

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF  
CALIFORNIA

Impossible Foods Inc. v. Impossible X LLC

Impossible Foods · No. 21-cv-02419-BLF · Decided September 17, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of California grants two administrative motions to seal materials related to an opposition to Impossible Foods Inc.'s motion for partial summary judgment. The court applies the compelling-reasons standard and finds that the materials contain confidential financial information, business strategies, and other information whose disclosure could cause competitive harm. The court also orders the parties to refile public versions with narrower redactions or renew their sealing motions by September 29, 2025.

CASE DETAILS

|                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| COURT                 | United States District Court for the Northern District of California                                                                                                                                        |
| WRITING FOR THE COURT | Beth Labson Freeman                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| JURISDICTION          | United States District Court for the Northern District of California                                                                                                                                        |
| DECIDED               | September 17, 2025                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| DOCKET                | 21-cv-02419-BLF                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| DISPOSITION           | other                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| PROCEDURAL POSTURE    | The court decided two administrative motions to seal materials filed in connection with Defendants' opposition to Plaintiff's motion for partial summary judgment.                                          |
| STANDARD OF REVIEW    | Motions to seal material more than tangentially related to the merits require a showing of compelling reasons; material only tangentially related to the merits may be sealed upon a showing of good cause. |
| PRECEDENTIAL VALUE    | Unknown; district court order addressing administrative motions to seal.                                                                                                                                    |

TOPICS

- summary judgment
- commercial litigation
- civil procedure
- intellectual property

PRACTICE AREAS

## QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether portions of filings related to an opposition to a motion for partial summary judgment may be sealed under the compelling-reasons standard.
2. Whether the requested sealing and redactions were narrowly tailored under Civil Local Rule 79-5.
3. Whether material designated as confidential by another party should be sealed under Civil Local Rule 79-5(f).

## HOLDINGS

1. Because the materials concerned an opposition to a motion for partial summary judgment and were more than tangentially related to the merits, the court applied the compelling-reasons standard rather than the lesser good-cause standard.
2. Compelling reasons existed to seal the identified confidential business, financial, and strategic information because public disclosure could harm the parties' competitive standing.
3. The sealing requests were narrowly tailored to the material warranting protection.

## KEY QUOTATIONS

*“As the sealing request relates to an opposition to a motion for partial summary judgment, Court will apply the “compelling reasons” standard.” (at 2)*

*“The “compelling reasons” standard is met for confidential business information that would harm a party’s competitive standing if publicly disclosed” (at 3)*

## FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Defendants sought to seal portions of their opposition to Plaintiff's motion for partial summary judgment, asserting that the material disclosed business and financial decision-making strategies and that disclosure would cause competitive harm. Plaintiff separately supported sealing material concerning its financial information, revenue, expenditures, and marketing strategies. The court found compelling reasons to seal the identified material and determined that the requested redactions were narrowly tailored.

## PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Impossible X LLC filed an administrative motion to seal portions of its opposition to Impossible Foods Inc.'s motion for partial summary judgment. It also filed an administrative motion asking the court to consider whether another party's material should be sealed. The court granted both motions and ordered the parties to refile public versions with narrower redactions or submit renewed sealing motions by September 29, 2025.

## DISPOSITION

other

## REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

None. The court ordered the parties to refile public versions of the filings with narrower redactions by September 29, 2025, unless they filed renewed sealing motions.

## CASES CITED

- Kamakana v. City & Cnty. of Honolulu, 447 F.3d 1172, 1178 (9th Cir. 2006)
- Nixon v. Warner Commc'ns, Inc., 435 U.S. 589, 597 & n.7 (1978)
- Ctr. for Auto Safety v. Chrysler Grp., LLC, 809 F.3d 1092, 1097, 1099-1102 (9th Cir. 2016)
- Laatz v. Zazzle, Inc., No. 22-cv-04844, 2023 WL 4983670, at \*2 (N.D. Cal. Aug. 3, 2023)
- Jam Cellars, Inc. v. Wine Grp. LLC, No. 19-cv-01878, 2020 WL 5576346, at \*2 (N.D. Cal. Sept. 17, 2020)
- Fed. Trade Comm'n v. Qualcomm Inc., No. 17-cv-00220, 2019 WL 95922, at \*3 (N.D. Cal. Jan. 3, 2019)
- In re Elec. Arts, Inc., 298 F. App'x 568, 569 (9th Cir. 2008)

## OPINION

Impossible Foods Inc. v. Impossible X LLC

PER CURIAM.

1 2

3 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

4 NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

5 SAN JOSE DIVISION

6 7 IMPOSSIBLE FOODS INC., Case No. 21-cv-02419-BLF 8 Plaintiff,

ORDER REGARDING IMPOSSIBLE

9 v. LLC'S ADMINISTRATIVE MOTIONS

10 IMPOSSIBLE X LLC, et al., [Re: ECF Nos. 278, 279] 11 Defendants. 12 13 Before the Court  
are two administrative motions: 14 1. Impossible X LLC's Administrative Motion to Seal. ECF  
No. 278. 15 2. Impossible X LLC's Administrative Motion to Consider Whether Another Party's  
Material 16 Should Be Sealed. ECF No. 279. 17 For the reasons described below, the Court rules  
as follows: the administrative motion at 18 ECF No. 278 is GRANTED, and the administrative  
motion at ECF No. 279 is GRANTED.

19 I. LEGAL STANDARD

20 "Historically, courts have recognized a 'general right to inspect and copy public records 21 and  
documents, including judicial records and documents.'" Kamakana v. City & Cnty. of 22  
Honolulu, 447 F.3d 1172, 1178 (9th Cir. 2006) (quoting Nixon v. Warner Commc'ns, Inc., 435 23  
U.S. 589, 597 & n.7 (1978)). Consequently, access to motions and their attachments that are 24  
"more than tangentially related to the merits of a case" may be sealed only upon a showing of 25  
"compelling reasons" for sealing. Ctr. for Auto Safety v. Chrysler Grp., LLC, 809 F.3d 1092, 26  
1101-02 (9th Cir. 2016). Filings that are only tangentially related to the merits may be sealed 27  
upon a lesser showing of "good cause." Id. at 1097.

1 Rule 79-5. That rule requires, inter alia, the moving party to provide “the reasons for keeping a  
2 document under seal, including an explanation of: (i) the legitimate private or public interests  
that 3 warrant sealing; (ii) the injury that will result if sealing is denied; and (iii) why a less  
restrictive 4 alternative to sealing is not sufficient.” Civ. L.R. 79-5(c)(1). Civil Local Rule 79-5  
requires the 5 moving party to provide “evidentiary support from declarations where necessary.”  
Civ. L.R. 79- 6 5(c)(2). And the proposed order must be “narrowly tailored to seal only the  
sealable material.” 7 Civ. L.R. 79-5(c)(3). 8 Further, when a party seeks to seal a document  
because it has been designated as 9 confidential by another party, the filing party must file an  
Administrative Motion to Consider 10 Whether Another Party’s Material Should be Sealed. Civ.  
L.R. 79-5(f). In that case, the filing 11 party need not satisfy the requirements of subsection (c)(1).  
Civ. L.R. 79-5(f)(1). Instead, the 12 party who designated the material as confidential must, within  
seven days of the motion’s filing, 13 file a statement and/or declaration that meets the  
requirements of subsection (c)(1). Civ. L.R. 79- 14 5(f)(3). A designating party’s failure to file a  
statement or declaration may result in the unsealing 15 of the provisionally sealed document  
without further notice to the designating party. Id. Any 16 party can file a response to that  
declaration within four days. Civ. L.R. 79-5(f)(4).

## 17 II. DISCUSSION

18 A. ECF No. 278 19 Defendants Impossible LLC and Joel Runyon (collectively, “Defendants”  
or “ILLC”) seek 20 to seal portions of its Opposition to Plaintiff Impossible Foods Inc.’s  
 (“Plaintiff” or “Impossible 21 Foods”) Motion for Partial Summary Judgment. ECF No. 278 at 1–  
2. Plaintiff did not submit any 22 response. 23 ILLC asserts that the information it seeks to seal  
pertains to “its business and financial 24 decision making strategies.” Id. at 1. Defendants argue  
that the disclosure of this information 25 would “reveal critical business information” to the  
market that would cause “substantial harm” to 26 ILLC’s competitive standing. Id. at 1–2. 27 As  
the sealing request relates to an opposition to a motion for partial summary judgment, 1 Court will  
apply the “compelling reasons” standard. Ctr. for Auto Safety, 809 F.3d at 1099–101. 2 The Court  
finds that compelling reasons exist to seal the materials ILLC identifies. The 3 “compelling  
reasons” standard is met for confidential business information that would harm a 4 party’s  
competitive standing if publicly disclosed, including materials discussing “internal 5 business and  
financial decision-making strategies.” See Laatz v. Zazzle, Inc, No. 22-cv-04844, 6 2023 WL  
4983670, at \*2 (N.D. Cal. Aug. 3, 2023); Jam Cellars, Inc. v. Wine Grp. LLC, No. 19- 7 cv-01878,  
2020 WL 5576346, at \*2 (N.D. Cal. Sept. 17, 2020) (finding compelling reasons for 8 sealing  
“confidential business and proprietary information”); Fed. Trade Comm’n v. Qualcomm 9 Inc.,  
No. 17-cv-00220, 2019 WL 95922, at \*3 (N.D. Cal. Jan. 3, 2019) (finding compelling 10 reasons  
to seal “information that, if published, may harm . . . competitive standing and divulges 11 terms  
of confidential contracts, contract negotiations, or trade secrets”); In re Elec. Arts, Inc., 298 12 F.  
App’x 568, 569 (9th Cir. 2008) (finding sealable “business information that might harm a 13  
litigant’s competitive standing”). The Court also finds that the request is narrowly tailored. See 14

Civ. L.R. 79-5(c)(3). 15 The Court's ruling is summarized below: 16 Public ECF. Document  
Portion(s) Requested to Seal Ruling No. / Sealed 17 ECF. No. 277 / 278-2 Defendants'  
Highlighted portions at GRANTED as containing 18 Opposition to 3:13; 8:26; 9:3-4, 6-9.  
sensitive information 19 Plaintiff's Motion for regarding ILLC's financial Partial Summary  
information, the release of 20 Judgment which could cause ILLC competitive harm. 21 B. ECF  
No. 279 22 ILLC filed an Administrative Motion to Consider Whether Another Party's Material 23  
Should be Sealed. ECF No. 279. Impossible Foods filed a statement in support of sealing the 24  
materials identified in Plaintiff's motion. ECF No. 280. ILLC did not submit any response to 25  
Plaintiff's statement in support of sealing. 26 Impossible Foods asserts that this information  
pertains to "financial information, including 27 revenue and expenditures, and marketing  
strategies." Id. at 2. Plaintiff argues that public 1 disclosure of this information "would cause  
substantial harm to Impossible Foods's relative to its 2 competitors and future business partners."  
Id. at 3. 3 As the sealing request relates to an opposition to a motion for partial summary  
judgment, 4 which the Court finds is "more than tangentially related to the underlying cause[s] of  
action," the 5 Court will apply the "compelling reasons" standard. Ctr. for Auto Safety, 809 F.3d at  
1099–101. 6 The Court finds that Plaintiffs have established compelling reasons to seal the  
identified 7 materials. The "compelling reasons" standard is met for confidential business  
information that 8 would harm a party's competitive standing if publicly disclosed, including  
materials discussing 9 "internal business and financial decision-making strategies." See Laatz v.  
Zazzle, Inc, No. 22-cv- 10 04844, 2023 WL 4983670, at \*2 (N.D. Cal. Aug. 3, 2023); Jam Cellars,  
Inc. v. Wine Grp. LLC,  
11 No. 19-cv-01878, 2020 WL 5576346, at \*2 (N.D. Cal. Sept. 17, 2020) (finding compelling  
12 reasons for sealing "confidential business and proprietary information"); Fed. Trade Comm'n v.  
13 Qualcomm Inc., No. 17-cv-00220, 2019 WL 95922, at \*3 (N.D. Cal. Jan. 3, 2019) (finding 14  
compelling reasons to seal "information that, if published, may harm . . . competitive standing and  
15 divulges terms of confidential contracts, contract negotiations, or trade secrets"); In re Elec.  
Arts, 16 Inc., 298 F. App'x 568, 569 (9th Cir. 2008) (finding sealable "business information that  
might 17 harm a litigant's competitive standing"). The Court also finds that the request is narrowly  
tailored. 18 See Civ. L.R. 79-5(c)(3). 19 The Court's ruling is summarized below: Public ECF  
Document Portion(s) Requested to Seal Ruling 20 No. / 21 Sealed ECF No. 22 277 / 279-2  
Defendants' Highlighted portions at GRANTED as containing Opposition to 4:17-19, 21-26, 28;  
5:1-4, discussions of sensitive 23 Plaintiff's Motion for 11-13, 19-22, 24, 26; 6:7-8; business  
strategy and Partial Summary 21:9; 23:26-28; 24:1-2. financial information, the 24 Judgment  
release of which could cause 25 Impossible Foods harm. 26 27 I 277-3 / Ex. 2 to Declaration |  
Entire document. GRANTED as containing 279-3 of Adam S. Cashman discussions of sensitive 2  
business strategy and financial information, the 3 release of which could cause 4 Impossible Foods  
harm. 5

6 I. ORDER

For the foregoing reasons, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that: 4

1. The motion at ECF No. 278 is GRANTED.

8

2. The motion at ECF No. 279 is GRANTED.

9 The parties SHALL refile public versions of each filing where the redactions and sealing 10  
granted by the Court are narrower than what was redacted in the current public versions by 11  
September 29, 2025, unless they are filing a renewed sealing motion for any document in that 12  
filing. 13 v 14 IT IS SO ORDERED. 15 16 Dated: September 17, 2025 = 17 fainflaman

2 18 TH LABSON FREEMAN

19 United States District Judge 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28