

Allergen checklist for food businesses

Guidance on allergens for food businesses in the retail and catering industry. Includes advice on providing allergen information and avoiding cross-contamination in the kitchen.

There are specific allergen labelling and information requirements food businesses must meet if they operate in the UK. This checklist provides tips on how your business can meet those requirements.

Following this checklist will help your business to provide safe meals for customers with food allergy or intolerance. It is recommended that this checklist is shared with staff and managers. The checklist can be used in conjunction with our free food allergy training.

Allergen checklist for managers

- Have you made clear to the team, who has overall responsibility for allergen management?
- Is a responsible member of staff available on each shift to manage requests from customers with allergies?
- If you use a sign requesting customers ask about allergens, is this displayed prominently in a place where customers make their food choices?
- Are staff clear on how to avoid allergen cross-contamination?
- Do kitchen staff know how to record allergens when recipes are changed?
- Are there procedures in place when ingredients are delivered, to verify that you have received the items you have ordered?
- If there are any changes to the ingredients in your regular order (for example substitutions), do you have a procedure in place to approve and record this?
- Are there clear instructions in place for the cleaning of premises, equipment and work tools?

You could also

- Suggest staff ask customers whether they have allergies or intolerances when taking orders.
- Have a statement on printed menus and flyers to inform customers how to obtain allergen information for your dishes.
- Provide instructions in the kitchen area to explain how to prevent cross-contamination.

- Ask staff to use an allergy matrix when planning recipes.
- Provided staff with suitable allergen training on an annual basis.
- Make your staff aware of what to do if a customer has an allergic reaction during a meal.

Allergen checklist for kitchen staff

Food storage

- Are ingredients stored in sealed and labelled containers?
- If you transfer ingredients from their original packaging do you have a way of identifying the allergens present in the product?
- Are open ingredient packages stored in sealed containers where appropriate?
- Do you have a spillage policy to deal with spillages of one ingredient onto another ingredient?

Food preparation

- Do you have accurate recipe lists, so that there is a clear list of the allergens present in the food you serve?
- Do you have reminders in place to update records when you make recipe changes?
- Do you wash your hands thoroughly with soap and hot water when preparing allergen-free meals?
- When an order comes in from an allergic customer, do you have a clear process in place to ensure that the food can be safely prepared and served to the correct customer?
- Are you aware of the allergens in garnishes, toppings, sauces or dressings so that you can avoid using them?
- Do you clean kitchen surfaces regularly so that there is no visible food debris or crumbs from other meals?

Allergen checklist for waiters and front of house staff

- Do you have an effective way of accurately informing customers about the allergens in the dishes on your menu?
- Do you communicate cross-contamination risks to customers with an allergy or intolerance?
- Do you have accurate written information you can refer to when asked about allergens or know who to refer allergen information requests to?
- How do you record a customer's allergen-free order and clearly communicate this to kitchen staff?

- Are you aware of what you should do if a customer experiences an allergic reaction during a meal? For more information read [NHS guidance on anaphylaxis](#)(Opens in a new window).

Allergen checklist for delivery orders and takeaway food

Orders

- Are staff aware of how to take orders with specific allergy requirements over the phone or online?
- Do you have a statement on your website to advise customers where they can obtain allergen information before they place their order?
- Is your online allergen information clear, accurate and easily accessible at the point when customers order food?
- If you provide food via an online ordering site, do you follow their requirements for providing allergen information?

Delivery

- Have you removed possible cross-contamination risks during the delivery of the order from your business to the customer?
- When the order is delivered to the customer, is it clear which is the allergen-free meal? (You can use stickers or a note on the container in permanent marker to label each meal).