

Sea Moss

What is sea moss?

Sea moss typically refers to specific types of algae or seaweed that are naturally rich in certain nutrients, including folate, vitamin K, iron, iodine, magnesium, and calcium. *Chondrus Crispus* (commonly referred to as Irish sea moss), *Gracilaria* (commonly known as Jamaican sea moss) and *Euचेuma Cottonii* (commonly referred to as gusô) are several types of sea moss used in food production. Sea Moss is found along the coasts of the Atlantic, primarily between North America and Europe, in the warmer waters of Asia, South America, and Africa and some parts of the Caribbean. The plant also produces a thickening agent called carrageenan.

What is sea moss gel?

Sea moss gel is made by adding water to sea moss and blending it together. Some ingredients derived from some sea moss species are approved food additives or are generally recognized as safe (GRAS).

- Carrageenan as a stabilizer, emulsifier, or thickener in food - [172.620](#)
- *Chondrus* extract as a stabilizer in food - [182.7255](#)
- Fucoidan concentrate as an ingredient in various food categories - [GRN 661](#)
- *Cetraria islandica* for flavoring alcoholic beverages only - [172.510](#)

Do sea moss producers need to acquire a license/registration to process and package their products?

A sea moss processor who manufactures and distributes their products or a warehouse of sea moss products must be registered and inspected by the Ohio Department of Agriculture, Division of Food Safety.

A sea moss processor who only sells their products as a food directly to the end consumer will need to obtain a retail food license from their local health department.

What are the requirements for the labeling of sea moss?

A sea moss processor is required to label all their products properly, which includes the following information on the label of each unit of food product manufactured, distributed or packaged for the consumer:

1. Statement of Identity - the name of the product
2. Net Quantity of Contents - the net weight, in both U.S. Customary System and International System
3. Ingredient List - ingredients of the sea moss product, listed in descending order of predominance by weight
4. Statement of Responsibility - the name and address of the business

If nutrient content claims (i.e., low fat, salt free, etc.) or health claims (i.e., may reduce heart disease) are made, the product must bear all required nutritional information in the form of the Nutrition Facts panel. All labeling components are to comply with 21 CFR Part 101, Food Labeling. The FDA Food Labelling Guide is an excellent resource for the proper labeling of food products. The web address for the FDA Food Labelling Guide is:

<http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/GuidanceDocumentsRegulatoryInformation/LabelingNutrition/ucm2006828.htm>

Sea moss products cannot claim to diagnose, cure, mitigate, treat, or prevent a disease; those are considered drug claims and would not be permitted on a food, cosmetic or dietary supplement.

What are some of the hazards associated with sea moss and sea moss gel?

Sea moss, like other sea algae and seaweed, can accumulate heavy metals. This is largely determined by the location where the sea moss is grown and is a result of polluted areas where the sea moss is harvested. It is the responsibility of the processor to determine if they require a control program for sea moss to address the heavy metals hazard. The sea moss harvester should be able to provide information on this hazard (e.g., third party or governmental water quality monitoring data from the harvest area(s), water and/or sea moss testing results over time, etc.) that the processor could use as part of their support. If the processor is unable to obtain appropriate information from the sea moss harvester, they may consider procuring an alternative supplier who can provide such information or contacting a process authority who is able to assess the literature pertaining to the sea moss and public/local records related to sea water quality in the specific harvest area(s).

Sea moss gel has the potential for microbial pathogens such as *C. Botulinum* and *Vibrio* species. Also, like sea moss, depending on the harvest site, heavy metals may be a hazard as well. These potential hazards need to be evaluated by the processor to determine the risk.

BASIC REQUIRED FOOD LABELING COMPONENTS

LABEL EXAMPLE

Labels must comply with all applicable state and federal regulations. Labeling regulations applied to a home bakery are the same as those applied to other food processors. All information on the label must be truthful and not misleading. This label example is just one way to present the required information.

Additional information can be found at

<https://www.fda.gov/Food/IngredientsPackagingLabeling/FoodAdditivesIngredients/ucm449162.htm>

Ingredient List – Ingredients shall be listed by common or usual name in descending order of predominance by weight. Meaning, the ingredient that weighs the most is listed first, followed by the next heaviest ingredient, with the ingredient that weighs the least listed last. Any ingredient that is composed of two or more ingredients (sub-ingredients) must list those sub-ingredients parenthetically following the name of the ingredient. The label of any food that contains an ingredient that is or contains a protein from a “major food allergen” shall declare the presence of the allergen by its common or usual name either in the list of ingredients or placing the word “Contains” followed by the name of the food source from which the allergen is derived immediately after or adjacent to the list of ingredients (e.g., Contains: milk, eggs, wheat, soy).

Ref: CFR 21, Part 101.4; FALCPA – Public Law 108-282, Title 2

Statement of Identity – The *Statement of Identity* is the name of the food. The name shall be the common or usual name of the food and shall accurately identify or describe the basic nature of the food or its characterizing properties or ingredients. Foods that have a Standard of Identity must conform to all requirements of the standard

Ref: CFR 21, Part 101.3

Statement of Responsibility
– Shall include the:

- Business Name
- Street Address
- City, State, Zip Code

All information in the *Statement of Responsibility* shall be continuous. If the business name is listed in the local telephone directory, the street address may be omitted. If the business name is listed in the local telephone directory, a Post Office Box may be used in place of the street address.

Telephone numbers, web-site addresses, and e-mail addresses are permitted, but not required. This type of extra information shall not be placed between the *Ingredient List* and the *Statement of Responsibility*.

Ref: CFR 21, Part 101.5

Sea Moss Gel - Strawberry

INGREDIENTS: Sea Moss, Purified Water, Agave Nectar, Strawberry Juice from Concentrate, Cane Sugar, Citric Acid

Agriculture Moss Co.
8995 E. Main Street
Reynoldsburg, OH 43068

BEST BY
APR 14, 2022

NET WT 8 OZ (227 g)

Keep Refrigerated

Net Quantity of Contents – The term “NET WEIGHT” - or an appropriate abbreviation - shall be used when stating the *Net Quantity of Contents* in terms of weight. The *Net Quantity of Contents* shall be declared in both the U.S. Customary System and the SI (metric system). The second declaration shall be stated parenthetically.

The quantity of contents shall be placed on the principal display panel. It shall be within the bottom 30 percent of the area of the label panel in lines that are generally parallel to the bottom of the package as it is designed to be displayed.

Ref: CFR 21, Part 101.7
Ref: FPLA, Title 15 – Chapter 39, 1453(a) (2)

Perishable Food Sale and Date - Products that begin to diminish in quality in 30 days or less must be marked with a sale date that is easily understood by the consumer. The date indicates the period of peak quality. The period of peak quality is determined by the manufacturer.

ORC 3715.171

Keep Refrigerated – ODA recommends any product requiring refrigeration for food safety or to maintain quality bear the declaration “Keep Refrigerated” or a similar declaration to that effect.

ODA – Ohio Department of Agriculture
CFR – Code of Federal Regulations
ORC – Ohio Revised Code
FPLA – Fair Packaging and Labeling Act
FALCPA – Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act

The principal display panel (PDP) is that portion of the package label that is most likely to be seen by the consumer at the time of purchase.

The 8 major food allergens are milk, eggs, tree nuts (e.g., almonds, walnuts, pecans), peanuts, wheat, soybeans, fish and Crustacean shellfish.