

**USDA COMMODITY REQUIREMENTS**

**BCD5  
NATURAL AMERICAN CHEESE  
FOR USE IN DOMESTIC PROGRAMS**

Effective Date: **02/01/2008**

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## Part 1 COMMODITY SPECIFICATIONS

### Section 1.1 COMMODITIES

#### A. Quality of Product

- (1) Except as otherwise required, the natural American cheese shall comply with the appropriate definition and standard of identify, and all regulations issued pursuant to the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, relevant to cheese (21 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Parts 1-199, including Parts 133.113 for Cheddar cheese, Part 133.118 for Colby cheese, Part 133.144 for Granular cheese, and Part 133.146 for grated cheese), as appropriate, for the type of natural American cheese specified in the solicitation.
- (2) The reduced fat cheddar cheese shall conform to the Commercial Item Description (CID) A-A-20208A in effect on the date of the solicitation, which is available at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/fqa/ciddair.htm>.

#### B. Production Requirements

- (1) 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, Dairy Programs, Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). **The USDA AMS plant approval code must match the appropriate product or operation code for the commodity being offered.**
- (2) Cheese used for cutting shall be clean, free from impurities, mold, rindrot, soft spots, salt spots, pests, and other similar defects.
- (3) A mold inhibitor may be applied in accordance with the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act.
- (4) All surfaces of the barrel cheese shall be reasonably smooth and closed to inhibit mold growth and penetration. However, if the surface is treated with an antimycotic and/or vacuum sealed, definite rough surface will be allowed. Each lot shall contain only one type and size container. Barrel cheese may contain a reasonable amount of whey on the surface of the cheese and the liner. "Reasonable" means droplets but less than flowing whey on the cheese or the interior of the liner. Barrel cheese may not have visible mold at the time of grading.
- (5) Natural American cheese which deviates from the specifications and the schedule of discounts contained herein will be rejected or, at the discretion of the contracting officer, accepted at discounts to be determined by the Government.
- (6) Notwithstanding the other provisions of this section, the presence of any extraneous material in the natural American cheese will be the basis for rejection.

#### C. Product Age, Temperature and Grade Requirements

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

<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Product Age</b>	<p>No lot may contain cheese having a variation of over 30 days in dates of manufacture.</p> <p>All cheese shall be at least 10 days old when graded except Reduced Fat Cheddar, which shall be at least 20 days old when graded.</p> <p>The cheese shall be aged at 38° to 42° F (3.5° to 5.5° C) prior to inspection. This aging may take place before or after the cheese is shredded.</p>
<b>Grade</b>	<p>Blocks or prints of Cheddar cheese shall be U.S. Grade A or higher</p> <p>Cheese packed in barrels shall be U.S. Extra Grade.</p>
<b>Temperature</b>	<p>Cheese shall be located in a cooler and stored at a temperature 40° F or lower until delivered to the Government. Carriers when transporting cheese shall maintain a temperature of 35° F or lower.</p>

D. Composition Requirements

Cheese composition requirements shall comply with the following:

<b>Composition</b>	<b>Cheddar</b>	<b>Reduced Fat Cheddar</b>	<b>Barrel Cheese</b>
<b>Milk fat %</b>	Not less than 50% by weight of the solids	Range 19.2% - 22.9% by total weight	Not less than 50% by weight of the solids
<b>Moisture %</b>	No vat more than 39%	Not more than 49%	No vat more than 39%
<b>Salt %</b>	N/A	Range 1.4% - 2%	N/A
<b>pH value</b> <sup>1</sup>	No vat may have a pH value higher than 5.30, except shredded cheese, which shall not have a pH value higher than 5.35		
<p>Notes: Shredded cheese allows for 1% less milk fat than the standard of identity for cheddar cheese.</p> <p>Reduced fat cheddar cheese should contain between 1/4 to 1/3 less milk fat than that of traditional cheddar cheese.</p>			

E. Physical Analysis

Barrel, cheddar, and reduced fat cheddar cheese physical analysis requirements shall comply with the following:

<sup>1</sup> If a re-test of the product is required, the quinhydrone method will be used by AMS laboratories.

<b>Barrel Cheese U.S. Extra Grade</b>	<b>Cheddar, Blocks/Prints U.S. Grade AA</b>	<b>Cheddar, Blocks/Prints U.S. Grade A</b>
<p><b>Flavor:</b> Cheese shall possess a pleasing characteristic of the variety and type of cheese packaged in barrels. The barrel cheese may contain a very slight bitter taste and slight acid and feed flavor, but shall not possess any undesirable flavor or odors as listed in the U.S. Standards for Grades of Bulk American Cheese, which are available at <a href="http://www.ams.usda.gov/standards/Bulkamer.pdf">http://www.ams.usda.gov/standards/Bulkamer.pdf</a>.</p>	<p><b>Flavor:</b> Cheese shall be fine and highly pleasing. The cheese may be lacking in flavor development or may possess slight characteristic cheddar cheese flavor. The cheese also may possess a very slight feed flavor, but shall be free from any undesirable flavors and odors.</p>	<p><b>Flavor:</b> Cheese shall possess a pleasing flavor. It may be lacking in flavor development or may possess slight characteristic Cheddar cheese flavor. It may possess very slight acid, or slight feed, but shall not possess any undesirable flavors and odors.</p>
<p><b>Body and Texture:</b> The cheese shall be firm and sufficiently compact to draw a plug for examination. The cheese may be slight coarse, mealy, open (except for Colby), short, weak, and curdy to definite degree, but it shall not be corky, crumbly, gassy, pasty, pinny, slitty, or have sweet holes. Mechanical openings are permitted in all types of the cheese except cheddar.</p>	<p><b>Body and Texture:</b> A plug drawn from the cheese shall be firm, appear smooth, compact, close and should be slightly translucent, but may have a few small mechanical openings. The cheese may be very slight open and definitely curdy or may be partially broken down if more than 3 weeks old. Shall be free from sweet holes, yeast holes, and gas holes of any kind. The surface shall be free of mold, but may be very slightly soiled.</p>	<p><b>Body and Texture:</b> A plug drawn from the cheese shall be firm, appear smooth, compact, close and should be slightly translucent, but may have a few mechanical openings, if not large and connecting. May possess not more than two sweet holes per plug, but shall be free from other gas holes. The cheese may be slight open and definitely curdy or partially broken down if more than 3 weeks old. The surface may have very slight mold and be very slightly soiled and slightly rough. The blocks may be slightly lopsided.</p>
	<p><b>Color:</b> The cheese shall have a uniform, bright attractive appearance; practically free from white lines or seams. May be colored or uncolored, but if colored, it should be a medium yellow-orange.</p>	<p><b>Color:</b> The cheese shall have a fairly uniform, bright attractive appearance. May have slight white lines or seams, or be very slightly wavy. May be colored or uncolored, but if colored, it should be a medium yellow-orange.</p>

<b>Shredded Cheddar</b>	<b>RDU FAT Shredded Cheddar</b>	<b>RDU FAT Block/Prints</b>
<p><b>Flavor:</b> Cheese shall have a mild pleasing flavor. It may be lacking in flavor development, or may possess characteristic cheddar cheese flavor. Shredded cheddar cheese shall meet the flavor requirements of U.S. Grade A or better according to the U.S. Standards for Grades of Cheddar Cheese, which are available at <a href="http://www.ams.usda.gov/standards/Bulkamer.pdf">http://www.ams.usda.gov/standards/Bulkamer.pdf</a>.</p>	<p><b>Flavor:</b> Reduced fat cheddar cheese shall have a pleasing flavor. It may be lacking in flavor development or may possess slight characteristic cheddar cheese flavor. It may possess very slight acid, bitter, or slight feed, but shall not possess any undesirable flavors and odors.</p>	<p><b>Flavor:</b> Reduced fat cheddar cheese shall have a pleasing flavor. It may be lacking in flavor development or may possess slight characteristic cheddar cheese flavor. It may possess very slight acid, bitter, or slight feed, but shall not possess any undesirable flavors and odors.</p>
<p><b>Body and Texture:</b> Shredded cheddar cheese may have the following body and texture characteristics to a slight degree: mealy, weak, or pasty. The cheese shall be free from all foreign and extraneous materials. Shredded cheddar cheese shall have a height and width up to 3/16 inch in either dimension. Shredded Cheddar cheese shall be free flowing and shall not be matted. An approved anticaking agent may be added as a processing aid. If an anticaking agent is used, the amount used shall be the minimum required to produce the desired effect, but shall not exceed 2.0% of the weight of the shredded cheddar cheese.</p>	<p><b>Body and Texture:</b> Shredded cheese shall be free flowing and of uniform size and shape. It shall not mat, crumble, oil off, or contain excessive fines.</p>	<p><b>Body and Texture:</b> The block cheese body and texture shall be firm, compact, and should be slightly translucent and shiny. It may have a few mechanical openings (1 to 3 openings per plug) if not large and connecting. The cheese shall be free from gas holes. The body may be very slight gummy, slight mealy or coarse, and definite curdy. The cheese surfaces shall be free of mold but may be slight soiled or rough. The cheese blocks may be slightly lopsided.</p>
<p><b>Color and Appearance:</b> Shredded cheddar cheese shall have a uniform bright color, and an attractive sheen. The cheese may be colored or uncolored, but if colored, it shall be a medium yellow-orange. No visible signs of mold shall be permitted.</p>	<p><b>Color:</b> The cheese shall have a uniform, bright attractive appearance, and may be slightly wavy. May be colored, or uncolored, but if colored, it shall be medium yellow-orange. The shredded cheese shall not vary in color.</p>	<p><b>Color:</b> The cheese shall have a fairly uniform, bright attractive appearance, and may be slightly wavy. May be colored or uncolored, but if colored, it shall be medium yellow-orange.</p>
<p><b>Fines:</b> Shredded cheddar cheese shall contain not more than 6.0% fines. For shreds whose height and/or width is 1/16 inch or less, the fines content shall be determined using a Standard Test Sieve #14 (1.4 mm). For shreds whose height and/or width is greater than 1/16 inch, the fines content shall be determined using Standard Test</p>	<p><b>Fines:</b> RDU FAT Shredded Cheddar cheese shall contain not more than 6.0% fines. For shreds whose height and/or width is 1/16 inch or less, the fines content shall be determined using a Standard Test Sieve # 14 (1.4 mm). For shreds whose height and/or width is greater than 1/16 inch, the fines content shall be determined using a</p>	<p><b>Meltability:</b> The cheese shall have been tested for meltability in accordance with AMS Methods of Laboratory Analysis, DA Instruction No. 918-RL, and shall be at No. 3 or higher.</p>

<p>Sieve #8 (2.36 mm).</p> <p>Note: The manufacturer shall provide shred size information. This information will determine the sieve used to measure the fines content. If shred size information is not provided, the Standard Test Sieve #8 will be used.</p>	<p>Standard Test Sieve # 8 (2.36mm).</p> <p>Note: The manufacturer shall provide shred size information. This information will determine the sieve used to measure the fines content. If shred size information is not provided, the Standard Test Sieve # 8 will be used.</p>	
	<p><b>Meltability:</b> The cheese shall have been tested for meltability in accordance with AMS Methods of Laboratory Analysis, DA Instruction No. 918-RL, and shall be at No. 3 or higher.</p>	

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. The liability for reduced-fat cheddar cheese shall be five months from the date of delivery.

**Section 1.2 KOSHER ONLY PRODUCTS**

“Kosher Only” products will be identified in the solicitation. Offerors shall not bid on these products unless they are properly certified to produce Kosher products. If awarded a contract, contractors shall:

- (1) Comply with applicable dietary (Kosher) laws as established by the “613 Council of Kashruth,” and
- (2) Contact the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York at 646-472-5365. A rabbinic supervisor will be sent to visit the plant to certify compliance with the applicable dietary (Kosher) laws.

**Section 1.3 QUALITY ASSURANCE**

A. The contractor or AMS shall perform the product testing and quality analysis to ensure that the product meets the commodity specifications. The results shall be evidenced by a Certificate of Analysis (COA). If quality discounts are provided in the contract, and the product to be delivered by the contractor falls within the quality discount table, those factors shall be identified by an asterisk on the copies of the COA. The meltability, percentage of moisture, milkfat, salt, fines and pH value shall be evidenced by certificates 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 natural American cheese shall be evidenced by grading certificates issued by the contractor or AMS.

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

**Section 1.4 SCHEDULE OF DISCOUNTS**

Discounts for salt, moisture, fines, and pH deviation from the commodity specifications will only be in accordance with the discounts in the tables below for each pound of natural American cheese delivered.

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Salt Content Range</b>	<b>Discount per Pound</b>
Salt	RDU FAT Cheddar	1.10% <b>B</b> 1.19%	\$0.0050
		1.20% <b>B</b> 1.29%	\$0.0035
		1.30% <b>B</b> 1.39%	\$0.0020
		1.40% <b>B</b> 2.00%	No Discount
		2.01% <b>B</b> 2.10%	\$0.0020
		2.11% <b>B</b> 2.10%	\$0.0035
		2.21% <b>B</b> 2.30%	\$0.0050

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Moisture Content Range</b>	<b>Discount per Pound</b>
Moisture	Cheddar	Not more than 39.0%	No Discount
		39.01% - 39.10%	\$0.0025
		39.11% - 39.20%	\$0.0050
		39.21% - 39.30%	\$0.0075
	RDU FAT Cheddar	Not more than 49.0%	No Discount
		49.01% - 49.10%	\$0.0025
		49.11% - 49.20%	\$0.0050
		49.21% - 49.30%	\$0.0075

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>pH Value Content Range</b>	<b>Discount per Pound</b>
pH	Cheddar and RDU FAT Cheddar	Less than or equal to 5.30	No Discount
		5.31 <b>B</b> 5.35	\$0.0025
		5.36 <b>B</b> 5.40	\$0.0075
		5.41 <b>B</b> 5.45	\$0.0150
	Shredded	Less than or equal to 5.35	No Discount
		5.36 <b>B</b> 5.39	\$0.0025
		5.40 <b>B</b> 5.45	\$0.0075
		5.46 <b>B</b> 5.50	\$0.0150

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Fines Content Range</b>	<b>Discount per Pound</b>
Fines	Shredded	Less than or equal to 6.00%	No Discount
		6.01% - 7.50%	\$0.0075
		7.51% - 9.00%	\$0.0150
		9.01% - 11.00%	\$0.0200



**Section 1.5 WEIGHT REQUIREMENTS**

- A. The cheese shall be packaged in approximately ten (10) pound prints/blocks, 40 pound blocks or other sizes stated in the offer and accepted by the Government. Shredded cheese shall be packaged in 6/5 pound pouches, and barrel cheese is packaged in a 500 pound drum.
- B. For random weight blocks and cuts, contractor shall deliver the number of units specified by the Government. For barrel cheese, the actual net weight delivered shall not vary more than 5% from the net weight specified by the Government.
- C. Block cheese shall weigh not less than 40 pounds net weight but not more than 44 pounds net weight. Print cheese shall weigh not less than ten (10) pounds net weight but not more than 11 pounds net weight. Cheese that varies from the net weight requirements shall be rejected or, at the discretion of the contracting officer, accepted at discounts to be determined by the Government.
- D. Individual shipping containers of shredded cheese packed in 6/5 pound pouches shall weigh not less than 29.85 pounds. The total net weight of all exact weight shipping containers test weighed by AMS from a lot shall not vary more than one-tenth (0.1) of the one percent under the aggregate marked net weight of all shipping containers within the lot.
- E. Discounts for Test Weight Shortages
  - (1) Any lot of exact weight cheese with test weight shortage in excess of one-tenth (0.1) of one percent, but not more than four-tenths (0.4) of one percent, under the marked net weight of all shipping containers within the lot, shall be accepted by the Government in accordance with the discounts in the table below.

<b>Discounts for Test Weight Shortage</b>	<b>Discount Per Lot</b>
Greater than 0.1% Up to and Including 0.2%	\$25.00
Greater than 0.2% Up to and Including 0.3%	\$50.00
Greater than 0.3% Up to and Including 0.4%	\$75.00

- (2) Any lot with test weight shortage in excess of four-tenths (.4) of one percent of the aggregate marked net weight of all shipping containers within the lot shall be rejected or, at the discretion of the contracting officer, accepted at discounts to be determined by the Government.
- (3) In addition to the discounts specified above, individual shipping containers of cheese included in the sample test weighed in a lot which do not meet the minimum net weight requirements as specified herein shall result in discounts by the Government of \$10.00 for the first shipping container and \$5.00 for each additional shipping container.
- (4) An amendment shall not be required to reduce the contract quantity to reflect the aggregate of test weight shortages.

## **Part 2 CONTAINER AND PACKAGING REQUIREMENTS**

### **Section 2.1 GENERAL**

This part provides the container specifications and packaging materials requirements used under the 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. **All containers and packaging shall be 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 and container ingredients 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 to the Government an explanation of the lot coding system utilized.

