

Food Allergen Risk Assessment For Caterers

People with food allergies have to take great care when eating out to avoid certain foods that could cause them harm. As a business you have a legal obligation to ensure that any food you produce or prepare is safe.

From December 2014 there will be a legal obligation to supply information to consumers on the allergens that are in the food that you produce.

Food Allergens



Peanuts



Nuts



**Crustaceans
(Shellfish)**



**Molluscs
(Shellfish)**



Fish



Eggs



Milk



**Cereals
containing
Gluten**



Soya



**Sesame
seeds**



Celery



Mustard



Lupin



**Sulphur
Dioxide**

These are the 14 allergens that you need to find out whether they are in the food that you make. Consumers may ask about other ingredients, but these are the ones you have a legal obligation to know whether they are in the foods that you make.

How the information can be supplied

The information can be supplied on the menu, on chalk boards, tickets or provided verbally by an appropriate member of staff. It must be clear and conspicuous, not hidden away, 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.

An example of the wording:

Food Allergies and intolerances:
Please ask a member of staff if you require information on the ingredients in the food we serve.

It is no longer enough for businesses to say that they do not know whether or not a food contains an allergen and deny any knowledge, nor is it enough

to say that all their foods may contain allergens. Allergen information must be specific to the food, complete and accurate.

As a food business operator you cannot refuse to provide specific allergen information on foods served. You also cannot give incorrect or misleading information on a menu or through verbal communication.

Although there is a legal requirement to give all information about the allergens that are within the food you produce, there is no legal requirement to give details of any cross contamination of allergenic ingredients. As a business however you have a responsibility to assess the allergens that are used on the premises and reduce the likelihood of any cross-contamination. This leaflet is aiming to help you identify the allergens that you use as ingredients as well as reducing cross-contamination in non-allergenic foods.

Risk Assessment

The risk assessment has been divided into three sections covering Overall Management & Training, Kitchen Procedures and Front of House. This will allow you to assess whether the controls you currently have in place are effective and if any improvements can be made to ensure that the food you serve is safe.

If you are not certain that you can provide food that is suitable for someone with a food allergy then you should tell them, so they can then decide whether or not to eat the foods you provide.

Overall Management & Training

Assessment Questions

Action Points

Management

1. Do you have a written policy on food allergies and intolerances?

Yes No

You should consider the following:

- Identify the allergen risks
- Decide who is to have overall management responsibility for allergens and food safety.
- Ensure training is given to all staff (both permanent and temporary)
- Ensure there is always a trained member of staff on duty during opening hours
- Plan how to minimise the risks
- Display notices to remind staff of the risks.
- Plan how to communicate the risk between members of staff, and to customers.

Training

2. Have all kitchen staff received food allergen awareness training?

Yes No

3. Have front of house staff received food allergen awareness training?

Yes No

4. Is there always a member of staff available who knows what allergens are in which meals?

Yes No

Training should include the following:

- Train staff about the risks of providing the wrong information or serving food containing an ingredient that a customer is allergic to.
- Ensure Staff have access to and know where to find information on which foods contain allergens.
- Implement Kitchen procedures to prevent cross-contamination during storage, and preparation of food.
- Identify customers with food allergies when they book a table, or when staff take orders (e.g. menu reminders).
- Develop a system for waiters to alert kitchen staff that the food they are to prepare is for somebody who is allergic to certain ingredients.
- Have procedures in place to deal responsibly with a customer complaint over concerns that their food may be contaminated with an allergenic ingredient. Staff should not just remove the 'offending' allergen from a prepared dish and send it back on the same plate, because traces of the allergen will remain which could cause a reaction

Good Practice

Ensure all training given to staff is recorded and kept on file and that refresher training is given on a regular basis.

Kitchen Procedures

Allergenic Ingredient Identification

5. Which food allergens do you handle? (or see diagram on page 1)

Peanuts

Nuts including almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, cashews, pecans, Brazil nuts, pistachios, macadamias, and Queensland nuts

Sesame seeds

Fish

Eggs

Milk

Soya

Lupin

Celery

Crustaceans

Molluscs

Mustard

Cereals containing gluten: wheat, rye, barley, oats, spelt, kamut and their hybridised strains.

Sulphur dioxide and sulphites often expressed as SO₂, used as a preservative and often found in wine and dried fruit.

Continued on next page

Allergenic Ingredient Identification *continued*

Continued from previous page

Which food allergens do you handle?

- Identify all the allergens in each ingredient and decide how you will control their use, and prevent cross-contamination.
- Prepare a list of all of the meals that contain those allergenic ingredients
- Make a specification folder containing information for each item on the menu and the allergens it contains including the source of the allergen (i.e. the ingredient)

Important

It is important to think about all of the ingredients that are used i.e. what garnishes are used, what is used to thicken sauces, what oils are used such as sesame oil and nut oils.

You need to take steps to ensure this is carried out so you can comply with the legislation. You need to be able to provide this information to consumers.

6. Have you checked for allergens in ingredients you use? Including checking the labels of prepared food, sauces, and seasoning mixes?

Yes No

7. Does your supplier provide you with adequate labelling information?

Yes No

8. Do you check to see if any substituted items that have been delivered contain allergenic ingredients?

Yes No

9. Do you record any of the above checks?

Yes No

- Contact your supplier for the information, and make sure they understand why you need the information.
- Ensure they provide you with clear information and that they update you should the ingredients or their processing change.
- Think about how you can make staff remember to check for allergenic ingredients in new or replacement ingredients.
- Ensure that your suppliers only supply you with food labelled in English
- If you change your recipe or the ingredients used, ensure you update your allergen information and communicate this to all your staff.

Good Practice

You should consider how you would be able to demonstrate what steps you have taken to ensure allergen information is available to consumers and how you will prevent allergen cross contamination.

For example:

- Written records
- How frequently are records made?
- Who checks information is being recorded correctly?

Storage

10. Do you have a storage system to prevent cross-contamination of ingredients with other ingredients containing allergens?

Yes No

11. If you transfer ingredients from packaging into storage containers or fridges/freezers, do you have a procedure for retaining product information such as date codes, batch codes, allergen information?

Yes No

- Store ingredients containing allergens in a separate area or if this isn't possible, store on lower shelving
- Use a colour code system to identify ingredients containing allergens.
- Have a spillage plan in place to clean up allergenic ingredients.
- Ensure that if any ingredient is decanted into a separate container that all the product information including allergens is also transferred

Kitchen Procedures *continued*

Assessment Questions

Action Points

Preparation

12. Do you follow any procedures when preparing food for a customer with a food allergy?

Yes No

13. If yes, have you considered all aspects listed in the right hand column?

Yes No

- a) Check ingredient labelling for allergenic ingredients.
- b) Ensure that when preparing all foods, that care is taken to ensure that no cross contamination can occur between foods containing allergens and foods which are allergen free
- c) Where possible use separate equipment & utensils and separate preparation areas for allergen and allergen free foods. If not possible, thoroughly clean equipment/ utensils/ surfaces between uses.
- d) Make sure that thorough cleaning takes place before and after handling and preparing different foods
- e) Verify that all food handlers follow adequate hand-washing procedures.
- f) Don't re-use cooking oil, if there is a possibility that nut proteins/fish proteins/gluten will still be present. If possible have a separate pan or fryer for allergen and allergen free foods
- g) Take steps to prevent cross-contamination when food is served in a buffet style

Front of House

Assessment Questions

Action Points

14. Do you have procedures for informing customers about dishes that contain particular allergens

Yes No

15. Do you ensure that information is available and customers know where to find it (menu/staff/notice)?

Yes No

Look out for these FSA chef cards as customers may show them to you



- a) Decide how you will communicate allergen information to your customers
- b) If all the information is to be provided next to each dish on the menu, make sure that this includes all of the allergens as per your specification folder
- c) Have a system in place to make sure that your menu is always up to date
- d) If you are relying on your front of house staff to communicate allergen information to customers, ensure that your staff have full access to all the information they need
- e) Have a system in place to make sure you communicate any changes to your staff and that the place where they are getting the information from is also up to date and accurate

Important

It is a legal requirement to provide information on foods that contain allergens. You need to decide whether you are putting all the information on your menus, a notice or having the information available from members of staff.

You could also consider putting the information on your website as well.

More Advice?

Further advice and information for businesses including technical guidance on food allergen labelling requirements and an online training resource is available through the Food Standard Agency website www.food.gov.uk/allergen-resources. Information about the Food Information to Consumer Regulations can be found on the Norfolk County Council website www.norfolk.gov.uk/abc. If you wish to speak with a member of the Food and safety team please call us on 01603 212747 during office hours or email foodandsafetyteam@norwich.gov.uk.

This leaflet has been reproduced with the kind permission of Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Essex and Suffolk County Council Trading Standards Departments.