Food Standards Agency
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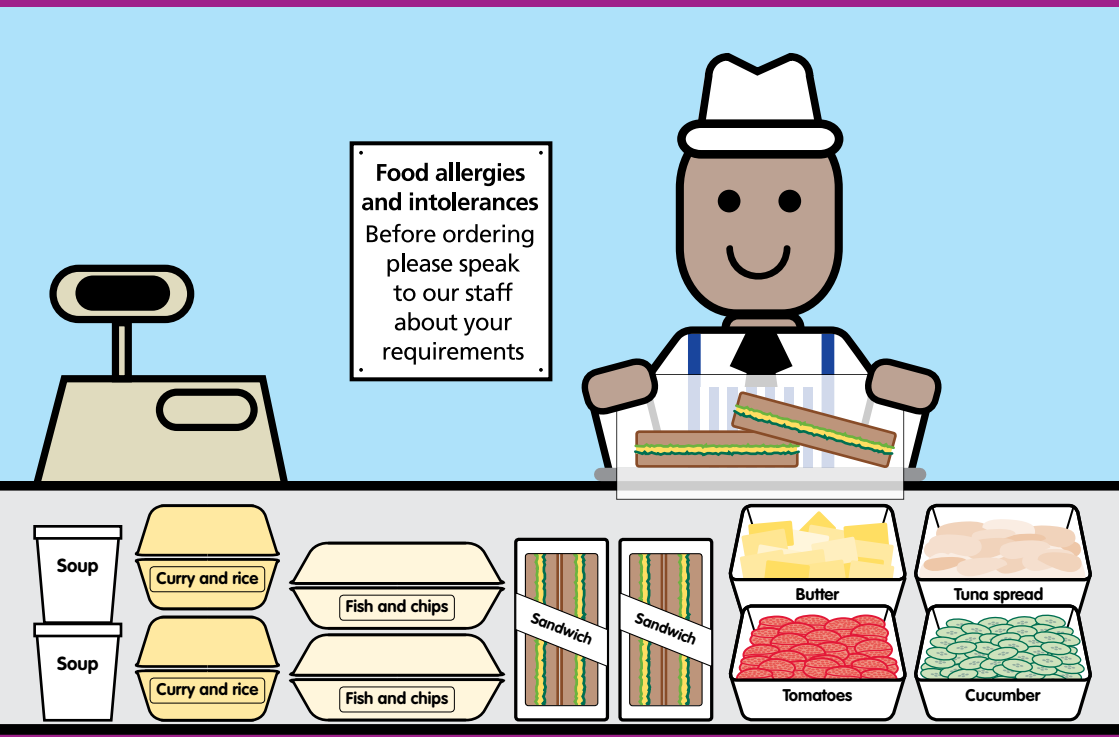
Allergen information for loose foods

Advice on the new Food Information Regulations for small and medium food businesses



June 2014

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Introduction

There are big changes to the information that food businesses must give to their customers.

From 13 December 2014, the EU Food Information for Consumers Regulation (EU FIC) comes into force. These European rules will be enforced in the UK by the Food Information Regulations 2014 (FIR).

FIR will change the way you and your staff provide information to your customers. You can find out more about FIR here: **http://food.gov.uk/science/allergy-intolerance/label/**

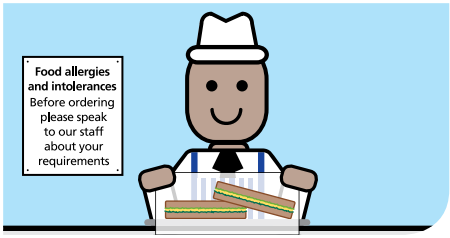
Who is this booklet for?

This booklet is for you if, for example, you:

- provide meals in a café or restaurant
- sell food that you wrap yourself, such as loose bread rolls, sandwiches, cakes, deli products or other unpackaged foods
- provide institutional catering such as in schools, hospitals and care homes

During the preparation of loose food, you may be using prepacked foods as ingredients in your recipe. Allergenic ingredients will be emphasised within the ingredients list of prepacked foods.

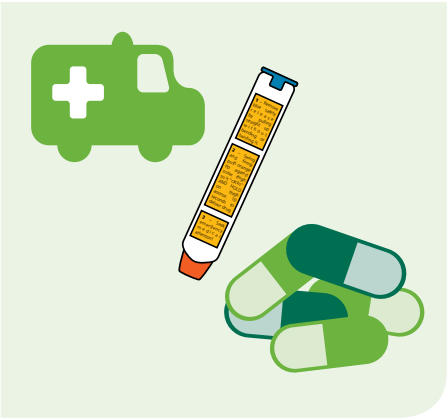
If you want to know more about prepacked foods and how to identify allergenic ingredients contained within them, you should refer to the leaflet on prepacked food 'Allergy: what to consider when labelling food' which you can find here: **http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/publication/allergy-labelling-prepacked.pdf**



Why food allergy matters

Allergic reactions can make people very ill and can sometimes lead to death. However, there is no cure for food allergy. The only way someone can avoid getting ill is to make sure they don't eat the foods they are allergic to.

If you work with food, it is important to take food allergy seriously. When the new FIR rules come in, you will have a **legal responsibility** to provide the correct allergen information about the ingredients that is in the food you make or serve, to your customer.



IMPORTANT

The definition of loose foods

Prepacked foods are usually made by one business and sold by another such as a retailer or caterer. Loose or foods that are not prepacked describe everything else. This includes foods which are wrapped on the same site as they are sold, such as in a sandwich bar, bakery or from a delicatessen counter.

Please note: For the purposes of this leaflet, we will be using the term 'loose food' to mean all foods that are sold not prepacked. This includes unpackaged food or food that is packaged on site for immediate consumption.

New rules for loose foods

The EU law has listed 14 allergens that need to be identified if they are used as ingredients in a dish. This means that from 13 December 2014, all food businesses will need to provide information about the allergenic ingredients used in foods sold or provided by them.

There are also new requirements for businesses which are providing loose food, such as supermarket food counters, delicatessens, restaurants, takeaways.

As a food business serving loose foods, you will have to supply information for every item on your menu that contains any of the 14 allergens as ingredients.

How to provide this information

Details of these allergens will have to be listed clearly in an obvious place such as:

- a menu
- chalkboard
- information pack

If it is not provided upfront, you will need to signpost to where it could be obtained, either in written or oral formats.

If the allergen information is provided orally there must be a way for:

- this information to be checked by others (verifiable)
- it to be confirmed as accurate
- the same information to be given every time (consistent)

You can find more information about this in *How to provide allergen information* on page 9.

Other ways of selling

If food is sold at a distance, such as through a telephone order for a takeaway, the allergen information must be provided:

- before the purchase of the food is complete (this could be in writing or orally)
- in a written format when the food is delivered

IMPORTANT

Ignorance is no excuse

The change in the law means that you will no longer be able to say that you don't know what allergens are in the food you serve. You are also not allowed to say that all the foods you serve could contain an allergen.

You will need to know what is in the food you provide.

The 14 allergens

There are 14 major allergens which need to be declared when used as ingredients. The following list tells you what these allergens are and provide some examples of foods where they may be found in:

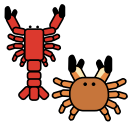
Celery

This includes celery stalks, leaves and seeds and celeriac. It is often found in celery salt, salads, some meat products, soups and stock cubes.

Cereals containing gluten

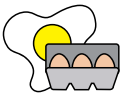
This includes wheat (such as spelt and Khorasan wheat/ Kamut), rye, barley and oats. It is often found in foods containing flour, such as some baking powders, batter, breadcrumbs, bread, cakes, couscous, meat products, pasta, pastry, sauces, soups and foods dusted with flour. The cereal will need to be declared. However, it is up to you if you want to declare the presence of gluten with this.

Crustaceans



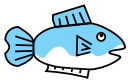
This includes crabs, lobster, prawns and scampi. It is often found in shrimp paste used in Thai curries or salads.

Eggs



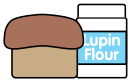
This is often found in cakes, some meat products, mayonnaise, mousses, pasta, quiche, sauces and foods brushed or glazed with egg.

Fish



This is often found in some fish sauces, pizzas, relishes, salad dressings, stock cubes and in Worcestershire sauce.

Lupin



This includes lupin seeds and flour, and can be found in some types of bread, pastries and pasta.

Milk

This is found in butter, cheese, cream, milk powders and yoghurt. It is often used in foods glazed with milk, powdered soups and sauces.

Molluscs

This includes mussels, land snails, squid and whelks. It is often found in oyster sauce or as an ingredient in fish stews.

Mustard

This includes liquid mustard, mustard powder and mustard seeds. It is often found in breads, curries, marinades, meat products, salad dressing, sauces and soups.

Nuts

This includes almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, cashews, pecan nuts, Brazil nuts, pistachio nuts, macadamia or Queensland nuts. These can be found in breads, biscuits, crackers, desserts, ice cream, marzipan (almond paste), nut oils and sauces. Ground, crushed or flaked almonds are often used in Asian dishes such as curries or stir fries.

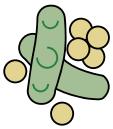
Peanuts

This can be found in biscuits, cakes, curries, desserts and sauces such as for satay. It is also found in groundnut oil and peanut flour.

Sesame seeds

This can be found in bread, breadsticks, houmous, sesame oil and tahini (sesame paste).

Soya



This can be found in beancurd, edamame beans, miso paste, textured soya protein, soya flour or tofu. It is often used in some desserts, ice cream, meat products, sauces and vegetarian products.

Sulphur dioxide

This is often used as a preservative in dried fruit, meat products, soft drinks and vegetables as well as in wine and beer.

Recording information about ingredients

When preparing a dish, think about the ingredients you use in your recipe, and then carefully record the ones which are used in each dish.

If you are using prepacked foods as an ingredient in your recipe, please remember that some products (such as tinned or dried food) have a long shelf life. This means that you may see both types of labelling (old and new) being used on these products for a few years after December 2014. Always remember to read the label!

To help to identify which dishes contain allergens:

- make sure that your kitchen staff use the same recipes every time
- keep a copy of the ingredient information on labels of pre-packed foods for example, sauces, desserts etc
- keep ingredients in the original containers where possible, or keep a copy of the labelling information in a central place (either on paper or stored electronically)
- ensure that containers are clearly labelled, for ingredients which are delivered in bulk, and then transferred or stored in smaller containers
- make sure that staff are aware of where this allergen information is stored and how it is kept
- ensure that the allergen information is kept up to date (for example, if recipes are changed or products substituted)
- always check deliveries to make sure what is delivered is what was ordered. Ensure that the relevant labelling information is provided with the order
- make sure that any records are updated, to help trace back to the source of your information
- check that the food delivered is the same brand that is normally used, as different brands might have different ingredients.

How to provide allergen information

There are a number of ways in which allergen information can be provided to your customers. You will need to choose the method which is best for your business and the type of food you serve.

Keep staff trained and informed

Businesses should ensure, as a minimum, that all their staff are aware of the procedures and policies of the business when it comes to handling all requests for allergen information. All staff should receive training on handling allergy information requests from their first day in the job.

As a food business, it is your responsibility to know which allergenic ingredients are present in the foods you sell. Where you have a group of foods such as cereals containing gluten, crustaceans, fish, nuts and molluscs, you will need to say what they are; for example wheat, prawns, cod, almonds and mussels.

Make sure the allergen information is accessible to all staff and that it is kept up-to-date. If you use

part-prepared ingredients, make sure you know what's in them and make sure they are clearly labelled. When handling and preparing foods, consider the risk of allergen cross-contamination.

Signposting allergen information

Where allergen information is not provided upfront in writing, signposting a customer to where they can get this information will be required.

Your sign should be where customers expect to find this information; for example where they would be making their food orders such as at the till point, on menu board, or on the menu.

Written allergen information

This can be provided on menus, menu boards or on websites, when selling online. For example:

- Chicken Korma – Contains: Milk, Almonds (nuts)
- Carrot cake – Contains: Milk, Egg, Wheat, Walnuts (nuts)

Allergen menu folders

Allergen menu folders that contain:

- product specification sheets
- ingredients labels
- recipes or charts of the dishes provided and the allergen content could be used to communicate or aid communication of allergen information to the consumer.

Telling a customer about allergens

Allergy information can also be provided as part of a conversation with the customer as well as using any of the ways described above. You can also use methods you have devised yourself to ensure that the information provided is correct and consistent.

An example of a chart of the dishes provided and their allergen content

Dish	Cereals containing gluten	Crustaceans	Eggs	Fish	Peanuts	Soyabeans	Milk	Nuts	Celery	Mustard	Sesame	Sulphites	Lupin	Molluscs
Chicken korma							✔	✔ almonds						
Seafood risotto		✔ prawn		✔			✔		✔					✔ Mussels, squid
Lemon cheesecake	✔ wheat		✔				✔							

Effective communication

Effective communication among your staff, with the customer and with your suppliers will help to ensure that customers with food allergy are given accurate information.

IMPORTANT

Customers must play their part

Where a business says, on a signpost, that allergy information can be obtained by talking to staff, the customer also has a responsibility to ask for information and relay their dietary needs to the person providing the food.

Remember that customers use the information you provide about the allergenic ingredients in the dishes you offer, to make the final decision on whether or not to buy and eat the food you provide.

You will need to think carefully about how:

- you handle these requests for allergen information
- you provide the information to your customer
- to make sure their staff can access the information.

Gluten-free and no gluten containing ingredients

If you say that any of the foods you serve are gluten-free, please note that there are strict rules surrounding this. The foods that you serve to your customer that are declared as gluten-free must not contain more than 20mg/kg of gluten.

If you are making a gluten-free claim on a loose food that you sell, consider whether you have the required processes in place to prevent cross-contamination.

If your processes cannot be guaranteed or controlled sufficiently, consider more factual statements, such as 'no gluten containing ingredients' which is also known as NGCI.

Either way, you will need to prevent cross-contamination as much as you can.

If you want more gluten-free guidance, please go to: **www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/allergy-guide/gluten/**

Dealing with severe allergic reaction

When someone has an allergic reaction to a food it is important that all staff should know what to do.

IMPORTANT

Warning signs

It is not always clear if someone is having an allergic reaction because other serious conditions can have similar symptoms. However, warning signs to look out for is if they are finding it hard to breathe, if their lips or mouth are swollen, or if they collapse.

If the above happens, this is what you should do:

- Do not move the customer, because this could make them worse.
- Call 999 immediately and describe what is happening; explain that you think the customer may be having a serious allergic reaction or anaphylaxis (pronounced anna-fill-axis). It is important to mention the word anaphylaxis to ensure that the urgency of the situation is communicated and that appropriate medication will be available.
- Ask the customer if they carry an adrenaline pen and, if necessary help them retrieve it. If a staff member or first aider is trained in administrating adrenaline and the customer is struggling to self-administer, then offer to assist them.
- Send someone outside to wait for the ambulance while you stay with your customer until help arrives.

Dealing with allergen information: Your quick checklist

1. When someone asks you if a food contains a particular ingredient, always check every time – never guess.
2. If you are selling a food that contains one or more allergenic ingredients, list them on the card, label, chart or menu – and make sure the information is kept up to date and is accurate.
3. Keep up-to-date ingredients information for any ready-made foods that you use (for example, ready-made sandwich filling). The ingredients are usually on the label or invoice.
4. When you are making food, keep a record of all the ingredients (and what they contain), including cooking oils, dressings, toppings, sauces and garnishes.
5. If you change the ingredients of a food, make sure you update your ingredients information and tell your staff about the change.
6. If someone asks you to make food that does not contain a particular ingredient, don't say yes unless you can be absolutely sure that none of that ingredient will be in the food.
7. If you're making food for someone with an allergy, make sure work surfaces and equipment have been thoroughly cleaned. And wash your hands thoroughly before preparing that food. Control the risks.

Serving a customer who has a food allergy

More information

- Free online allergen training can be obtained on: **http://allergytraining.food.gov.uk/**
- For information and advice about food allergies and intolerances, visit the Food Standards Agency website: **www.food.gov.uk/allergy**
- For information on the EU Food Information for Consumers Regulation 1169/2011 visit: **http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/labellingnutrition/foodlabelling/proposed_legislation_en.htm**
- For information on gluten, visit the Coeliac UK website: **www.coeliac.org.uk**

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