



Cornell University
New York State Agricultural Experiment Station

Food Container Selection Tips - Glass

Fact Sheets for the
Small Scale Food Entrepreneur

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Food Container Selection Tips - Glass

NECFE is often asked for suppliers of containers for packaging products and tips for how to choose a supplier. Consider the following pointers and issues as part of your purchase decision.

Choosing a Container

When deciding on a container type, first determine:

- the type of material needed
- the processing conditions required
- as well as the final conditions for distribution and usage by the consumer

For example, if you are manufacturing high acid foods such as condiments, jams, jellies, vinegars, etc, the container and the closure must be able withstand the contact with the acid for extended periods of time.

If the product needs to be pasteurized, either by hot-filling or by immersion in boiling water bath, then the container and the closure must be able to withstand the high temperature for a specified period of time. Glass bottles and jars are usually used for pasteurized acid products since they provide good protection and extended shelf-life. In this case, the closure is very important, as the vacuum inside the container serves as an indication of seal integrity and ensures the stability of the product. The closure is normally a coated metal cap with a special liner called plastisol to hold the vacuum. Some FDA approved food grade plastic containers can be used for hot-filling but you must tell the supplier the temperatures the container will need to withstand before buying it.

Additional factors to consider are:

- cost
- product image
- compatibility with processing equipment

Choosing a Supplier

To identify suppliers of glassware, it is recommended that you talk to other food entrepreneurs, as well as organizations like NECFE, who have regular contact with them. Variables to consider when choosing a supplier include:

- volume discounts
- your available storage space
- frequency of production runs
- lead time a supplier needs to deliver the necessary quantity
- customer service

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Pricing

The same jar is often sold by many different companies with as many different prices. There are several factors that will affect price quotes for glassware:

- quantity
- style
- time of year
- payment schedule
- delivery location

Make sure you understand how each factor affects the prices when comparing quotes from various companies.

Purchasing

The following are some specific factors to consider when making purchase decisions with regard to glassware:

- quantity of a single style and size needed per production run
- number of product batches produced within a given time frame
- quantity of packaging inventory can you warehouse
- quantity of packaging inventory can you afford to warehouse
- number of different sizes and styles needed for each glass delivery
- amount of lead time required by the supplier to provide the quantity you need for each production run
- do you use enough glassware to bypass a broker and order directly from a foundry

Purchase Verifications

It is strongly recommended that you verify the following before making a glassware purchase:

- the reputation of a glass supplier with other producers similar in size to yourself
- the product being purchased:
 - is the glassware food grade
 - does the glassware need to be washed prior to use
 - is there any returned glassware in the shipment to you (if so why was it returned)
- order lead times to minimize risk of partial shipments
- shipping terms and methods
- which party is responsible for damage in transit
- that you will be able to receive the glassware as shipped (will the pallet fit through the door?)
- order quantity - how many units per case and how many cases per pallet
- customer references – ask for and check them

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