

Food Safety Series (No.3)

December 2016

## Allergens

WEB VERSION

### Introduction

People who experience an allergic / intolerant reaction to food can become very ill and sometimes reactions can even be fatal. There is no cure for food allergy and even cooking food does not make it safe. The only way someone can avoid getting ill is to make sure they do not eat the foods they are allergic to so it is important food handlers take food allergy seriously.

It is a legal requirement to provide the correct allergen information about the ingredients that is in the food they make or serve, to their customers. The Food Information Regulations 2014 (FIR) lists 14 allergens that need to be identified if they are used as ingredients in a dish.

This means all food businesses need to provide information about the allergenic ingredients used in foods sold or provided by them. The following list tells you what these 14 allergens are and provides some examples of foods where they may be found:

**Celery** - This includes celery stalks, leaves and seeds and celeriac

**Cereals containing gluten** - This includes wheat (such as spelt and Khorasan wheat/ Kamut), rye, barley and oats dusted with flour

**Crustaceans** - This includes crabs, lobster, prawns and scampi

**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 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

**Molluscs** - This includes mussels, land snails, squid and whelks

**Mustard** - This includes liquid mustard, mustard powder and mustard seeds

**Nuts** - This includes almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, cashews, pecan nuts, Brazil nuts, pistachio nuts, macadamia nuts

**Peanuts** - This can be found in biscuits, cakes, curries, desserts and sauces such as for satay

**Sesame seeds** - This can be found in bread, breadsticks, hummus, sesame oil and tahini

**Soya** - This can be found in bean curd, edamame beans, miso paste, textured soya protein, soya flour or tofu

**Sulphur dioxide** - This is often used as a preservative in dried fruit, meat products, soft drinks and vegetables as well as in wine / beer

### Source FSA website

Details of these allergens will have to be listed clearly in an obvious place. This does not mean you have to label food with allergen details but you must ensure the information is accessible such as on a menu, chalkboard or in a freely available folder. Forms and posters can be downloaded free of charge from the FSA website.

Where allergen information is not provided upfront, you will need to point to where it could be obtained e.g. website or orally. However, if the allergen information is provided orally it must be accurate and consistent.

Communication is essential and staff must be aware of exchanging any information with regard to allergens from a customer to staff or knowledge of an allergen within a food they have handled.

The business must have an Allergen Policy that sets out how the premises comply with (FIC). This should include:

**Training** - food handlers and anyone involved in the food business should be trained in allergen awareness and kept informed of the policies and procedures with regard to food allergens.

**Controls** - from purchasing to serving to your customers, the policy should detail how you ensure that the information provided is accurate and where free-from food is provided the controls in place to protect the food.

These controls should include checks on prepacked foods where used as an ingredient in a recipe or as a meal to ensure :

- deliveries checked to make sure what is delivered is what was ordered
- labels checked to ensure the recipe has not been changed
- copies of the ingredient information kept
- ingredients kept in the original containers where possible, or a copy of the labelling information kept (either on paper or stored electronically)

- Containers are clearly labelled, for ingredients which are delivered in bulk, and then transferred or stored in smaller containers and staff are aware of where this allergen information is stored and how it is kept .
- Standard recipes followed or any changes noted on chefs card (see FSA website)
- Any free from foods on display protected to prevent cross contamination.
- Signage clearly displayed requesting customers with allergic reactions to notify staff (see FSA website)

#### **IMPORTANT NOTE**

Ignorance is no excuse and you are not able to say that you do not know what allergens are in the food you serve OR that all the foods you serve could contain an allergen.

However, you must never guess and if you are unable to provide food safely do not do it and be honest with the customer.

#### **Further information**

- Food Standards Agency website ([www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk))
- Other leaflets in the Food Safety Series
- from MAS Environmental ([www.masenv.co.uk/fsq](http://www.masenv.co.uk/fsq))

### **Other leaflets in the Food Safety Guidance**

#### **Notes Series**

- 1 Food Safety – An introduction to legislation for University premises
- 2 Catering Options - A guide for departments and faculties
- 4 Food Hygiene Training Requirements
- 5 Guidance on Departmental Barbecue Safety
- 6 Purchase, Delivery and Storage of Food
- 7 Preparation and Service of Food
- 8 Personal Hygiene Requirements for Individuals Preparing or Serving Food
- 9 Cleaning and Pest Control in Food Preparation Areas
- 10 Food Safety Guidance for Departmental Christmas Parties
- 11 Food Safety for Charity Events – A guide for departments and faculties
- 12 Food Complaints - A guide for departments and University operated food outlets

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