



Natasha's Law – October 2021

What is Natasha's Law?

In July 2016, 15-year-old Natasha ate a Pret a Manger artichoke, olive and tapenade baguette bought at Heathrow Airport. Unbeknown to her, sesame seeds had been baked into the bread. Due to her sesame allergy, Natasha sadly died of anaphylaxis after collapsing onboard a flight shortly afterwards. This tragedy may have been avoided if clear legislation was already in place, ensuring all food sold to the public is labelled with every ingredient.

Under the previous Food Regulations, you didn't have to individually label freshly made, pre-packaged food. This meant Pret a Manger didn't have to list all ingredients on their food product labels. Instead, they had signs near displays prompting consumers to raise any allergen queries with staff. However, this changes with the introduction of Natasha's Law.

From October 2021, food pre-packed for direct sale (PPDS) must list all ingredients on food labels of individual products. Natasha's Law will apply to all businesses in the UK. Natasha's Law will give consumers greater transparency about what they are eating. This is something that will benefit everyone, and, most importantly, help to prevent potentially life-threatening allergic reactions.

What Does Natasha's Law Mean for My Business?

Cafés & Delis

From October 2021, you are legally required to label ingredients on pre-packed food made on-site. Typically, this applies to cafés and delis, where food is produced at the same premises and usually on the same day. **Example products include ready-made salads or sandwiches that are then packaged up and put out for direct sale to the consumer.**

Previously, cafés and delis tended to display signs prompting customers to ask a member of staff about allergens. However, if you give wrong information, this could cause a customer to experience a potentially life-threatening allergic reaction.



Under Natasha's Law, you must list all the ingredients on individual packaging of products that are considered pre-packed for direct sale (PPDS). **Products made at a customer's request do not need to carry an allergen label, but this information must be available to customers if they ask for it.** If you sell PPDS food, then you must ensure that you have implemented the new regulations. **Whilst COVID-19 has been majorly disruptive to businesses' trading, and caused considerable supply chain disruption, you should have had plenty of time with the two-year transition period to make the necessary changes.**



Restaurants

Restaurants will not be affected by Natasha's Law and the changes it will bring to the listing of ingredients. However, you must make allergen information available, whether that be via the menu or verbally if the customer asks.

While Natasha's Law may not specifically affect your business, it is in your best interests to take allergens into consideration. With a clear industry wide crack down on reporting of allergens, being ahead of your competitors will put you at an advantage. Consumers are more likely to trust businesses that pay attention to allergens.



By providing clear allergen information for every dish, this prevents the customer having to ask a server about each one.

Additionally, knowing about Natasha's Law and implementing controls around allergens will help your food hygiene rating. EHO's will work with you and offer advice on how to improve in your business, whereas if you choose not to implement labelling legislation and don't take allergens seriously, this will harm your rating.

Takeaways



Takeaways come under the same category as restaurants, as they sell 'non-prepacked (loose) foods'. This means you can give allergen information either in writing or verbally. Likewise, takeaways will not be affected by Natasha's Law. However, unlike restaurants, takeaway meals are considered to be 'distance selling'. This means that allergen information must be available to the customer both at the point of purchase and at point of delivery.

This information must be in a written document that is kept at the takeaway premises, as well as available in written form for the consumer if they request it.

To make your takeaway business stand out from your competitors, you could clearly list the allergens in each dish on your menu or have a separate menu doing so.



Caterers

For caterers, Natasha's Law will impact if the business produces single items in packaging that are ready for presentation to the consumer before it is ordered or selected. It does not include food packaged in larger quantities (such as platters of sandwiches covered in clingfilm). For event caterers this may mean changes to labelling for prepacked foods such as sandwiches, salads and other products. As always, food provided by a caterer should adhere to food law and be safe to consume.



Therefore, caterers supplying food to an event should provide allergen information to enable consumers to make safe and informed food choices. Allergen information must be available to consumers prior to ordering, and this can be provided verbally.

Kitchens and Staff

No matter what type of food business you operate in, in all kitchen environments, all staff should take care in the preparation of food to ensure there is no cross contamination. For products which carry a label, this is especially important to ensure labelled products don't mislead the customer by containing an ingredient or allergen that is not listed. Staff should all have an awareness of allergens and there should be a kitchen culture of checking for allergens in the products they use.



Need a Course?

Ensure your staff have up to date **allergen awareness training** and understand the importance of taking allergens seriously.

Our **Level 2 Food Allergen Awareness and L3 Allergen Management Training** will teach you how to comply with the UK's allergen laws, so you understand which foods commonly cause allergic reactions, how these should be labelled on food products under the Food Information for Consumers (FIC) Regulation, and how to ensure customers are provided with accurate information about the food they are purchasing.