

Allergens & Food Businesses

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13th December 2014 EU Food Information for Consumers.
These European rules will be enforced in the UK by the
Food Information Regulations 2014 (FIR).

Allergens & Food Businesses

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).

The FIR will change the way, your staff & your business provide information to customers about allergens.

The following information covers businesses who provide loose food in the following ways:

- Restaurants,
- Cafes,
- **Where** you wrap food yourself,
- **Making/providing** Sandwiches,
- **Making/providing** Cakes,
- **Supplying** Deli Products,
- **Supplying** unpackaged foods,
- Institutional Catering such as Schools, Hospitals, Care Homes & Prisons.

In the preparation of loose food you may use pre-packed foods as ingredients. In pre-packed foods any allergenic ingredients will be highlighted within the ingredients list on the packaging.

Food Allergies & Why they are important

Allergies & allergic reactions in some cases can make people very ill & in severe cases can be fatal. There is no cure for food allergy, the only way people avoid getting ill is by making sure that they do not eat any foods to which they have an allergy.

You must take food allergies seriously & if you work with food when the new FIR rules come in you will have a **LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY** to provide information on allergens & the ingredients in the food you serve to your customers.

What are Loose Foods?

Loose foods are foods that are not prepacked including foods which are wrapped on site & sold for example a sandwich bar, bakery or deli counter. Prepacked Foods are generally foods which have been produced by one business & sold by another such as a retailer.

In this document we will refer to 'Loose Food' as foods that are not sold prepackaged this includes food that is packaged onsite for immediate consumption or unpacked foods.

New Rules for Loose Foods

There are 14 allergens which are listed in the EU Law & these need to be identified if they are ingredients in any foods you sell. The new requirements have to be adhered to for the following:

Any business selling loose food;
Restaurants,
Cafes,
Takeaways,
Supermarkets,
Food Counters,
Delicatessen Counters.

If as a business you serve loose food you will have to supply information on every menu item that contains any of the 14 Allergens.

How to Provide the Information to your Customers

Details of the allergens will need to be listed clearly in an obvious place for your customers to see:

- On a menu,
- On a Chalkboard,
- Or in an Information Pack.

If you do not provide this information upfront to your customers you must signpost how the information can be obtained in either a written format or orally.

If you are to provide this information orally it must be able to be verified, in a way to confirm that the information is accurate & the information must be consistent & delivered the same every time.

If you are a takeaway & sell food at a distance for example over the phone you must provide allergen information before the purchase of the food is complete or in a written format when the food is delivered or collected.

When the law changes on the 13 December 2014 there will be no excuse to not know what, if any of the 14 allergens are in the foods you sell. You are also not able to say that all of the foods that you sell may potentially contain any of the 14 allergens. You will have to be able to advise your customers what if any of the 14 allergens are in your menu items.

The 14 Allergens

The following 14 allergens need to be declared when they are used as ingredients. The list details what the allergens are & there are also some examples of which foods they can be found in.

- **Cereals** containing Gluten this includes wheat such as spelt (Khorasan Wheat/Kamut) rye, barley & oats. It is often found in foods containing flour, some baking powders, batter, bread, cakes, couscous, meat products, pasta, pastry, sauces, soups & foods dusted with flour.
- **Crustaceans** this includes crabs, lobsters, prawns & scampi. It is also found in shrimp paste.
- **Fish** is often found in fish sauce, pizzas, relishes, dressings, stock cubes & worcester sauce.
- **Molluscs** this includes mussels, land snails, squid & whelks. It is often found in oyster sauce or as an ingredient in fish stews.
- **Eggs** are often found in cakes, meat products, mayonnaise, mousses, pasta, quiche, sauces & foods brushed or glazed with egg.
- **Peanuts** can be found in biscuits, curries, desserts & sauces. it is also found in groundnut oil & peanut flour.
- **Nuts** this includes almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, cashews, pecans, Brazil nuts pistachio nuts, macadamia or Queensland nuts. they can be found in biscuits, breads, ice cream, crackers, desserts, marzipan, nut oil, curries, stir fries & sauces.
- **Soybeans (Soya)** can be found in bean curd, edamame beans, miso paste, textured soya protein, soya flour or tofu. it is also used in desserts, ice cream, meat products sauces & vegetarian products.
- **Milk** is found in butter, cheese, cream, milk powders & yoghurt. It is also found in foods glazed with milk, powdered soups & sauces.
- **Celery** including stalks, leaves, seeds & celeriac. It is often found in celery salt, salads some meat products, stocks & soups.
- **Mustard** this includes liquid mustard, mustard powder & mustard seeds. it can be found in bread, curries, marinades, meat products, dressings, sauces & soups.

- **Sesame Seeds** can be found in bread, breadsticks, houmous, sesame oil & tahini.
- **Lupin** includes lupin seeds & flour & can be found in some types of bread, pastries & pasta.
- **Sulphur dioxide (Sulphites)** this is often used as a preservative in dried fruit, meat products, soft drinks, vegetables & can also be found in beer & wine.

Recording Information about Ingredients

When preparing & planning a dish you will need think about the ingredients and then record each one that is used.

If you are using pre-packed foods as ingredients in your recipe remember that some tinned goods & dried goods may have a long shelf-life. This means that both types of labels old & new maybe on these goods. Read the label carefully to identify the allergens.

To help identify which dishes contain the allergens ensure the following:

- make sure the kitchen staff always use the same recipes;
- keep a copy of the ingredients labels from pre-packed foods for example stocks or desserts;
- ensure that containers are clearly labelled;
- make sure your staff are trained and are aware of the allergen information & where it is stored;
- make sure the allergen information is kept up-to-date if recipes are changed or ingredients substituted;
- check deliveries to ensure they are correct & the labelling information is provided;
- If you order branded goods ensure the delivery is correct as alternative brands may have different ingredients.

How to Provide Information on Allergens

There are many ways in which you can provide allergen information to your customers.

Choose a method that will best suit you, your business & the types of food you serve.

Staff Training

Food businesses should ensure that all their staff are trained and aware of the procedures & policies of the business when it comes to handling the allergen information.

As a food business it is your responsibility to know what allergen ingredients are in the foods that you sell. If you have any foods which contain any of the groups of foods such

as gluten, nuts or molluscs you will need to clearly state what they are. For example wheat, almonds & mussels.

You will need to make sure that all allergen information is accessible to your staff & that it is kept up-to-date. If you use part prepared ingredients make sure you are aware of what is in them & make sure they are clearly labelled. There is also a risk of allergen cross contamination when you are handling & preparing food so this also needs to be considered.

Communicating Information about Allergens to your Customers

Information on allergens can be provided to your customers as part of a conversation as well as any of the ways detailed below.

Signposting Allergen Information

If you are not providing allergen information upfront & in writing you will need to use signposting advising where your customers can get the information. The sign should be somewhere your customers will expect to find it, this can be at a till point, on a menu board or on the menu.

Written Allergen Information

Written information can be provided on menus, menu boards & on a website if you are selling foods online. For example:

- Seafood risotto contains prawns, celery, mussels, squid.
- Carrot Cake contains milk, egg, wheat, walnuts.

Allergen Menu Folders

It is recommended that an allergen menu folders should be created. It can contain recipes or charts of the dishes provided and the allergen ingredients, these can be used to communicate allergen information to your customers. It would also be sensible to keep ingredients labels & product specification sheets from your suppliers within the folder for clear identification of the allergens.

Effective Communication

It is important to communicate effectively with your staff, your suppliers, so as you have the correct information about the ingredients you are purchasing & your customers, to ensure they are given accurate information on food allergy.

Customers must also play their part, if a signpost advises allergen information can be obtained from staff, they have joint responsibility to ask for the information & relay their dietary requirements to the person providing the food.

Customers will then use the allergen information provided to make an informed decision on whether to buy & eat the foods on offer.

Remember you will need to think carefully about how you provide the following:

- How you handle requests for allergen information,
- How you provide the allergen information to your customers;
- make sure your staff are trained & have easy access to up-to-date information.

Allergen Information - Quick Checklist

1. If you are asked if a menu item contains a certain ingredient - NEVER guess, check the ingredients every time.
2. If a menu item contains more than one allergenic ingredient list them on the menu, label, card or chart - make sure the information is regularly checked & kept up-to-date.
3. Keep up-to-date ingredients & labels from prepackaged foods or any ready-made foods.
4. When you are preparing food keep a record of all the ingredients, what they contain including oils, dressings, sauces & garnishes.
5. If you change any ingredients or an ingredient is substituted ensure you update the ingredients information and advise staff immediately of any changes.
6. If a customer requests you prepare a food that does not contain a particular ingredient do not agree unless you can ensure that none of the ingredients will be in the food.
7. When preparing foods for someone with an allergy make sure that all work surfaces & equipment has been thoroughly cleaned & your hands are washed. This will help control the risk of cross contamination.

What to do if someone has an allergic reaction:

They might get a rash, swelling of their face, neck, mouth and tongue, have difficulty breathing.

- Call 999.
- Sit the person up.
- They might have a special pen called an “ Epipen” to inject medication, if they have, encourage them to use it.
- If you have been trained in first aid be prepared to use CPR.
- Comfort the person until the ambulance arrives & do not move them.
- Complete the accident book and inform Food Hygiene Solutions.