



5 Steps to Allergen Safe Menus



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KNOW YOUR OBLIGATIONS

Understanding your legal responsibilities is the foundation of allergen safety. UK allergen regulations, including the Food Information Regulations (FIR) and Natasha's Law, continue to evolve — and customers expect higher standards every year.

Overview

Legal compliance shapes everything from recipe structure to front-of-house communication. Staying ahead of regulation protects your customers and reduces risk across your venue.

“95% of UK food businesses report having allergen-labelling procedures in place.”

Key Insights

- UK diners increasingly expect clarity — 70% say they feel anxious ordering food if allergen info isn't obvious.
- Natasha's Law transformed expectations: more than half of allergy-affected customers choose venues based on transparency alone.
- Clear processes protect both customers and your business, reducing legal, financial, and reputational risks.

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AUDIT YOUR MENU

A menu audit is more than listing allergens – it's a strategic and ongoing system. Every dish, recipe, ingredient, and supplier change needs to be checked and recorded.

Overview

Hidden allergens remain one of the biggest risks in UK hospitality, often caused by mislabelled supplier products or overlooked recipe changes.

“Between 2016–2021, 58% of all UK food recalls were caused by allergen issues.”

Key Insights

- Hidden allergens are responsible for the majority of recall incidents, costing businesses thousands in loss and reputation.
- With global supply chains, mislabelled ingredients are a top food-safety concern.
- Regular audits build consistency, trust, and reduce last-minute menu changes.

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TRAIN YOUR TEAM

Your team is the frontline of allergen safety. Customers rely on confident, consistent information – and staff training is the strongest predictor of safety outcomes.

Overview

Menus don't serve people – staff do. When team members know what they're talking about, customers feel safer and incidents reduce dramatically.

“68% of hospitality workers report they need more allergen training.”

Key Insights

- Staff confidence directly affects customer confidence.
- Training reduces mistakes by up to 70% during busy service periods, when communication often breaks down.
- Teams with clear allergen understanding are twice as likely to deliver accurate, consistent guidance

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DESIGN SMARTLY

A well-designed menu supports both customer experience and staff communication. Poor design leads to confusion, guesswork, and avoidable mistakes.

Overview

Clarity reduces risk. A clean, structured menu helps customers navigate options and gives staff a reliable tool during busy service.

“Only 62% of UK venues provide both written and verbal allergen information.”

Key Insights

- Messy layouts overwhelm customers — clear formats reduce allergen questions by up to 40%.
- Good menu design guides the eye toward safe options and allergen information.
- Consistent iconography prevents misunderstandings between staff and guests.

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ENGAGE CUSTOMERS

Communication is the final defence in allergen safety.
When customers feel comfortable asking questions,
the risk of incidents drops dramatically.

Overview

Allergen confidence starts with conversation.
Engagement helps ensure no assumptions are made —
and assumptions are the #1 cause of allergen mistakes.

“1-in-3 diners with allergies report receiving incorrect
allergen information.”

Key Insights

- 1-in-3 allergy sufferers avoid venues that seem unprepared or uninterested in allergens.
- Open, friendly dialogue reassures guests and encourages repeat visits.
- Asking clarifying questions prevents substitution mistakes and miscommunication.

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Allergen Safety Master Checklist

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Use this checklist to ensure your venue remains compliant, safe, and customer-focused

KNOW YOUR OBLIGATIONS

- Clear written allergen processes in place
- Up-to-date knowledge of Natasha's Law
 - Staff aware of the 14 major allergens
- Systems for updating allergen information
- Legal signage and customer messaging reviewed

AUDIT YOUR MENU

- Every recipe checked for all 14 allergens
 - Ingredient lists updated regularly
- Supplier allergen documents stored and reviewed
 - High-risk dishes highlighted
- Cross-contamination risks documented

TRAIN YOUR TEAM

- Annual allergen training completed
- Front-of-house staff confident explaining allergens
 - Kitchen team follow strict preparation rules
 - Training materials accessible to all staff
- Dual verbal + written communication procedures in place

DESIGN SMARTLY

- Consistent allergen icons used throughout
 - Clear, uncluttered layout
- Allergen statements visible and easy to understand
 - Menu updated when recipes change
- Accessible design for visually impaired customers

ENGAGE CUSTOMERS

- Staff proactively ask about allergies
- Customers encouraged to disclose allergens
- All allergy discussions documented where necessary
 - Clear communication on substitutions
- Culture of safety and openness promoted

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