**Company Name Document Reference:**

**Program Document**

**Document Type: Retention Sample Policy Page: 1 of 2**

**Purpose**

To define the process of collection, organizing, keeping properly stored and disposing of retention samples. Retention samples can be a helpful tool in determining the root cause of customer complaints as part of a complete Quality Assurance program can be a vital tool to determine how widespread a particular issue may be within batches/vats/production when doing an investigation on an issue, retained samples may not exhibit the same characteristics as the finished goods. Samples can be of finished products, raw materials, or packaging.

**Definitions**

**Retention Sample** – A small amount of material taken from a larger amount of either finished product or raw material as a small representation.

**Retention expiration date** – The date that a retention sample has expired based on the customer’s expected shelf-life.

**Guide**

If micro sampling is completed, collect a similar representative sample from the vat.

The sample should be enough so that if some sample is taken for analytical re-testing, micro re-testing, or sensory evaluation there is enough left over for potential future evaluation.

If these samples may be tested for micro in the future, it is important they were aseptically collected and care is taken that pathogens are not tested (this may prompt a recall and affect clean breaks)

The samples should be stored in the same temperatures/conditions (light exposure, fumes, etc.) as the finished product/raw material that it is imitating.

Create a system that works best for your company that allows for ease of retrieval. If they are not stored in order of date of make, product type, or other method that is easy to decipher, it will affect how timely the sample retrieval process is.

Retention samples are not meant to be kept forever, and must be disposed of at an appropriate time.

Typically, retain samples should be kept for as long as its shelf-life would be once it gets to the consumer. At minimum it should be kept until it has gone through the evaluation process of the convertor.

Procedure

1. **Collect a representative sample amount.** *(This maybe 1 per batch, shift, filter head or similar of defined time increments).*
2. Store the sample in appropriate conditions that are representative of the material that it is imitating.
3. Dispose of the retention sample once it has expired.

**Documentation / Recordkeeping**

1. Sample collection records may be integrated with Production Records
2. A Sample Register may be used to indicate the target timeframe for holding retained samples  
     
   E.g.,

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Product | Sample Location | Frequency | Retention Timeframe |
| Cheese A | Random block selection via trier | 1 per vat at knock-out and sealing | 14 days |
| Cheese A, Shredded | Each machine | Startup, every 30 minutes of run time | BBD + 30 |
| Soft Cheese B | Cup-filler, each head | Startup, every 60 minutes of run time | BBD + 7 |

**END**