

Allergen Information for Non-Prepacked Foods Best Practice: Voluntary information

Voluntary information and how to keep allergen information accurate.

Voluntary information

51. Some food businesses may wish to make claims that dishes are free from certain allergens such as 'peanut free' or 'gluten free'. There are specific rules that must be followed when making 'gluten free' claims.

52. Further guidance on making 'free from' claims can be found in the [Food allergen labelling and information requirements technical guidance](#).

53. If making 'free from' claims on the same document as telling consumers about the presence of allergens in food, food businesses must make it clear whether they are indicating the allergen is present in the food or the food is 'free from' the allergen, i.e. it must be very clear if the dish contains peanuts or is peanut free to avoid confusion.

54. Consideration should also be given to whether consumers should be informed about the potential presence of unintended allergens for example due to the risk of cross-contamination within the catering setting itself or 'may contain' warnings on the ingredients. This is often referred to as precautionary allergen labelling (PAL). Guidance on the application of PAL can be found in the [Food allergen labelling and information requirements technical guidance](#).

Tips

Example

To advise consumers about the potential presence of unintended allergens you could use a statement such as:

'May contain **egg**'

Or

'We use **peanuts, nuts, soy** and **wheat** (gluten) in our kitchen, please speak to us so we can prepare your meal safely'

Other allergens

55. People can be allergic or intolerant to foods outside of the 14 mandated allergens and therefore need to avoid eating those foods. Food businesses should be able to tell a consumer if other ingredients are present in food if asked where possible. To do this food businesses should keep records of the full ingredients in the foods they serve, such as by retaining food labels, and

ensure that front of house staff can easily check these when necessary or know who to ask, allowing them to confirm to consumers whether other allergens are present in the food. It is important that staff do not guess or make assumptions based on what ingredients they think may or may not be present. There may be instances where it is not possible for a food business to provide accurate information about other ingredients e.g. when the request involves non-prepacked food supplied to the food business that does not need to be accompanied by full ingredients information.

56. If food businesses are unable to provide accurate ingredient information, they must inform the consumer so they are able to make an informed choice.

How to keep allergen information accurate

57. The allergen information provided to consumers must be accurate. This is a legal requirement as well as being vital to ensure the safety of consumers.

58. Food businesses should have procedures in place to ensure that their allergen information is accurate and up to date at all times.

59. Ways to ensure allergen information is up to date and accurate include:

- Keeping records of ingredients
- Regularly checking whether ingredients in products have changed
- Minimising the occasions where last minute substitutions are required (if this occurs, ingredients should be checked and allergen information updated accordingly)
- Regularly checking the allergen information is accurate and updating where required
- Keeping a record of recipes so they are made to the same specification each time.
- Having and using approved suppliers with supply chain assurances
- Conducting checks with suppliers to ensure they provide accurate allergen information and ask them to agree to inform the businesses of any allergen changes
- Having and implementing an allergen management policy (see [‘Safer food, better business for caterers’](#) pack)
- Allergen management training for staff (see FSA’s [Food Allergy and Intolerance Training](#))