

New Allergen Regulations



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On the 13th December 2014, new changes will take effect in regard to the existing allergen regulations. These changes will have an impact on restaurants, cafes, take-aways and bars which serve food. Failure to comply with these changes could result in an **unlimited fine**.

The Government has made these changes to ensure that customers who are dining out are being given the opportunity to make an informed decision about the food which they are about to consume. The limited information currently available on most menus is not sufficient for people who suffer from allergies, particularly the more obscure allergies, and can easily lead to illness and even fatality in the most extreme circumstances.

Under the new Regulations, anyone who serves food will be obliged to provide information on allergens, particularly highlighting any allergenic ingredients contained with the product. The level of information to be made available will be similar to that currently provided on pre-packaged foods purchased from a store.

There is currently a list of the top 14 allergens, but this is not an exhaustive list and therefore - to avoid any confusion - a full list of ingredients for each dish should be available.

The top 14 allergens are as follows:

Cereals containing gluten, Crustaceans, Fish, Eggs, Molluscs, Soybeans, Milk, Nuts, Peanuts, Celery, Mustard, Sesame Seeds, Sulphites, Lupin Flour.

Most menus currently contain a disclaimer which tells the customer which dishes may contain traces of allergens – but after 13th December 2014, this will no longer be adequate. A breakdown of any allergens contained within a specific meal will have to be clearly indicated.

With only a few months to go, now is a good time to start preparing for the new regulations to go 'live'.

The first step is to make sure that suppliers are providing accurate information regarding the ingredients of the products which they are supplying. In order to comply with the new Regulations, you will need to keep up-to-date ingredient information for products in a file in the kitchen, or displayed on the wall so that they are immediately accessible to any member of staff. This could simply be accomplished by retaining the packaging for a product.

Customers need to be made aware that they can ask members of staff about allergenic ingredients; therefore it would be a good idea to put up a Notice alerting them to this option. Examples of wording can be found on the Food Standards Agency website at www.good.gov.uk, and includes wording such as:

"Food allergies and intolerances. Before ordering please speak to our staff about your requirements."

The Notice can be at the food order point or even contained within the menu itself.

It is extremely important that there is always someone available at the premises who can deal with any queries regarding allergens. In order to ensure that all information is up-to-date and correct, it is advisable to have a written folder of information for staff to revert to – particularly as items such as 'daily specials' will also need to be included - and this will be subject to regular change.

All staff need to be aware of these changes to the Regulations, and therefore prior to the December date you should arrange staff training and ensure you have the relevant documentation to prove that this was done should it be required.

Please remember that failure to comply with these requirements can earn you an unlimited fine. Make sure you are prepared well ahead of the December date.

If you would like to discuss the best ways to start preparing for these changes, then you can contact either Anthony Horne or Stephanie Williams on 0161 237 9961.