

# **FOOD ALLERGIES**

**Revised March 2023**

On 13th December 2014 the EU Food Information for Consumers Regulation came into effect. Within the UK this has been implemented through the Food Information Regulations 2014 (FIR).

These regulations have been introduced because of the increasing numbers of people with food allergies, food intolerances and coeliac disease.

The new regulations place a legal responsibility upon food businesses to provide accurate information to consumers about the ingredients in food on their menus. There are 14 categories of food allergens listed in FIR and every food business must identify if any of these allergens are present within the dishes on their menus.

## **The 14 allergens**

The 14 allergens that need to be declared when used as ingredients are:

- Celery e.g. celery stalks, leaves, seeds and celeriac
- Cereals containing gluten e.g. wheat, spelt, khorasan, kamut
- Crustaceans e.g. crab, lobster, prawns, scampi
- Eggs e.g. raw, pasteurised, cooked
- Fish e.g. cod, haddock, tuna, salmon
- Lupin e.g. flour, seeds
- Milk e.g. cow, sheep, goat, buffalo
- Molluscs e.g. mussels, land snails, squid, whelks, oysters
- Mustard e.g. liquid mustard, powder, seeds
- Nuts e.g. almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, pecan nuts
- Peanuts e.g. ground nuts
- Sesame seeds e.g. found within bread
- Soya e.g. edamame beans, tofu
- Sulphur dioxide e.g. preservative in food

## **Providing Information**

The allergen information can be held within an information pack, on the internet, on a chalkboard or on the menu. If allergen information is not easily identifiable, then a sign should be displayed in a prominent position e.g. where a customer would place their food order, at the till point, at the entrance to the restaurant or on the table.

All Allergen Information linked to any products available can be found on the Reli – Ops system. This is available to any customers when pre – ordering through the system.

If the food is served as a takeaway or picnic hamper, any food prepared ‘in house’ and then packaged must be labelled. The label needs to show the name of the food and the ingredients list with the 14 allergens required to be declared by law emphasised within it. The allergen information could be provided verbally before the purchase of food and in a written format when the food is delivered.

The information must be verifiable and confirmed as accurate.

The change in law means that food businesses will no longer be able to say ‘you don’t know what allergens are in the food you serve’. You will also not be able to say that ‘foods could contain allergens’.

As long as you have displayed some information regarding allergens, the customer has a responsibility to ask for information if they have a specific dietary need.

## **Gluten-free**

Foods that you declare are gluten-free must not contain more than 20mg/kg of gluten. You will also need to consider if this food may have come into contact with other foods that are not gluten-free.

## **Responsibilities**

It is the responsibility of the Catering Operations manager to ensure that the Chef Manager has accurately assessed the food on current menus and is able to provide the teams with the necessary information on food allergens. This information should be reviewed on a regular basis.

It is the responsibility of the Catering Operations Manager and Chef Manager to ensure that all employees who have responsibilities for food have received allergen training and that this is recorded.

## **Kitchen Practices**

The Chef Manager should ensure that the following practices are in place before making an assessment of the allergens that may be present in ingredients:

- If food is decanted, transfer/copy the original label on to secondary containers.
- Remove old labels on food containers.
- Check labels on foods and if allergen information is missing, contact the supplier to obtain the relevant allergen information.
- Check that the same brands of food are delivered as in previous orders.
- Discuss with your suppliers about being informed of allergens in foods and any future changes.

Look at the 14 allergens and check the storage conditions:

- Nuts should be stored in sealed containers separate to other foods
- Can fish or shellfish be stored in a separate refrigerator?
- Can gluten-free products be easily identifiable in colour coded packaging?

## **Allergen assessments**

### **Step 1**

Check all labels on foods and assess the contents to see if they contain any of the 14 allergens. Record this information.

### **Step 2**

Check all of the dishes on the menus and assess these against the 14 allergens using the initial food assessment.

### **Step 3**

Look at equipment that is used in the kitchen to see if any foods during preparation would come into direct contact with other foods and cross contaminate.

Identify if any reorganisation of foods needs to take place within the kitchen or any separate equipment needs to be purchased.

### **Step 4**

Confirm on spare menus if any meals are 'free from' meals and this can be used by your teams as your allergen information.

As long as Chefs consistently use the same products in all menus and deliveries do not contain different products, then your allergen information would be up to date.

It is extremely important that the most senior person on duty speaks to the customer about their specific dietary needs and states the facts regarding the preparation of food and the potential of allergens within the meal.

### **Preparing food for customers with specific dietary requirements**

If the customer has a critical allergy to a food allergen, it is important that the Chef Manager speaks directly to the customer regarding the practices for preparing food.

The customer is relying on being given accurate information about food preparation and may make the decision to choose an alternative meal or not eat the meal.

The following is guidance to be used to avoid cross contamination with allergens:

- Use separate chopping boards, crockery, cutlery, pans and cooking utensils for gluten free meals. These may be colour coded.
- Always use washed and clean preparation surfaces and utensils for preparing allergen free meals.
- Wash hands before preparing allergen free meals and prepare allergen free meals in a separate area of the kitchen.
- Keep allergen free products and meals away from other foods and if a meal has become contaminated from an allergen during storage or preparation, ensure that this is not served to the customer requiring an allergen free meal.

### **Dealing with customer requests**

If the customer has a severe food allergy, it is possible that they will contact the school prior to arrival. The Chef Manager should contact the customer directly to discuss the specific meal requirements and the preparation methods. This should then be confirmed in writing on the customer allergen form.

If the customer makes the enquiry at the time of eating in the school, then the most senior person on duty at the time should discuss the specific meal requirements directly with the customer.

**Under no circumstances should employees 'guess' about the contents of a meal or give misleading information.** The customer requires the facts about the contents of the meal and the food preparation methods.

### **Customer suffering from anaphylaxis**

In the event of a customer suffering from an anaphylaxis shock, an ambulance must be called immediately and a first aider notified.

## **Training**

All employees involved in food safety must be trained in allergen awareness. This training must be recorded.