

FOOD ALLERGY ADVICE FOR CATERERS

Why allergies matter?

There are 14 ingredients to which allergic reactions are common and whose presence in food has to be brought to the consumer's attention. These are known as "allergenic ingredients."

The allergic reactions to these ingredients can range from digestive discomfort up to death in the case of severe peanut allergy.

How does this affect me?

It is an offence to mis-describe food or to supply food which is unsafe. A restaurant in Cumbria was recently fined £10,000 for selling a Chicken Tikka Wrap to a customer who had a peanut allergy after assuring him it did not contain nuts. The Chicken Tikka Wrap contained peanut protein and the customer was rushed to hospital after eating a mouthful.

From **13 December 2014** it will be a legal requirement for you to be able to inform your customers which of these allergenic ingredients are in any food or drink you supply. It will no longer be adequate to say that foods may contain allergens.

This new requirement will apply to anyone selling food from a catering establishment such as a restaurant, pub, café, takeaway or mobile stall.

What are the "allergenic ingredients" and where may they commonly be found?

CELERY including celery stalks leaves and seeds and celeriac in salads, soups, celery salt and some meat products.

CEREALS CONTAINING GLUTEN such as wheat, rye and barley and foods containing flour, such as bread, pasta, cakes, pastry, meat products, sauces, soups, batter, stock cubes, breadcrumbs and foods dusted with flour.

CRUSTACEA such as prawns, lobster, scampi, crab, shrimp paste.

EGGS in cakes, mousses, sauces, pasta, quiche, some meat products, mayonnaise, foods brushed with egg.

FISH in some salad dressings, pizzas, relishes, fish sauce and some soy and Worcestershire sauces.

LUPIN Lupin seeds and flour may be found in some types of bread and pastries.

MILK in yoghurt, cream, cheese, butter, milk powders and foods glazed with milk. As an ingredient it may be called whey or whey powder.

MOLLUSCS such as mussels, whelks, squid, snails, oyster sauce.

MUSTARD including liquid mustard, mustard powder and mustard seeds, in salad dressings, marinades, soups, sauces, curries, meat products.

NUTS (almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, cashews, pecans, brazils, pistachios, macadamia, Queensland) in sauces, desserts, crackers, bread, ice creams, marzipan, ground almonds, nut oils.

PEANUTS in sauces, cakes, desserts, groundnut oil, peanut flour, ground nut mixes.

SESAME SEEDS in bread, breadsticks, tahini, hummus, sesame oil.

SOYA as tofu or bean curd, soy sauce, soya flour and textured soya protein, in some ice cream, sauces, desserts, meat products, vegetarian products.

SULPHUR DIOXIDE (as a preservative) in meat products, fruit juice drinks, dried fruit and vegetables, wine, beer, cider.

How do I provide the information?

The information can be supplied on the menu, on chalk boards, tickets or provided verbally by an appropriate member of staff as well as in other formats made available to the consumer. It must be clear and conspicuous, easily visible, and legible. If the information is to be provided verbally by a member of staff then it is necessary to make it clear that the information can be obtained by asking a member of staff by means of a notice, menu, ticket or label that can easily be seen by customers. Allergen information must be specific to the food, complete and accurate. This also applies to food pre-packed for direct sale, such as from deli counters, bakeries or sandwich bars.

What should I do to make sure I comply?

1. Make sure staff are adequately trained so they know what to do when a customer makes a request for allergen information.
2. If you are selling a food that contains one or more of the ingredients which can cause a problem, list them on a card, label or menu – and make sure the information is accurate.
3. Keep up-to-date ingredients information for any ready-made foods that you use (for example, a filling you put in a sandwich). The ingredients might be on the label or invoice. If you are unsure, check with your supplier.
4. When you are making food, make sure you know what is in all the ingredients you use, including cooking oils, dressings, toppings, sauces and garnishes. Any pre-packed food should have the information on the label but if you are unsure or if the food is unwrapped or does not have a label then check with your supplier.
5. If you change the ingredients of a food, make sure you update your allergen information and tell other staff about the change.
6. If someone asks you to make some food for them that does not contain a particular ingredient, don't say yes unless you can make sure that absolutely 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.

8. If it is obvious from the name of the food that it contains an allergenic ingredient then no extra information need be supplied regarding this allergen for example a prawn cocktail would not have to state that it contains prawns.

Further advice

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