

Artisanal Foundation

CONSUMER GUIDE

# KNOW WHAT YOU'RE BUYING

How the Certified Artisanal mark works, why it was created, and what it tells you about any product that carries it.

SCROLL OR PRESS ARROW KEYS TO NAVIGATE



# THE WORD "ARTISANAL" HAS NO LEGAL DEFINITION. ANYONE CAN PUT IT ON A PACKAGE.

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When you see "organic" on a product, it means the USDA has established rules, an independent auditor has checked compliance, and a government agency enforces the standard. The same is true for "Non-GMO Project Verified" and many other labels.

"Artisanal" works differently. No government agency defines it. No auditor checks it. No one enforces it. A bread baked by hand in a small workshop and a bread produced on a factory line can both say "artisanal" on the package -- and neither one is lying, because the word has no regulated meaning.

- The FDA does not define "artisanal," "handcrafted," or "small-batch" for food labeling
- The FTC has not established guidelines for these production claims
- Producers apply these terms voluntarily with no third-party review
- This is not illegal -- the terms simply have no enforceable standard

## BY THE NUMBERS

### LEGAL DEFINITIONS FOR "ARTISANAL" IN U.S. FOOD LAW

**Zero**

FDA 21 CFR; FTC Act Sec. 5

### PRODUCTS USING "ARTISANAL" OR "HANDCRAFTED" CLAIMS

**340% increase since 2013**

Mintel GNPD, 2023

### CONSUMERS WHO SAY LABELS AFFECT THEIR PURCHASES

**94%**

NielsenIQ, 2023

## TRUST EROSION

# MOST SHOPPERS WANT TO TRUST LABELS -- BUT THE SYSTEM IS NOT DESIGNED FOR THAT

Research consistently shows that consumers care deeply about what is in their food and how it is made. NielsenIQ found that 94% of consumers say labels influence their purchases, and Innova Market Insights reports 44% will pay a premium for products they believe are genuinely artisanal. But Deloitte's consumer trust research found that only 30% of shoppers trust grocery retailers to be transparent about their products. The gap between what people want to know and what they can verify is where misleading claims thrive.

### KEY IMPLICATION

You are paying attention to labels. You are willing to pay more for genuine quality. But the current system gives you no reliable way to verify the claims you are reading.

94%

#### LABELS INFLUENCE PURCHASES

Of consumers say food labels affect their buying decisions

NielsenIQ Consumer Outlook, 2023

44%

#### WILL PAY MORE FOR "ARTISANAL"

Of consumers willing to pay a premium for products perceived as genuinely handcrafted

Innova Market Insights, 2023

30%

#### TRUST GROCERY TRANSPARENCY

Of consumers who trust grocery retailers to be fully transparent about products

Deloitte, Fresh Food Trust, 2024

49%

#### LOOK FOR CERTIFICATIONS

Of consumers say third-party certifications on packaging influence what they buy

Purdue CFIDAS / FMI, 2023

## WHAT YOU CAN VERIFY

# SOME CLAIMS ARE CHECKED. OTHERS ARE NOT.

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### LABELS WITH INDEPENDENT VERIFICATION

- USDA Organic: defined by federal law, audited annually, fines for violations
- Non-GMO Project Verified: private standard, third-party testing, registry lookup
- Fair Trade Certified: independent audit of labor and sourcing practices
- Country of Origin: federal labeling law (COOL Act) with enforcement

### LABELS WITH NO VERIFICATION

- "Artisanal": no definition, no audit, no enforcement
- "Handcrafted": no threshold for what qualifies as handmade
- "Small-batch": no defined batch size -- could mean 10 or 10,000
- "Traditional": no requirement to demonstrate any tradition



# WHAT CERTIFIED ARTISANAL TELLS YOU -- AND WHAT IT DOES NOT

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## ✓ WHEN YOU SEE THE MARK

- An independent institution evaluated this product against published standards before the mark was granted
- The producer demonstrated genuine skill, heritage connection, material quality, and direct maker involvement
- Certification was earned through assessment -- not purchased, inherited, or self-applied
- The producer's certification is time-limited, subject to periodic review, and can be revoked

## ✗ WHAT THE MARK DOES NOT CLAIM

- Not a taste rating, flavor recommendation, or personal endorsement of any kind
- Not a health claim, nutritional certification, or dietary label
- Not a guarantee of price fairness or value judgment
- Not permanent -- producers must maintain standards to keep the mark

## THE ASSESSMENT

# FOUR THINGS THE FOUNDATION CHECKS BEFORE GRANTING THE MARK

Every certified product has been evaluated across these four dimensions. All four must meet a published threshold. No exceptions.

01	<b>METHOD INTEGRITY</b> Is this product made using skilled techniques and human judgment at the stages that matter? The assessment looks for evidence that production depends on craft knowledge, not just automated systems.
02	<b>HERITAGE CONTINUITY</b> Does the maker's practice connect to a real craft tradition, regional technique, or established body of expertise? This is not about age -- it is about roots in genuine knowledge.
03	<b>MATERIAL PROVENANCE</b> Are the ingredients or inputs chosen with care and intention? The assessment looks for evidence that sourcing decisions are deliberate, not just driven by lowest cost.
04	<b>MAKER INVOLVEMENT</b> Is a skilled person directly involved in the production at stages that shape the final product? The mark requires that an identifiable human being -- not just a company name -- stands behind the work.

## THE SPECTRUM

# NOT EVERYTHING CALLED "ARTISANAL" IS THE SAME

Production methods exist on a spectrum. The mark identifies products in the zone where genuine craft meets verifiable standards -- not marketing language.

FACTORY PRODUCTION

ONE-PERSON WORKSHOP

●  
Certification Threshold

10%

### "ARTISAN-STYLE" INDUSTRIAL

Factory-made products with craft language on the package. The word "artisan" is used as a marketing term, not a production description.

30%

### SCALED WITH HERITAGE BRANDING

Medium-sized operations using rustic packaging and origin stories. Some manual steps, but primarily machine-driven production.

55%

### GENUINE CRAFT, HARD TO PROVE

Real skill and tradition behind the product, but no external verification. You have to take their word for it.

75%

### CERTIFIED ARTISANAL ZONE

Skill-intensive production with verified heritage, traceable materials, and identifiable makers. This is what the mark confirms.

92%

### BESPOKE / STUDIO

One-of-a-kind work by a single maker. Typically available only locally or in very limited quantities.



AT THE SHELF

QUESTIONS THE MARK ANSWERS BEFORE YOU HAVE TO ASK

Every time you see the Certified Artisanal mark, these questions have already been answered by an independent evaluation.

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	WITHOUT THE MARK	WITH CERTIFIED ARTISANAL
IS THIS REALLY HANDMADE?	No way to verify at the shelf	Method integrity independently assessed
DOES THE MAKER HAVE REAL EXPERTISE?	Brand story is the only signal	Heritage and training documented and evaluated
ARE INGREDIENTS CAREFULLY SOURCED?	Packaging claims are self-reported	Material provenance reviewed by the Foundation
WHO ACTUALLY MADE THIS?	Often unclear or unidentifiable	Named maker(s) with demonstrated involvement
CAN I TRUST THE "ARTISANAL" LABEL?	No mechanism to confirm	Independent institution verified the claim
WHAT HAPPENS IF STANDARDS SLIP?	Nothing -- no enforcement exists	Certification reviewed periodically; can be revoked

Comparison based on current U.S. labeling regulatory environment (FDA 21 CFR) and Artisanal Foundation governance structure.



*You should not need a degree in food science to know if something is genuinely artisanal. The mark does that work for you -- so you can shop with confidence, not guesswork.*

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**Artisanal Foundation**

Consumer Principle

# SOURCES & REFERENCES

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## CONSUMER LABEL BEHAVIOR

NielsenIQ, "Consumer Outlook," 2023. 94% of consumers report food labels influence their purchase decisions.

## ARTISANAL PREMIUM WILLINGNESS

Innova Market Insights, "Top Trends in Food & Beverage," 2023. 44% of consumers will pay more for products perceived as genuinely artisanal.

## GROCERY TRUST GAP

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

## CERTIFICATION INFLUENCE

Purdue University CF DAS / FMI, "The Future of Traceability and Transparency in the Food System," 2023. 49% of consumers say certifications influence purchases.

## CLAIM PROLIFERATION

Mintel Global New Products Database (GNPD), 2023. "Artisanal" product claims on packaging increased 340% since 2013.

## REGULATORY ABSENCE

U.S. FDA, 21 CFR; FTC Act Section 5. No federal definition of "artisanal" or "handcrafted" exists in any U.S. regulatory framework.

## ORGANIC GOVERNANCE MODEL

USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, National Organic Program, 7 CFR Part 205. Model for third-party-audited food certification.

## EU QUALITY FRAMEWORKS

European Parliament and Council, Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012. Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) systems.

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## LOOK FOR THE MARK

The Certified Artisanal mark exists because you deserve a straightforward answer to a simple question: is this product what it claims to be? When you see the mark, an independent institution with published standards has already verified the answer.

[artisanalfoundation.org](https://artisanalfoundation.org)

Learn more about certified products and producers

Search the certified producer directory at [artisanalfoundation.org/directory](https://artisanalfoundation.org/directory)

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