



The Food Information Regulations What Caterers Need to Know

From 13th December 2014, it will become a legal requirement for food businesses that serve meals or non pre-packed food to provide information to their customers about food allergens.

How can we provide this information to customers?

There are three main ways of providing information to the customer:

- You can list the allergens on your printed menu or chalk board. For example Chicken Tikka Masala contains: milk, nuts (almond).
- You can direct customers to a 'menu allergen folder' at point of order which could include, an allergen chart listing all dishes sold and recipes, to help them make an informed decision.
- You can provide a statement on the menu, or at point of order for example :

'Before you order your food and drinks please speak to our staff if you have a food allergy or intolerance'.

Distance Selling/ Takeaways

For orders taken by telephone or internet, allergen information must be provided before the customer decides to buy the product. Either by:

- Staff asking the customer if allergen information is required or
- A signpost on the website, directing customers to the allergen information

And

- Providing allergen information at the point of delivery, by placing stickers on food containers e.g. Chicken Satay contains: wheat, soy, fish, peanut.

Buffets/Self-Serve

- Allergen information must be provided for each food item separately
- Try to find out in advance if any customers have a food allergy, as there is a risk of cross contamination from people helping themselves
- Instruct staff to use separate plates and utensils, for selected foods, ensure these are clearly labelled and covered.

What practical steps should I take to ensure I comply with the new law?

1. You should inform and train your staff about food allergens – they will need to know the list of 14, and the importance of checking the ingredient labels.
2. The ingredients for home-made recipes must be consistent. Make sure they are written down and all staff follow them.
3. Make sure that you keep recipes and ingredient labels in an allergy file which you can easily refer to if a customer makes a request for food allergy information. Don't forget that you should include items like cooking oils, sauces, garnishes and dressings.
4. There should always be a member of staff present who has sufficient knowledge about food allergens to help provide the customer with the correct information.
5. If you change your recipe or one of your suppliers changes a product always update your allergy file with the new information.
6. You must include the assessment and suitable controls in your written food safety management system.

How do I make sure my kitchen is safe to prepare food for a customer with a food allergy?

- Make sure that you and staff thoroughly wash your hands, work surfaces and utensils in hot soapy water and rinse in clean hot water before you prepare food. This will help prevent cross contamination with allergens.
- Ensure that cross contamination of allergens does not occur during storage and preparation in your kitchen. Having colour coded equipment and storage areas for foods containing allergens may help to manage this.
- When food is fried in a deep fat fryer or cooked on a grill or griddle, you should make sure the cooking oil or surface of the grill or griddle has not been in contact with the allergen.

You might find the Allergens - Recipe Checklist and Dish Checklist attached to these notes helps you.

Where can I find more information about food allergens and food intolerance?

The Food Standards Agency Website has information and guidance for small businesses that sell restaurant/bar meals visit <http://www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/allergy-guide>

Contact us
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