

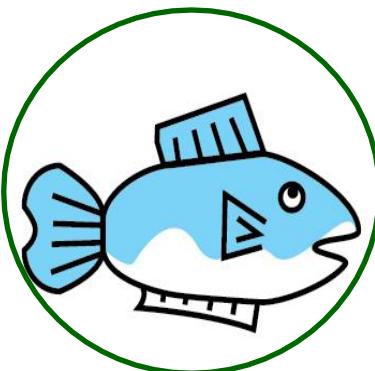
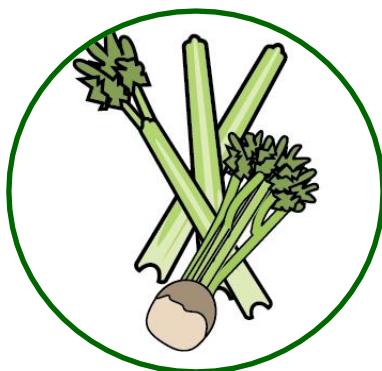


Allergen
ware month 2026
In Food Service



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RESOURCE PACK



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WE SUPPORT:

#allerjanuary

Food Allergen Customer Excellence **2026**



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 2026 Resource Pack!

This year's Resource Pack takes us to a new era with enhanced controls and measures as part of the continuous improvement process.

There was a significant amount of consultation recently and new guidance has been released for catering businesses on communicating allergen information to customers. (Note: for England, Wales and Northern Ireland)

It follows a consultation last year asking caterers and interested groups about how best to present allergen ingredient information.

The FSA has explained "The overarching approach in this guidance is designed to meet the expectation from consumers that allergen information should be: easily available in writing and be underpinned with a conversation".

Here are the key points:

1. Written Allergen Information:

- Catering businesses should ideally provide written allergen information for non-prepacked foods.
- This information should be easily accessible, such as on menus, allergen booklets, or displayed allergen matrices.

2. Encouraging Conversations:

- Businesses should encourage conversations between staff and customers about allergen requirements.
- Staff should be trained to provide accurate allergen information and explain potential cross-contamination risks.

3. Online Orders:

- Allergen information should be available online, ideally no more than one click away.
- If accurate allergen information cannot be provided online, businesses should ask customers about allergen requirements before taking the order.

4. Pre-Ordered Parties and Large Group Bookings:

- Allergen information should be requested at the time of booking and discussed on the day of the event to account for any changes in ingredients or requirements.

5. Free Tools and Resources:

- The FSA provides free tools such as allergy icons, an allergen matrix, and a downloadable allergy poster to help businesses implement the guidance.

These guidelines aim to improve safety and inclusion for customers with food hypersensitivities, promoting consumer confidence in food businesses.

Broadly this is good advice, and catering businesses should take time to read through.

<https://www.food.gov.uk/news-alerts/news/updated-industry-guidance-issued-for-food-allergen-information-in-the-out-of-home-sector>

There is a suite of new icons and posters that catering businesses can utilise.

<https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/download-your-allergen-icons-and-posters>

Note: Use of icons- These are acceptable but must be footnoted with the actual allergen.
(Not group of allergens)



January represents a great time of the year to renew, refresh and reinvigorate all your allergen training, systems, procedures, and communication methods with consumers.

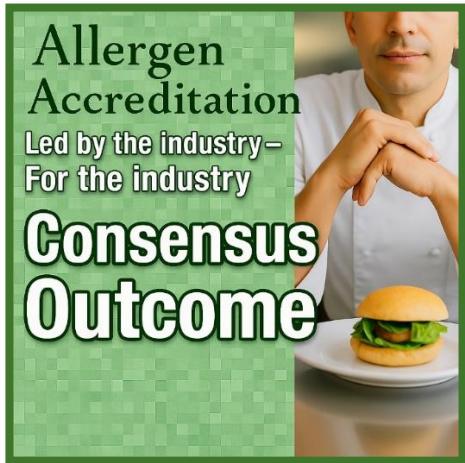
Already in February and beyond?

Not an excuse so act now!

Thank you for taking time out to be part of #allerjanuary and continuing with your **Food Allergen Customer Excellence** journey!

Industry Best Practice and what this now looks like

There was a consensus amongst members to enhance controls and better serve the food hypersensitive customer.



Written allergens on menus

Instigate dialogue on allergens

Other ingredient availability

Quality Controls

Non catering staff training

For all catering businesses allergens must be declared and information provided when asked for. For PPDS products all allergens as well as a full ingredient list is attached to the label. Accredited business must provide enhanced allergen information and adhere to new standards of verbal interaction.

The 14 allergens that must be declared:

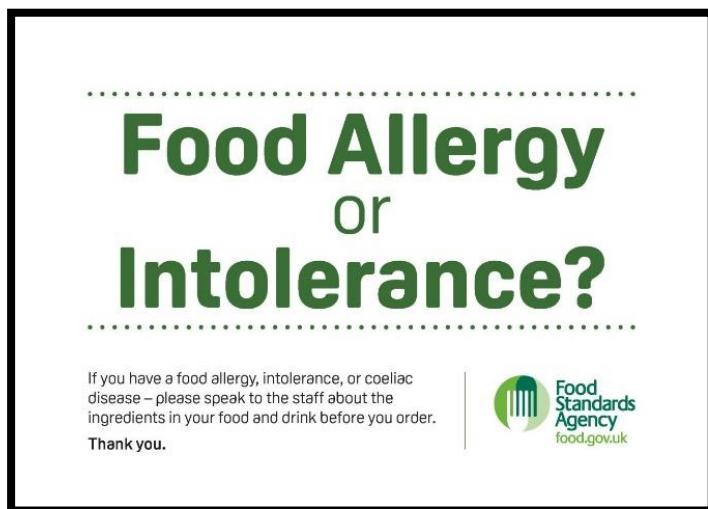
1. **Cereals containing gluten** – wheat, rye, barley, oats, spelt or kamut
2. **Crustaceans** – e.g. lobster, crab, prawns and langoustine
3. **Egg**
4. **Fish**
5. **Lupin**
6. **Milk**
7. **Molluscs** – e.g. squid, octopus, mussels, cockles and snails
8. **Tree Nuts**
9. **Peanut**
10. **Soya**
11. **Sesame**
12. **Celery and celeriac**
13. **Mustard**
14. **Sulphur dioxide and sulphites**

Keynote 1- it is the cereal that is the allergen containing ingredient therefore the cereal itself must be named not just “GLUTEN”.) **Example: Allergen contents - Wheat OR Wheat (Gluten)**

Keynote 2- it is the actual tree nut – almond, hazelnut, walnut, cashew, pecan, Brazil, pistachio, macadamia and Queensland- that is the allergen containing ingredient therefore the nut itself must be named not just “NUTS”.) **Example: Allergen contents - Hazelnut OR Hazelnut (Tree Nut)**

What does the venue need to advertise allergen information?

At the very least a sign, and more situated at each service point, like this one from the FSA:



Businesses can adapt the sign to fit in with their corporate imagery.



An example sign from an Allergen Accredited businesses

Does allergen information need to be in writing?

For industry best practice all allergen ingredients should be available in writing and on the menu.

What about other ingredients? These should be available in writing that has been checked. Customers could ask you about any ingredients!

Use a matrix to keep all your allergen information in one place.

Dishes and their allergen content

(Note – Please state the name of the cereal(s) containing gluten* and/or the name of the nut(s)†)

Review date:

Reviewed by:



You can find this template,
including more information at
www.food.gov.uk/allergy-guidance

You can download the above here: [Dishes and their allergen content - menu chart \(also known as the Allergen Matrix\)](#)

Some businesses use different signage and disclaimers

Too many businesses are now displaying disclaimers on signage and on their menus. Most of these read in very poor taste for the food hypersensitive customer and goes against the grain of any level of customer service.

Some examples:

- Our kitchen uses various allergens and ingredients and therefore we cannot guarantee there are no allergens in any of our dishes.
- For those with severe allergies we do not recommend eating here

Allergen Accreditation feels that this attitude and approach is a very poor substitute for safe food and allergen management systems.

The Law was introduced to protect food hypersensitive consumers, encourage them to eat out more and ask caterers to relay what dishes and drinks include any of the TOP 14 allergens.

What about may contain statements?

It is prudent to let your customers know if your products may contain certain allergens. This information may come from package labelling OR from observations of your own preparation, cooking and serving techniques. Crucially you're enabling your customer to make an informed decision. Having a *may contain* on everything you sell, however, suggests poor overall food safety management.

Allergen Accredited business must follow strict Industry Best Practice rules...

When we decant food from packaging, cook it and serve it on a plate WE take on the responsibility of telling our customer what's in the dish
- no may's no but's!

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Menu Descriptions

Your allergen communications journey

The more information you provide, the better. Describe what your ingredients are and offer as many opportunities to customers as possible during their journey through your business: Clear Signage, Labelling, Table talkers, Merchandising display stickers/decals, Menu/dish descriptions and Emphasis on any un-expected ingredients.

It's obvious to you every day, in your kitchen, but sometimes it's not so obvious for your customer!

Change to a traditional recipe?
“NEW RECIPE”
“Vegetable Stew-with no added salt-
seasoned with Fresh CELERY”
Allergen: Contains Celery (Plus your other
allergen ingredients)

Use buttermilk?
“Tender Chicken Breast marinated in
Buttermilk”
Allergen: Contains MILK (Plus your other
allergen ingredients)

Artisan bakery? Recipe infusion?
“Rustic Baguette with Walnut Oil”
Allergen: Contains Walnut (Plus your
other allergen ingredients)

Monter au beurre?
Added that square of butter for the essential
glaze?
“Butter Glazed Roast Gravy”
Allergen: Contains MILK (Plus your other
allergen ingredients)

Recipe engineering?
Adding a spoonful of double cream to your soup?
“Stilton and Broccoli Soup with real fresh CREAM”
Allergen: Contains MILK (Plus your other allergen ingredients)

Using Pea or Pea protein?

Or any other unexpected ingredient, for that matter. Get it on the menu: "Vegan Beef Burger made with Pea"

Pea? Really?

Pea protein is a particular concern for people with an allergy to peas. As pea protein is increasingly being used as an ingredient in a range of foods, including in foods where it may be unexpected by consumers, it would benefit from being emphasised on food labels to protect allergic consumers. In addition, as consumer exposure to pea protein increases, an increase in pea allergy may be anticipated and so monitoring for increasing prevalence of pea allergy is important, particularly in people with allergies to other legumes such as peanut.

Make sure Pea and Pea Protein appear on the menu description where it is less obvious pea is in the recipe. Some examples: Vegan Burger with Pea, Vegetarian Pea Bolognaise.

Training & useful links

All staff that work in and around consumables should have a basic induction and overview of allergens.

Then, dependent on their actual job descriptions they will need to be put through a structured training delivery to ensure they fully understand:

- The 14 top allergens and where they occur in the business
- The law
- Handling procedures, PPE, and cross contamination
- Kitchen systems including HACCP and monitoring procedures
- The effects on people with allergies
- What anaphylaxis is, an auto adrenalin injector, coeliac disease etc
- Medical emergency and how to deal with it
- Communication methods with customers including PPDS.

Our experience of delivering training over several years has allowed us to recommend what type of training is best suited to businesses.

What you can do today, right now, is to log in and undertake the (free) Food Standards Agency allergen course, which includes information on PPDS and then roll this out across your entire workforce.



For chefs and managers, the **Highfield Level 3 Award in Food Allergen Management for Caterers** course is best suited and a whole day is allowed to ensure all the content is delivered and understood.

For general staff **Highfield Level 2 Award in Food Allergen Awareness and Control in Catering (RQF)** course is best suited. This can be delivered over 5 hours.

For both these 'classrooms' of 10-20 work well.

One of the most acclaimed courses for allergen awareness for staff groups is the **Purple Allergen Plan** which has been designed to provide allergen training aimed at Level 2 standard. The course provides all the information required to understand the top 14 allergens and provides valuable information on how to integrate Allergen Management into the busy workplace.

On completion of a multiple-choice test, the attendees will appreciate the importance of good allergen management, will appreciate the risks of cross-contamination, and will have an overview of delivery, storage, food preparation and food service in relation to allergens.



A classroom of circa 20 candidates works for this course.

Both the Level 3 course AND Purple Allergen Plan are available online. This has worked extremely well for individuals or smaller groups who need to complete these courses but need to do it at home or at their place of work.

For more details on the above and training in general, get in touch:

offcie@allergenaccreditation.co.uk

The more we learn... the better we cater!

Regulatory body and technical guidance



<https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/allergen-guidance-for-food-businesses>

A mission to bring about positive change by focusing on law and policies



<https://www.narf.org.uk/>

Rules and regulations in Ireland



<https://www.fsai.ie/business-advice/labelling/labelling-allergens>

Information & emergency procedures



<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/allergies/>

Focus on Flour



Mixing flour can lead to unavoidable spillages and cross-contamination risks. Implementing effective mitigation measures can make a significant difference.

Here we have created a policy template that can be adapted.

1. **Dedicated Mixing Stations:** Set up specific areas in the kitchen for flour mixing, well-separated from other food preparation zones. This helps contain any spills within a confined or dedicated space.
2. **Prepared dough:** For pizza or pastry- once made these items can be rolled out using rice flour or other gluten free (GF) flour. Please note the GF flour used in recipe and other ingredient information.
3. **Splash Guards and Covers:** Use bowls with high sides or attachable covers to minimize the spread of flour during vigorous mixing. This simple step can reduce airborne particles significantly.
4. **Layered Protection:** Place disposable or washable mats beneath mixing bowls to catch any spills. These mats can be quickly replaced or cleaned.
5. **Immediate Clean-Up:** Encourage staff to clean surfaces and utensils promptly after mixing. Using damp cloths or wipes is especially effective, as dry-cleaning methods can disturb and spread the flour dust.
6. **Storage and Transfer:** When transferring flour to mixing bowls, use scoops and funnels to prevent accidental spilling. Avoid pouring flour directly from bags, as this often leads to clouds of dust.
7. **Utensil Segregation:** Assign specific utensils for flour mixing that never come into contact with other food groups. Clearly labelling these utensils can prevent accidental use elsewhere. Before any tasks are undertaken, ensure all the required items (and ingredients) are needed to avoid flour soiled hands encountering drawer or other handles. Likewise for service make sure dedicated utensils are used for specific foods.
8. **Chopping Boards:** Use correct board type/ colour for products as directed. When preparing and cutting sandwiches ensure to only use dedicated knives and also ensure fillings (that may have different allergen contents) are separated when cutting to avoid other allergen cross contact.
9. **Workflow Coordination:** Organise the kitchen workflow so that flour-heavy tasks are scheduled during less busy times or when sensitive food preparations are not underway.
10. **PPE:** Use aprons for dedicated flour works and remove when not in the bakery zone.
11. **Staff Awareness:** Educate the team about flour's potential to contaminate and emphasize the importance of minimizing spills during handling. Staff to wash hands between handling cereals and any other food, surfaces, utensils and crockery.

PAAS - Primary Allergen Authority Scheme - for groups

About: This approach enables organisations with multiple sites to take full advantage of a centralised control system to roll out and continuously monitor its safe food allergen management across its business base.

We accredit your key personnel as Senior Allergen Advisors as they will be instrumental at the test site to attain Allergen Accreditation status.

Under Allergen Accreditation's supervision you will be able to accredit your venues by ensuring the venue team are fully bought in, they have completed their framework/application, and your SAA validates this - then we administer the certification.

Allergen Accreditation supports you throughout and will invite your SAA's to events and keep these updated with news and information. They will also help shape the Accreditation process in its continuous development.



Entry Requirements: Food Allergen Customer Excellence, Full Allergen Disclosure, Written Allergen Information, Assisted Customer Support, Allergen Advisor (on duty) as well as compliance to the EU & Domestic Legal requirements all form part of an initial meeting to explore how your company operates and the expected standards from Allergen Accreditation.

Businesses must identify a lead champion or champions eligible to become Senior Allergen Advisors (Auditing experience and food safety qualifications/experience).



...Job done!



Food Allergen Customer Excellence

For more information, or just an informal chat about a confidential review, getting your premises accredited, training, auditing or to join the PAAS scheme contact: office@allergenaccreditation.co.uk



About Allergen Accreditation:

This is the UK and Ireland (the Statutory Instrument (S.I.) No. 489 of 2014-for Ireland) Professional Standard for all catering businesses for the safe management of food allergens. Any catering business can access our validated framework and apply to have their allergen systems and procedures evaluated and verified. The scheme covers the Retained EU FIC (European Union Food Information for Consumers 1169/2011 Regulations), UK/ Domestic regulations, Full Allergen Disclosure and Food Allergen Customer Excellence.

Allergen Accreditation is the operational name of Food Service Allergen Management Limited

For Food Service & Licensed Businesses

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