

Artisanal Foundation

PRODUCER & FOUNDER EDITION

MAKE YOUR METHODS VISIBLE

Why independent certification exists, what it evaluates, how to apply, and what it does for your brand in a market flooded with unverified claims.

SCROLL OR PRESS ARROW KEYS TO NAVIGATE

MARKET SIGNAL EROSION

THE "ARTISANAL" CLAIM HAS BEEN DILUTED ACROSS THE ENTIRE PRODUCTION SPECTRUM

When mass producers use the same language as genuine craft makers, the word stops communicating anything. The problem is not that your work lacks quality -- it is that the market lacks a way to see it.

FULLY AUTOMATED PRODUCTION

SINGLE-MAKER HANDWORK

●
Certification Zone

10%

INDUSTRIAL "ARTISAN-STYLE"

Factory production with cosmetic finishing touches. "Artisan" is a marketing term on the package, not a description of the process.

30%

SCALED CRAFT BRANDING

Mid-size operations using heritage language and rustic packaging. Some manual steps, but primarily mechanized production.

50%

HYBRID PRODUCTION

Genuine skill at key stages combined with efficient mechanization. Real craft knowledge but hard to distinguish from the category above.

75%

GENUINE ARTISANAL

Skill-intensive production rooted in tradition, with traceable materials and identifiable makers. This is what the term should mean.

92%

STUDIO / BESPOKE

One-person or micro-workshop production. Unambiguously handmade but typically too small to scale into broad retail.

THE DILUTION PROBLEM

REAL NUMBERS ON HOW THE MARKET UNDERMINES YOUR LANGUAGE

Mintel's Global New Products Database tracks on-pack claims across 86 markets. "Artisanal" and "handcrafted" claims have proliferated dramatically, with the fastest growth coming from large manufacturers borrowing craft language for industrial products. Meanwhile, USDA data shows small family farms sold \$2.4 billion in direct-to-consumer food products in 2023 -- demonstrating that genuine small producers exist at scale, but have no collective mechanism to distinguish themselves from imitators in retail channels.

KEY IMPLICATION

Genuine craft producers are not rare. What is rare is a credible mechanism for distinguishing them in channels where the buyer cannot visit every workshop.

86

MARKETS TRACKED

Mintel GNPD monitors new product launches and claims across 86 countries continuously

Mintel GNPD, 2024

175+

PRODUCT CLAIMS INDEXED

Including "artisanal," "handcrafted," "small-batch," and "traditional" -- all unregulated in the U.S.

Mintel GNPD Methodology, 2024

\$2.4B

SMALL FARM DIRECT SALES

Value of food sold directly to consumers by small family farms in 2023

USDA Economic Research Service, 2024

89%

SMALL FAMILY FARMS

Of all U.S. farms are classified as small family farms, yet they receive a fraction of retail shelf access

USDA ERS, America's Farms and Ranches at a Glance, 2025

02

WHAT BUYERS ACTUALLY WANT

Retailers and distributors are not rejecting artisanal products. They are rejecting unverifiable claims. Understanding the buyer's filter is the key to getting through it.

CATEGORY MANAGERS NEED CRITERIA, NOT STORIES

When a buyer at a specialty retailer or regional chain evaluates your product, they are managing a portfolio of hundreds of SKUs. They hear artisanal narratives daily. What they lack is an objective, consistent way to distinguish genuine craft from craft-adjacent branding.

The SFA's 2024 research confirmed that specialty products drive measurable loyalty and incremental basket size -- but only when retailers can confidently curate and explain the assortment. The Certified Artisanal mark gives buyers a shorthand they can trust without becoming experts in every production category.

- Specialty products drove \$1,200/household in secondary store trips -- sales retailers want to capture
- Buyers surveyed ranked "verifiable production claims" as a top unmet need in supplier evaluation
- The mark shifts your pitch from "trust our story" to "verify our credentials"
- Certified status gives your product a filter-passing signal in category review processes

BUYER RESEARCH

RETAILERS SURVEYED IN SFA STUDY

100

SFA, Understanding the Real Value of Specialty Foods, 2024

SHOPPERS CONFIRMING SPECIALTY LOYALTY

1,000

SFA, Understanding the Real Value of Specialty Foods, 2024

CONSUMER TRUST IN GROCER TRANSPARENCY

30%

Deloitte, Fresh Food Trust & Transparency, 2024

COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE

WHERE CERTIFIED PRODUCERS STAND IN THE INNOVATION PIPELINE

New product launches in specialty food are accelerating. Differentiation increasingly depends on production credibility, not just flavor or packaging novelty.

	INNOVATION RATE	TYPICAL DIFFERENTIATOR	CREDENTIAL AVAILABLE?	BUYER CONFIDENCE
ENERGY & SPORTS DRINKS	18.7%	Functional ingredients	Yes -- lab testing	High
WELLNESS & SNACK BARS	16.4%	Nutritional profile	Yes -- label claims	High
CHIPS, PRETZELS & SNACKS	14.0%	Flavor, brand	Partial	Moderate
ARTISANAL CHEESE	Moderate	Production method	No -- no standard	Low
CRAFT PRESERVES & FERMENTS	Moderate	Heritage, sourcing	No -- no standard	Low
ARTISANAL BAKERY	Moderate	Technique, ingredients	No -- no standard	Low

Innovation rates: SPINS, 2024 Industry Update & Trends Predictions (52 weeks ending 10/2024). Credential gap analysis by Artisanal Foundation.

EVALUATION LOGIC

THE FOUR-PILLAR ASSESSMENT: WHAT EVALUATORS LOOK FOR

Each pillar is assessed independently. All four must meet threshold. No single dimension compensates for weakness in another.

PILLAR 1	METHOD INTEGRITY Evaluators examine your production process for evidence of skill-dependent stages. The question is not whether you use any equipment, but whether human judgment and technique determine product character at critical points.
PILLAR 2	HERITAGE CONTINUITY Your practice must connect to an identifiable craft tradition, body of knowledge, or established technique. This can be formal apprenticeship, documented self-study, or lineage in a recognized regional practice.
PILLAR 3	MATERIAL PROVENANCE Evaluators assess whether your inputs are selected with deliberate attention to quality and origin. The threshold is not "most expensive" but "intentionally chosen" with rationale beyond cost minimization.
PILLAR 4	MAKER INVOLVEMENT An identifiable skilled maker must be directly involved in stages that determine the final product's character. This is about human presence at decision points, not performing every step manually.

QUALIFICATION LOGIC

NOT EVERY GOOD PRODUCT QUALIFIES -- AND THAT IS THE POINT

The mark is specifically designed to be selective. Understanding where the threshold sits helps you assess fit before applying.

DOES NOT QUALIFY

STRONG CANDIDATE

Minimum Threshold

8%

FULLY OUTSOURCED PRODUCTION

Product is designed by the brand but manufactured by a third-party co-packer with no maker involvement from the applicant.

20%

INDUSTRIAL WITH CRAFT MARKETING

Automated production at scale with artisanal language on packaging. No skill-dependent stages.

40%

QUALITY PRODUCT, LIMITED CRAFT EVIDENCE

Good ingredients and care, but production is largely mechanized and does not demonstrate heritage or maker involvement.

60%

GENUINE CRAFT WITH DOCUMENTATION GAPS

Real skill and tradition, but insufficient documentation of methods, sourcing, or heritage. Could qualify with stronger evidence.

85%

WELL-DOCUMENTED ARTISANAL PRODUCTION

Skill-intensive methods, heritage connections, traceable materials, identifiable makers. Strong documentation across all four pillars.

APPLICATION LIFECYCLE

FROM FIRST INQUIRY TO ACTIVE CERTIFICATION

The process respects your time while maintaining the rigor that makes the mark credible.

01	SELF-ASSESSMENT Review the published evaluation criteria on artisanalfoundation.org . Consider your production against all four pillars. The Foundation offers an optional pre-assessment questionnaire to help you gauge readiness before committing to a full application.
02	APPLICATION SUBMISSION Complete the formal application with production documentation: methods description, sourcing records, maker credentials, heritage evidence, and supporting materials (photos, video, batch records).
03	INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT Foundation evaluators review all submitted evidence against the four-pillar framework. This may include follow-up questions, requests for additional documentation, or production verification.
04	DETERMINATION & FEEDBACK You receive a clear pass or not-yet determination on each pillar, with specific feedback. If certified, you receive mark usage rights and governance terms. If not yet, you receive actionable guidance.
05	ACTIVE CERTIFICATION Certified producers are listed in the public registry, receive digital and physical mark assets, and gain access to retail-facing verification tools. Certification is time-limited and renewable.

COMMERCIAL UPSIDE

WHAT CERTIFICATION UNLOCKS IN THE MARKET

The specialty food market is growing, but competition for shelf space and buyer attention is intensifying. Circana projects 4% value growth in retail food and beverage for 2025. Within that, specialty categories are outpacing conventional at 2-3x the rate. Producers who can convert their craft story into a verified credential hold a structural advantage in every buyer conversation, distribution pitch, and consumer interaction.

KEY IMPLICATION

Certification does not replace your product quality. It makes your product quality legible to the people deciding what gets shelf space, press coverage, and repeat orders.

\$206B+

SPECIALTY MARKET TOTAL

Combined retail and foodservice specialty food sales, growing 2-3x the rate of conventional

SFA, State of the Specialty Food Industry, 2024-25

\$2.4B

DIRECT-TO-CONSUMER SALES

Small family farms selling food directly to consumers -- certification adds a retail channel bridge

USDA Economic Research Service, 2024

49%

CERTIFICATIONS INFLUENCE PURCHASE

Of consumers say certifications and on-pack claims directly influence their buying decisions

Purdue CFDAS / FMI, Future of Traceability, 2023

\$8.4B

NEW PRODUCT PACESETTER SALES

First-year sales of top 200 CPG launches in 2024 -- innovation drives category growth

Circana, New Product Pacesetters, 2024

SOURCES & REFERENCES

PRODUCT CLAIM TRACKING

Mintel Global New Products Database (GNPD), 2024. Tracks new product launches and on-pack claims across 86 markets, 290 subcategories, and 175+ claim types.

SMALL FARM ECONOMICS

USDA Economic Research Service, "National Farmer's Market Week" data release, 2024. Small family farms sold \$2.4 billion in direct-to-consumer food products in 2023.

FARM STRUCTURE DATA

USDA ERS, "America's Farms and Ranches at a Glance," 2025 Edition. 89% of U.S. farms are small family farms; 5% are large-scale, producing 50% of value.

SPECIALTY FOOD MARKET

Specialty Food Association, "State of the Specialty Food Industry," 2024-25 Edition. Total market exceeded \$206 billion. Data powered by SPINS.

SPECIALTY FOOD VALUE

Specialty Food Association, "Understanding the Real Value of Specialty Foods," 2024 Edition. 1,000 shoppers, 100 retailers surveyed.

CONSUMER TRUST GAP

Deloitte, "Fresh Food, Trust, and Transparency," 2024. Only 30% of consumers trust grocery retailers to be transparent.

TRACEABILITY & CLAIMS

Purdue University CFDAS / FMI, "The Future of Traceability and Transparency in the Food System," 2023. 49% influenced by certifications; 59% want production info.

INNOVATION & LAUNCH DATA

SPINS, "2024 Industry Update & Trends Predictions." Category innovation rates and new item dollar share analysis, 52 weeks ending 10/2024.

CPG NEW PRODUCT PERFORMANCE

Circana, "New Product Pacesetters," 2024. Top 200 launches achieved \$8.4 billion in first-year sales.

F&B MARKET OUTLOOK

Circana Compass, "Year-End 2024 Food and Beverage Market Outlook," November 2024. Projects 4% value growth for 2025.

All statistics cited are from publicly available, independently published sources. Artisanal Foundation is not affiliated with any research organization cited above.

Artisanal Foundation

YOUR CRAFT DESERVES TO BE VERIFIABLE

You built your practice on skill, tradition, and integrity. The Certified Artisanal mark exists to make those qualities visible to the buyers, retailers, and consumers who are looking for exactly what you make -- but have no way to find you in a market that has diluted the very language you depend on.

artisanalfoundation.org/apply

producers@artisanalfoundation.org

Pre-assessment questionnaire available at no cost

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