

body and texture characteristics permitted in §§ 58.711 through 58.714 as applicable, and to determine the characteristics it will contribute to the finished product when blended with other cheese. The cheese included in each blend shall be selected on the basis of the desirable qualities which will result in the desired finished product. Recook from equivalent blends may be used in an amount that will not adversely affect the finished product. Hot cheese from the filler may be added to the cooker in amounts which will not adversely affect the finished product.

**§ 58.724 Blending.**

To as great an extent as is practical, each vat of cheese should be divided and distributed throughout numerous cooker batches. The purpose being to minimize the preponderance and consequent influence of any one vat on the characteristics of the finished product, and to promote as much uniformity as is practical. In blending also consider the final composition requirements for fat and moisture. Quantities of salt, color, emulsifier and other allowable ingredients to be added shall be calculated and predetermined for each cooker batch.

**§ 58.725 Trimming and cleaning.**

The natural cheese shall be cleaned free of all non-edible portions. Paraffin and bandages as well as rind surface, mold or unclean areas or any other part which is unwholesome or unappetizing shall be removed.

**§ 58.726 Cutting and grinding.**

The trimmed and cleaned cheese should be cut into sections of convenient size to be handled by the grinder or shredder. The grinding and mixing of the blended lots of cheese should be done in such a manner as to insure a homogeneous mixture throughout the batch.

**§ 58.727 Adding optional ingredients.**

As each batch is added to the cooker, the predetermined amounts of salt, emulsifiers, color, or other allowable optional ingredients shall be added. However, a special blending vat may be used to mix the ground cheese and

other ingredients before they enter the cooker to provide composition control.

**§ 58.728 Cooking the batch.**

Each batch of cheese within the cooker, including the optional ingredients, shall be thoroughly commingled and the contents pasteurized at a temperature of at least 158 °F. and held at that temperature for not less than 30 seconds or any other equally effective combination of time and temperature approved by the Administrator. Care shall be taken to prevent the entrance of cheese particles or ingredients after the cooker batch of cheese has reached the final heating temperature. After holding for the required period of time, the hot cheese shall be emptied from the cooker as quickly as possible.

**§ 58.729 Forming containers.**

Containers either lined or unlined shall be assembled and stored in a sanitary manner to prevent contamination. The handling of containers by filler crews should be done with extreme care and observance of personal cleanliness. Performing and assembling of pouch liners and containers shall be kept to a minimum and the supply rotated to limit the length of time exposed to possible contamination prior to filling.

**§ 58.730 Filling containers.**

Hot fluid cheese from the cookers may be held in hotwells or hoppers to assure a constant and even supply of processed cheese to the filler or slice former. Filler valves shall effectively measure the desired amount of product into the pouch or container in a sanitary manner and shall cut off sharply without drip or drag of cheese across the opening. An effective system shall be used to maintain accurate and precise weight control. Damaged or unsatisfactory packages shall be removed from production, and the cheese may be salvaged into sanitary containers, and added back to cookers.

**§ 58.731 Closing and sealing containers.**

Pouches, liners, or containers having product contact surfaces, after filling shall be folded or closed and sealed in a sanitary manner, preferably by mechanical means, so as to assure against

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contamination. Each container in addition to other required labeling shall be coded in such a manner as to be easily identified as to date of manufacture by lot or subplot number.

**§ 58.732 Cooling the packaged cheese.**

After the containers are filled they shall be stacked, or cased and stacked in such a manner as to prevent breaking of seals due to excessive bulging and to allow immediate progressive cooling of the individual containers of cheese. As a minimum the cheese should be cooled to a temperature of 100 °F. or lower within 24 hours after filling. The temperature of the cheese should be reduced further, before being shipped or if storage is intended.

**§ 58.733 Quality control tests.**

(a) *Chemical analyses.* The following chemical analyses shall be performed in accordance with the appropriate edition of the Official Methods of Analysis of the AOAC as specified in the appropriate Standards of Identity or in accordance with methods that give equivalent results.

(1) *Cheese.* A representative sample of cheese used in the manufacture of pasteurized process cheese products shall have been tested prior to usage to determine its moisture and fat content.

(2) *Pasteurized process cheese products.* As many samples shall be taken of the finished product direct from the cooker, hopper, filler, or other location as is necessary to assure compliance with composition requirements. Spot checks should be made on samples from the cooker as frequently as is necessary to indicate pasteurization by means of the phosphatase test, as well as any other tests necessary to assure good quality control.

(b) *Examination of physical characteristics.* As many samples shall be taken as is necessary to assure meeting the required physical characteristics of the products. Representative samples shall be taken from production for examination of physical characteristics. The samples shall be examined at approximately 70 °F. the first day of operation after the date of processing for the following characteristics: (1) Finish and appearance, (2) flavor, (3) color, (4)

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body and texture, and (5) slicing or spreading properties.

(c) *Keeping quality.* During processing or preferably from the cooled stock select sufficient samples at random from the production run. The samples should be stored at approximately 50 °F. for 3 months for evaluation of physical characteristics as in paragraph (b) of this section. Additional samples may be selected and held at different temperatures or time.

(d) *Weight control.* During the filling operation as many samples shall be randomly selected and weighed from each production run as is necessary to assure accuracy of the net weight established for the finished products.

**REQUIREMENTS FOR PROCESSED CHEESE PRODUCTS BEARING USDA OFFICIAL IDENTIFICATION**

**§ 58.734 Official identification.**

Only process cheese products manufactured and packaged in accordance with the requirements of this part and with the applicable requirements in subpart A of this part which have been officially inspected in process and found to be in compliance with these requirements may be identified with official USDA Quality Approved Inspection Shield.

**§ 58.735 Quality specifications for raw materials.**

(a) *Cheddar colby, washed or soaked curd, granular or stirred curd cheese.* Cheese, used in the manufacture of pasteurized process cheese products which are identified with the USDA official identification shall possess a pleasing and desirable taste and odor consistent with the age of the cheese; shall have body and texture characteristics which will impart the desired body and texture characteristics in the finished product; and shall possess finish and appearance characteristics which will permit removal of all packaging material and surface defects. The cheese shall at least meet the requirements of U.S. Standard Grade for Bulk American Cheese for Manufacturing provided the quantity of the cheese with