profile. The cheese shall melt completely and evenly.

- B. **Manufacturer's/Distributor's Product Assurance.** The manufacturer/distributor shall certify that the cheese provided shall meet the requirement of this CRD, conform 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.

The contractor shall be liable for losses due to excessive deterioration, mold development, or spoilage, which are discovered within 120 days for shreds and slices and 150 days for blocks from pack date.

Section 1.2 QUALITY ASSURANCE

I. Inspection, Testing, and Certification Requirements

- A. Manufacturers must request for AMS Dairy Program to evaluate samples of finished product for each production run in Section One plants of the Dairy Plants Surveyed and Approved for USDA Grading Service list. Manufacturers must request AMS Dairy Program to be present for continuous online inspection for each production run in Section Two plants of the Dairy Plants Surveyed and Approved for USDA Grading Service list. The quality, date(s) of manufacture, and weight of the cheese will be evidenced by grading certificates issued by AMS. (See Section 2.3 for package weights.)
- B. All laboratory testing shall be performed by AMS National Science Laboratory, an independent commercial laboratory using AOAC International approved methodology, or the contractor's laboratory that complies with the inspection clause in the contract. The results shall be evidenced by a Certificate of Analysis (COA) maintained by the contractor. The contracting officer may require submission of COAs representing contract performance. **USDA requires the contractor to retain all COAs for a minimum of seven years from the date of issuance.**
- C. Contractors shall notify the Government immediately of lots that fail to meet contract requirements.
- D. Manufacturer's/distributor's certification. When the contractor performs quality assurance, the manufacturer/distributor will certify that the cheese distributed meets or exceeds the requirements of this CRD.
- E. 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.

F. 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.

- (1) Swiss Cheese Requirements (Sec 1.1).
- (2) Composition and Microbiological Requirements (Sec. 1.1). 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.
- (3) Packaging requirements (Part 2).

Part 2 CONTAINER AND PACKAGING REQUIREMENTS

Section 2.1 COMMERCIAL PACKAGING AND LABELING

I. Packaging and Labeling 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) At contractor's option, a statement such as "Not for Retail Sale" may be printed on the principal display panel of the food label.
- (2) The manufacturer's lot code/lot identification number shall be shown on the commercial bill of lading.
- (3) 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.
- (4) For identification upon receipt at delivery warehouses, all commercial-labeled product shipping documents shall specify "FOR USDA FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROGRAMS."

C. Container, packaging, and unitization requirements shall comply with Section 4A52.211-3, 4A52.211-4, and 4A52.211-6 in the Master Solicitation for Commodity Procurement-Domestic Programs which is available at <https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/MSCP.pdf>.

Section 2.2 MONTH/YEAR OF PACK

I. Marking Requirements

- A. The month/year of pack 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, day, year, and time of pack.

Section 2.3 MATERIALS

I. Material Codes

Material Code	Product Description	Cases Per Truck	Net Weight Per Truck
111312	Natural Swiss Cheese Slices - 6/24 oz	4,290 cases	38,610 lbs.
111310	Natural Swiss Cheese Blocks - 12/1 lb	3,360 cases	40,320 lbs.