

# Allergen Information for Non-Prepacked Foods Best Practice: Providing written allergen information

Providing and presenting written allergen information.

## Providing written allergen information

28. It is best practice that food businesses should make allergen information easily available in writing for consumers and ensure staff are able to support this with a conversation.

29. When deciding how to provide written allergen information, food businesses should be mindful of the following principles that will help them communicate the allergens in their food most effectively:

- **easy to use** - it should be easy for consumers to identify dishes/products that are safe for them to eat
- **clear** - it should clearly indicate which allergens are present in dishes/products
- **comprehensive** - it should provide information on all 14 allergens (as opposed to just focusing on a subset, for example those deemed by the FBO as most prevalent or severe)
- **accurate** - it can (and must) be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that it remains accurate, correctly displaying the presence of allergens in each dish

30. With the above in mind, food businesses should choose the format of the written allergen information that best suits their business model and allows them to keep the information accurate and up to date.

## How to present written allergen information

31. Food businesses can choose whether to provide the information using words or symbols with accompanying words. If symbols are used, the name of the allergen should form part of it e.g. be written underneath, however if the allergen name does not make up part of the symbol, a legend or key with the allergen name in written form, clearly defining which allergen each symbol represents, must be present allowing easy cross-referencing for consumers.

Tips

### Example

Allergen information could be provided as a 'Contains' statement, for example 'Chicken Salad (Contains: **milk, egg, mustard**)'. This could be used on a menu or on a label/ticket next to foods on display at a bakery for example.

32. For groups of allergens such as tree nuts and cereals containing gluten, when expressing the allergen information in words the specific nut or cereal should be provided.

Tips

### Example

Chicken Tikka Masala (Contains: **milk, nuts (almond)**).

33. If using symbols, a single symbol can be used to represent the group of allergens, for example one symbol for cereals containing gluten and one for tree nuts, however the food business should be able to advise the specific nut or cereal if a consumer requires more specific information.

Tips

### Example

#### Knickerbocker Glory ?

A delightful and indulgent dessert featuring layers of ice cream, fresh fruit, and jelly, all topped with whipped cream, almonds, and a cherry on top. This classic treat is perfect for satisfying your sweet tooth.

Contains:



Treenuts



Milk



Sulphur Dioxide

34. To give a better service and choice to consumers, food businesses could provide a breakdown of the components within a dish, rather than just providing the information on the allergens present in the whole dish. This will allow consumers to request dishes are amended to omit or substitute their allergens (where possible) rather than discount the dish when choosing what to eat.

35. This practice could also work in instances where a consumer customises the components of a dish for example the contents of a sandwich or salad.

36. Food businesses should take appropriate steps to minimise cross-contamination risks when adjusting dishes to meet allergen requirements. Cross contact with allergens should also be considered when they are not intentional ingredients in dishes.

Tips

### Example

BBQ Chicken Burger and Coleslaw (Chicken Burger: **wheat, fish, celery**; BBQ sauce: **celery, fish**; Bap: **wheat, eggs, sesame**; Coleslaw: **egg, celery, mustard**)

If a customer had an allergy to mustard for example, the dish could be served without the coleslaw.

## Where should it be?

37. Written allergen information should be readily available, if possible, without consumers having to ask for it, such as on the main menu (paper or digital), allergen booklet on a counter or matrix displayed on a wall in a consumer accessible area. An example matrix can be found at Annex B.

38. Food businesses who may need to change their menu or allergen information regularly may wish to make this information available upon request in a separate document so they can more easily update it and control the information.

39. If the information is not on the main menu, food businesses should let consumers know where allergen information can be found with a clear message on the menu. Food businesses who do not use a menu should display this message where they display their food options such as on a board or next to food in a counter.

40. Staff should be fully aware of where to find this information and be able to advise the consumer of its location or provide the written information if required.

41. There are a number of ways food businesses could provide the written information. They should choose the method that is most appropriate for their business model, such as on a menu (paper or digital), a separate matrix, a label placed next to the food where consumers choose from a counter or similar. Whichever method is chosen it must be easy for consumers to understand the information and to access, either themselves or by asking staff.

42. If written allergen information can only be made available upon request rather than upfront, such as on the main menus, then signs or messages on menus should be displayed such as: 'We have a menu with allergen information, please speak to staff who will be happy to provide it'.

43. Food businesses could choose to adopt a combination of both approaches by asking consumers if they require allergen information as well as displaying signs/messages.

44. Food businesses can decide whether to provide allergen information in paper or digital format.

45. If a food business chooses to provide allergen information in a digital format they should have an alternative way of accessing the information for those who may not be able to access the information digitally and as a backup should there be a problem with the digital information.