

HACCP Plan Template - Soft Cheese

Food Safety & Quality Template · Provided by GIFSQ

Soft cheese keeps QA managers up at night for good reason - high moisture, and *Listeria* loves a damp ripening room. This plan centers on pasteurization, salting and environmental control, built on the Codex framework.

Don't just fill in the blanks - the value is the team discussion the Codex steps force you to have. Replace every [bracketed] entry with your operation's detail and validate each critical limit for your own product and equipment.

1. Document control

Field	Details
Document title	HACCP Plan Template - Soft Cheese
Document no.	[QA-HACCP-007]
Version	[1.0]
Effective date	[YYYY-MM-DD]
Prepared by	[Name / Title / Date]
Approved by	[Name / Title / Date]
Review date	[YYYY-MM-DD]

2. Product description

Item	Description
Product name	[e.g., Brie-style soft cheese]
Description	[Soft, high-moisture cheese from pasteurized milk]
Ingredients	[Milk, cultures, rennet, salt, [list all]]

Item	Description
Packaging	[Wrap / box - describe]
Shelf life and storage	[e.g., 45 days at $\leq 5^{\circ}\text{C}$]
Distribution	[Chilled distribution to retail]

3. Intended use and consumers

- General public. Note: soft cheese is higher risk for pregnant women and immunocompromised consumers - labelling and advisory statements per local rules.

4. Process flow diagram

Codex Step 5, and the one teams skip: walk the flow on the floor and fix the diagram until it matches what actually happens - including the unofficial shortcuts. Number the final version.

1. Receiving milk and ingredients
2. Milk storage ($\leq 4^{\circ}\text{C}$)
3. Pasteurization
4. Cooling to set temperature
5. Culture addition and coagulation
6. Cutting and moulding
7. Draining / brining or dry salting
8. Ripening / maturation
9. Packaging and labelling
10. Cold storage ($\leq 5^{\circ}\text{C}$)
11. Dispatch

5. Hazard analysis (Codex Principle 1)

Be honest here. If a hazard is reasonably likely, say so - auditors distrust a hazard analysis where nothing comes out significant. Only significant hazards go to the decision tree.

Process step	Hazard (B / C / P)	Significant? Rationale	Control measure
Receiving	B: pathogens in milk; C: antibiotic residues	Y	Approved suppliers; testing
Pasteurization	B: survival of vegetative pathogens incl. <i>L. monocytogenes</i>	Y - CCP	Validated time-temperature (CCP 1)
Coagulation to brining	B: <i>Staph. aureus</i> enterotoxin if acidification slow; <i>L. monocytogenes</i> growth	Y	Validated make procedure: pH and time profile
Brining / salting	B: inadequate salt allows pathogen growth	Y - CCP or OPRP per your analysis	Salt concentration and time (CCP 2 if designated)
Ripening	B: <i>L. monocytogenes</i> growth during maturation	Y	Ripening room ≤[temperature]; environmental monitoring program
Packaging and labelling	C: undeclared allergens (milk); P: foreign material	Y	Label verification; foreign material controls
Cold storage / dispatch	B: growth if cold chain broken	Y	≤5 °C throughout

6. CCPs, critical limits and monitoring (Principles 2-4)

These limits are solid starting points from industry practice and regulation, but they're not yours yet. Validate each one on your equipment - this is the section auditors probe hardest.

CCP	Significant hazard	Critical limit	Monitoring (what / how / frequency / who)	Corrective action	Verification	Records
CCP 1 - Milk pasteurization	Survival of vegetative pathogens	[e.g., $\geq 72^{\circ}\text{C}$ for 15 s - use your validated schedule]	Continuous recording each batch; [role]	Re-process or dispose; investigate	Record review; calibration	Pasteurization log
CCP 2 - Brining / salting	Pathogen growth from under-salting	Brine at [concentration, e.g., 18-22% w/w] and [temperature]; cheese brined for [time]	Brine strength [frequency]; timer; [role]	Extend brining or dispose per QA assessment	Record review; salometer calibration	Brining log

7. Corrective action procedure (Principle 5)

1. Hold and segregate all product made since the last acceptable check; tag it and enter it in the hold log.
2. Restore control (re-cook, adjust temperature, repair equipment) and confirm it before restarting.
3. [QA Manager / designee] assesses the affected product - release, rework or disposal - and records the justification.
4. Find and fix the root cause; record the deviation, investigation and disposition, signed within [1 working day].

8. Verification procedures (Principle 6)

- A trained reviewer checks CCP monitoring and corrective action records at [frequency, e.g., within 7 days].
- Calibrate monitoring instruments per the calibration schedule.
- Periodic product testing (microbiological, chemical or physical) per the verification schedule.
- Internal audit at least [annually]; full HACCP reassessment annually or after any significant change.

9. Record-keeping (Principle 7)

- Hazard analysis worksheet and CCP decision records

- CCP monitoring records, signed and dated
- Deviation and corrective action records
- Verification records, including calibration
- Training records for the HACCP team and CCP monitors

Approval and control

Role	Name	Signature	Date
Prepared by	[Name]	[Signature]	[Date]
Reviewed by (QA)	[Name]	[Signature]	[Date]
Approved by	[Name]	[Signature]	[Date]

Keep completed forms for [Define retention period, e.g., 2 years beyond shelf life] at [defined location] - and make sure someone besides you knows where that is.

General use: This template contains no country-specific laws or regulator names and suits any food business — restaurant, catering, food manufacturing, retail, or food service. Adapt temperature limits, legal references, and record-retention periods to your local regulations. Provided by GIFSQ · v1.0 · September 2026