

Food Labelling For Catering Establishments

What does the leaflet cover?

The labelling of food which is:

Prepared by a retailer for sale by him on his premises or from a vehicle or stall used by him (when sold for eating elsewhere) for example

- Asian, Chinese, Italian takeaways
- Fish & Chip Shops
- Sandwich Bars
- Burger Stalls

Prepared by a retailer for sale and consumption on his premises for example:

- Restaurants
- Public Houses
- Cafes

Labelling requirements

Where food is sold by a catering establishment i.e. takeaways, restaurants, fish and chip shops, etc no labelling is required except

1. Where food or any ingredient in the food has been irradiated. Then it must be labelled with either 'irradiated' or 'treated with ionising radiation'. In particular it is worth checking herbs and spices, soft fruit and shellfish.
2. Where food contains genetically modified ingredients, this must be conspicuously shown on a notice where the food is selected. See the leaflet "Genetically Modified Foods – a guide for caterers".

Use of descriptions

All descriptions must be accurate. In addition to written descriptions in menus, blackboards, adverts, etc any illustration or verbal description must also be accurate.

Before you write your menu ensure that you look carefully at the label supplied with the products. Be careful not to mislead the customer.

Common Problem Areas

Fish & Shellfish

- Fish must be described by species (e.g. cod, haddock, and plaice. It cannot simply be described as 'fish and chips', the notice must state the type of fish).
- The name 'Scampi' can only be used if the product consists of the whole tail and cannot be used for formed fish produce in this case. 'Reformed Scampi' would be a more appropriate name as it gives an indication to the true nature of the food. Most scampi used by caterers is pre-packed therefore read the label carefully. A product with the bold name 'Breaded Scampi' may be further qualified 'Scampi tails chopped and shaped in bread crumbs'.
- Crab sticks, which contain little or no crab must be described as crab flavour fish sticks.

Meat

- Doner Kebab – the word Doner should only be used if the kebab consists of lamb.
- "Ham" cannot be used as a menu description if the product consists of cured turkey.
- Sandwiches cannot be described as ham if they are made with pork shoulder.
- Cooked or reformed beef cannot be described as roast beef.

- Descriptions such as 'Steak' or 'Gammon' means that you are supplying the unprocessed product, therefore they cannot be used if the packets are labelled 'reformed' 'chopped and shaped' or 'with added water and gelatine'. The menu must differentiate the processed product from the natural food.
- You cannot call an economy burger simply a burger because by law a burger has a greater meat content than an economy burger.

Under current legislation the minimum meat contents are as follows:

	Pig Meat	Bird/Rabbit	Other meat e.g. Beef
Burger	67%	55%	62%
Economy Burger	50%	41%	47%

- If you use a weight to describe meat, it can be an approximate weight before cooking and may be given in imperial quantities e.g. sirloin steak approx. 8oz, ¼lb burger.

Other Products

- Desserts cannot be illustrated with fresh fruit when tinned fruit is used.
- The description '(Dairy) Ice Cream' is deemed to indicate the ice cream is made solely with milk fat. If it is not then it must be qualified with the words 'contains non milk fat' or 'contains vegetable fat'. No other information, which could mislead customers as to the type of ice cream, or the manufacturer of ice cream, must be given.
- Chocolate flakes/sprinkles must be made of chocolate, if not they should be described as chocolate flavour.
- The term 'Onion Rings' (which implies a product made from natural onion rings) cannot be used to describe a product made from chopped onion and potato.
- Cheese analogue (processed vegetable oils and fats) should not be described as cheese.

Descriptive Terms

- The term 'fresh' should not be used to describe reconstituted or previously frozen products.
- The work 'smoked', e.g. smoked salmon, cannot be used when the product has only had smoke flavouring added. 'Smoke flavour salmon' would then be a better description.
- A meal cannot be described as 'roast' (e.g. Roast Beef) when the product used has been steamed and then flash roasted.
- The term 'home-made' should only be used for food which has been made on the premises and has not been mass-produced elsewhere.
- Care should be taken when referring to the origin of a product.
- Any 'special claims' made in relation to food must be justified e.g. 'suitable for vegetarians'. In particular, care must be taken with cheeses and products which may contain gelatine derived from animal bones.
- Be aware of food allergens and intolerances. See our leaflet entitled "Advice for Caterers on Food Allergens and Intolerance.
- Information on genetically modified foods and describing foods as organic is available in separate leaflets.

What is the best way to ensure I satisfy these requirements?

This leaflet provides general guidance on some of the likely problem areas. By taking care with the working on your menus and illustrations, you should be able to avoid misleading your customers and possibly committing a criminal offence. If in doubt please check with your supplier.

What are the consequences of non-compliance?

Failure to comply with these requirements is a criminal offence. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £5,000 or £20,000 for certain offences of misleading consumers.

If you would like further guidance or advice please do not hesitate to contact us.