

Calorie Wise

The Calorie Wise scheme helps food businesses to display calories on their menus, enabling customers to make healthier choices when eating out and on the go.

Calorie Wise is a free and voluntary scheme delivered by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and district councils in Northern Ireland. The scheme encourages food businesses to display energy information – in both kilojoules (kJ) and kilocalories (kcal) – on menus and to provide healthier options, empowering consumers to make healthier, more informed choices when eating out.

With over half of adults (65%) in Northern Ireland either overweight or obese (Department of Health, 2020), Calorie Wise can make a difference to the choices consumers make when eating out. To help maintain a healthy weight it is important not to eat more energy than we need.

- men need around 2,500 calories a day
- women need around 2,000 calories a day

There are three main benefits to putting energy information on the menu:

- it can help food businesses increase profit due to standardisation of recipes and reduction of food waste
- it can give businesses a competitive edge – current food trends point towards a rise in demand for healthier foods and products
- it's what consumers want – research shows 89% of people would like to see more information about healthier options when eating out (FSA, 2021)

Any catering business with a [Food Hygiene Rating](#) of three or more can apply to become Calorie Wise, whether it's a restaurant, takeaway, café, coffee shop, pub, sandwich shop or staff canteen. Businesses can get the award by displaying energy information clearly and prominently at the point of choice, meaning on menus, menu boards and/or online, for food and non-alcoholic drinks.

To help businesses achieve the Calorie Wise award, the following support is available from local council environmental health departments:

- help and advice on how to calculate and display energy information
- tips for standardising portion sizes
- guidance on offering healthier options for customers by making small and simple changes to menus

Becoming Calorie Wise

Businesses can apply for either the Gold or Silver Calorie Wise award. The only difference between the gold and silver award is the requirement to label all or 30% of menu items. Businesses taking part in the scheme will need to display energy information according to the following principles set out below:

Calorie Wise Gold

- Energy information is displayed clearly and prominently at the point of choice

- Energy information is provided for all standardised food and drink items sold (including breakfast, lunch and dinner menus and starter, main course and dessert menus where relevant) and all side portions
- Energy information is provided per portion/item/meal
- Information on daily energy requirements is displayed clearly and prominently in a way that is appropriate for the customer

Calorie Wise Silver

- Energy information is displayed clearly and prominently at the point of choice
- Energy information is provided for 30% of standardised food and drink items sold (spread evenly across breakfast, lunch and dinner menus and starter, main course and dessert menus where relevant) and 30% of side portions
- Energy information is provided per portion/item/meal
- Information on daily energy requirements is displayed clearly and prominently in a way that is appropriate for the customer

Businesses will need to accurately calculate the energy content – in both kilojoules (kJ) and kilocalories (kcal) – of menu items. This can be carried out for free using the online tool [MenuCal](#).

More information on calculating energy content can be found in the [Guidance on voluntary energy labelling for out of home businesses in Northern Ireland](#).

Step by step guide

- Download and read through the [Guidance on voluntary energy labelling for out of home businesses in Northern Ireland](#). It includes suggestions on how to comply with the above principles
- For further information and advice contact your [local council's environmental health department](#) and ask to speak to the Calorie Wise Champion
- Standardise recipes and portion sizes, calculate energy content of menu items and display information at the point of choice
- When you can demonstrate that you meet the four principles set out above, contact your local environmental health department to request an application form for the Calorie Wise scheme. An audit will then be carried out using the [Calorie Wise audit tool](#)
- If the audit is successful, you can then display the relevant Calorie Wise window sticker to show your achievement. This will be awarded by the Calorie Wise Champion
- A re-audit will be conducted every two years