



Ask About Allergies

Are you doing enough?



BOOKINGS

Do you ask customers if they have any known allergies / intolerances? Information must be robustly communicated.

Do you record this information down?

Do you have clear seating arrangements to ensure allergen free meals are served to the right person(s)?

Do ALL your staff understand your allergen procedures for taking orders and bookings?

Are staff trained?

Did you know?

In the UK about 10 people die each year from food induced anaphylaxis. Recently there have been several serious allergen incidents in Shropshire.

Shropshire Council is reminding all food businesses of their responsibilities to manage food allergies to protect customers.

For some customers the smallest trace of a food allergen can cause a fatality. You must **“Ask About Allergies”**.

What steps can I take to manage allergens in my business?

By law you must provide information to consumers on the 14 allergens contained in the foods you serve, [click here for a full list](#).

Provide clear and accurate allergen information to the customer for example using a menu, chalk board, ticket or verbally by a responsible person, who knows the ingredients of the dish.

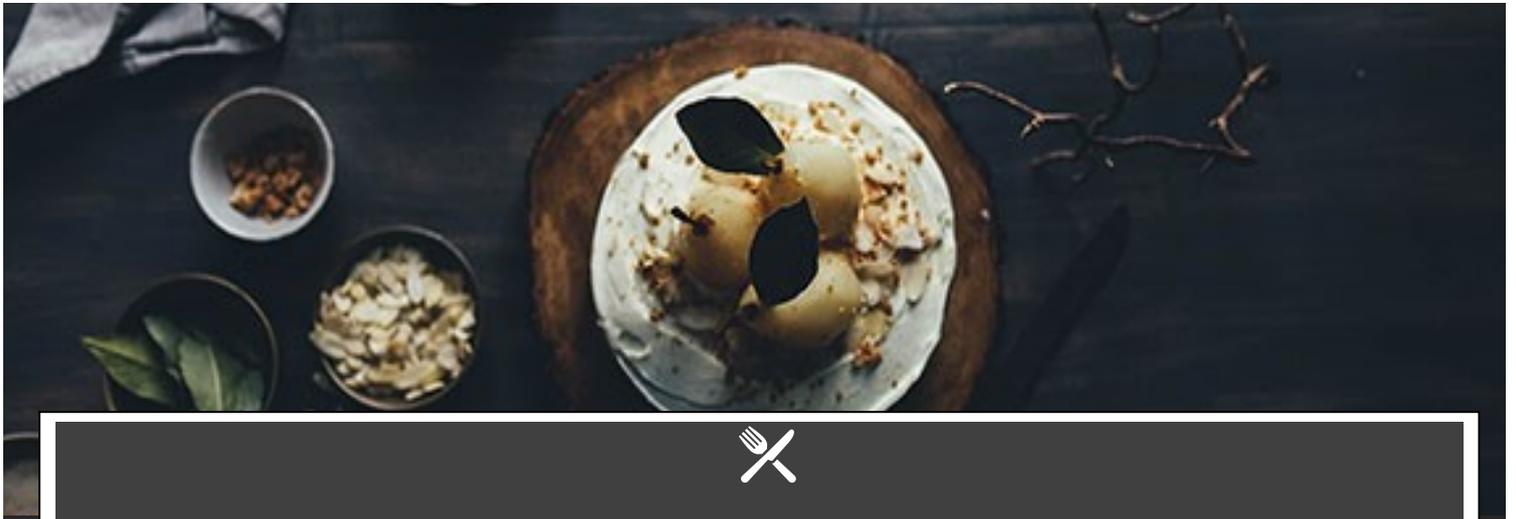
Carry out a full assessment of the ingredients contained in your menu to identify the 14 allergens. You will need to read product labels and ask suppliers for allergen information.

Record this information. This can be achieved by completing allergen matrix sheets, chef recipe cards or keep the product labels at hand to show the consumer upon request – [click here for advice and blank allergen records to help you](#).

Once you have identified which allergens are contained in your dishes / menus you must keep this information up to date e.g. if ingredients, products, suppliers or menu's change.

Remember any menu 'specials' are going to be different from the usual foods you serve, so it is vital that food allergens have been included.

If you cannot guarantee your food is allergen free, you must advise your customer. It is a business decision if you can safely serve customers with allergens or not.



It is essential that your food business has controls in place THROUGHOUT all stages of food production to manage allergens risks. Factors to consider:

Check your suppliers provide allergen information on their products and that they notify you of any changes.

Check deliveries to ensure the food specification is the same as your order, to see if you need to reassess allergens in your dishes, should a product have changed.

Check your food storage arrangements are adequate to avoid cross-contamination of allergens to other foods. Keep products containing allergens sealed or in hygienic lidded containers.

Check to ensure staff validate product information labelling before they prepare foods, to prevent cross-contamination.

Check to ensure that food preparation areas are thoroughly cleaned, safe to use and separate for all allergen free dishes.

Check to ensure that all food equipment is washed thoroughly before preparing and cooking foods i.e. pans, woks, utensils and food probes thermometers etc.

Check that cleaning cloths are separate for allergy free preparation areas, use disposable where possible.

Check staff adopt strict personal hygiene measures such as frequent hand washing/changing of gloves and aprons to prevent trace elements of allergens contaminating allergy free foods.

Check staff understand the risks of post cross contamination of allergens after cooking such as slicing equipment and cleaning down work preparation surfaces.





Check procedures are in place after meals are cleared away to prevent cross-contamination of food equipment.

Check your cleaning schedule to take account of allergen controls in your wash-up areas.

Check to avoid cross contamination risks at both hot and cold holding service by having clear labelling of foods. Consider different plates for customer with allergen requirements.

Check to ensure foods are placed in separate dishes and served by staff using different utensils.

Check to ensure there is clear food allergen signage displayed at self-service stations e.g. bread counters, salad bars and carvery areas.

Check that desserts cabinets / stands containing allergens such as nuts are kept completely separate from other foods.

Check that there are clear signs and notices displayed on the premises encouraging customers to 'Ask about Allergens'. [Click here for a free customer allergen poster.](#)

Check table hygiene procedures are in place for where allergen customers are to be seated. Check that any pre-plated foods for functions that are placed out in advance (e.g. bread rolls) do not contain allergens to known allergy sufferers. Use named allergen place cards for customers with allergies, [click here for a customer allergen warning card.](#)

[Safer Food Better Business Pack](#) will assist you. In particular the [safe method](#) and [management section](#). Alternatively a colour ring bound pack and diary can be purchased from Shropshire Council. To request a pack email food@shropshire.gov.uk or telephone 03456789067.

Please note there is a new Safer Food Better Business pack released November 2019. Much of the information in the old packs is now out of date, including allergens.

Always communicate accurate allergen information to your customers. This includes ingredients in dishes and potential other allergens used in the kitchen. These other allergens may not be in the ingredients but sometimes a small amount of contamination can produce anaphylaxis. The customer can then make an informed choice.





TRAINING

Ensure your food handlers and front of house staff are trained in food allergens and understand the danger. Document your training.

Have a designated responsible person and deputy to answer consumers enquires on allergens.

Ensure you have a written procedure to deal with requests for allergen information. Ensure your staff understand your allergen procedure.

Make sure staff know what to do in the event of an emergency, if a customer has an allergic reaction, [click here for advice](#).

The FSA provide free allergen awareness training at: <https://allergytraining.food.gov.uk/>

Shire Services at Shropshire Council also provide food safety training for food businesses including allergens. Course details can be found by [clicking here](#) or contacting: Shire Services Training Officer on Tel: 01743 250256.

Ensure that staff know what to do if they are presented with an [allergen warning card](#) by a customer. See below for an example card.



Ask about
allergies




My name is:
I have an allergy to:
Let me know if my meal contains these ingredients. Just a small amount can make me very ill. www.food.gov.uk/allergy



ASK ABOUT ALLERGIES – USEFUL LINKS

Shropshire Council: <https://shropshire.gov.uk/environmental-health/food-safety/food-safety-for-business/guidance-for-food-businesses/>

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

FSA Chef Recipe Matrix Chart and Cards:

<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/allergen-chart.pdf>

<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/recipe-sheet.pdf>

Examples of which food types contain the 14 allergens:

<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/top-allergy-types.pdf>

AllergyUK: <https://www.allergyuk.org/information-and-advice/for-caterers>

Safer Food Better Business (SFBB):

https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/sfbb-caterers-pack_0.pdf

SFBB Safe Method: <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/sfbb-cross-contamination-04-food-allergies.pdf>

SFBB Managing Allergen Information:

<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/sfbb-management-03-managing-food-allergen-information.pdf>

If you require any further information or advice, please contact Regulatory Services, Shropshire Council at:

Email: food@shropshire.gov.uk

Tel: 0345 678 3067

