

Food Alert

Food hygiene in your supply chain



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In uncertain economic times, it's never been more important to have positive health ratings. As disposable incomes reduce, customers will be looking for the best quality places to spend it, so making sure your hygiene ratings are as high as they can be is one way to get customers through your door.

But how much do you know about food hygiene in your supply chain? Our experts at Food Alert have pulled together to give you their top tips on ensuring your supply chain is just as safe and hygienic as your own business.

Case in point: where supply chain hygiene goes wrong

Back in 2017, a woman named Celia Marsh sadly passed away after eating a Pret a Manger wrap that had been labelled vegan but contained dairy protein and Ms. Marsh had a severe milk allergy. The protein was found in the yoghurt in the wrap, and was in an ingredient called COYO that contained an extra ingredient called HG1 that was cross contaminated with dairy in the manufacturing procedure.

Originally, this was seen to have been Pret a Manger's fault – but later it transpired that the manufacturer of the dairy-free yoghurt had documents that flagged this risk but this was

not passed onto it's customers. Eventually, the coroner said the death could have been prevented if this important information had been passed along the supply chain.

But of course, at this point it was too late – the damage to Pret a Manger's brand and reputation had already been done.

Even if it's the fault of your supply chain, if something like this happens to your business it could have costly financial and reputational damage, which is why it's so important to guarantee that your supply chain is as hygienic and safe as it can be.

Your expectations of your supplier

There are a few things that should be basic requirements of your suppliers:

- ✓ They're able to supply the products you want and in the volume you need
- ✓ They can provide you with a detailed, accurate list of allergens in their products
- ✓ Their products meet your quality standards
- ✓ They can verify any free-from claims and provide you with the details
- ✓ The food they provide is safe


However... relying on the checks of other people – especially if those people are only from the suppliers – is unlikely to be considered sufficient due diligence when it comes to food safety. Suppliers should do a thorough risk assessment that you should ask to see before carrying out your own risk assessment

Notes on allergen risk assessments

At a basic level, an allergen risk assessment involves analysing the product or dish to understand its composition or production, and thus the likelihood of allergen content.

Something else that needs to be considered is whether any non-ingredient allergens are handled nearby, and if that allergen could make its way into the original product or dish. This involves examining the process and character of the dish being made, the potential for an accidental allergen inclusion and the nature of the allergen.

Then it's time to mitigate these risks. Think about ways to segregate different products, whether that's through physical distance, time separation, scheduling production, covering or wrapping or washing and cleaning

 You should then **validate and verify** the supply chain and have a balanced decision making process.

Choosing a supplier

The availability of ingredients and supply chain logistics might be out of your control – but you control which suppliers you work with in the first place, and that the food you receive complies with safety and quality standards. Here's some of our top tips for choosing a supplier:

Build a good relationship

1

- Open and honest communication is a key part of effective allergen management. Your suppliers should quickly update you on any product or ingredient change, as they have a legal obligation to provide the exact composition of food you buy from them.
- Make sure you act on any updates immediately – all related documentation should be revised and communicated as soon as possible.

Visit your supplier and check their safety standards

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- But make sure you know exactly what you're looking for – which is where Food Alert's team of experts can help you out with food safety advice and guidance.

Check your supplier is certified

3

- Your suppliers should be certified to specific food safety and hygiene standards such as SALSA or BRC Global Standards – and make sure you check the certification is authentic.
- The certificates provided should be in date.
- Check the scope of their certificates cover the food they're selling.

Maintain your supplier information

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- Having the correct certification isn't a one-off – make sure your suppliers' certificates are in date and maintained.
- If a supplier falls short of this, you should act quickly and delist them

'Free-from' foods

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- Free-from foods are manufactured for those who need to avoid certain food to protect their health or choose to do so for their own personal reasons.
- These products tend to use substitute ingredients – such as rice or potato instead of wheat, or soya or coconut instead of milk.
- Suppliers can't just claim this willy-nilly – they have to have certain steps such as allergen segregation in place, and ingredients should be batch tested in labs before allowing them on the production site.

May contain' warnings

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- If there's a risk of an allergen being present due to unintentional cross-contamination, it's required within food hygiene legislation to apply HACCP principles to identify where this cross-contamination could occur, and determine the likelihood of the occurrence.
- Once this is done, businesses decide whether there should be a precautionary allergen warning added to the allergen declaration to warn sensitive consumers to avoid the product.
- This information should be passed to the final consumer.



Food labelling and allergen management at your end

Keeping it simple is always the best way when it comes to ingredients and allergens. Less is more!

Our advice is:

- Simplify your recipes and limit the number of ingredients and allergens
- Where you can, have one supplier for certain foods – and if you do have a backup, make sure they have the same allergens



Checklist: your legal labelling requirements

- ✓ **Pre-packed food for direct sale (PPDS)** – it is mandatory to label all PPDS with a full list of ingredients and any of the 14 allergens emphasised to comply with UK food allergen legislation.
- ✓ **Food packaging design** – your packaging shouldn't only be eye-catching! It needs to be legally compliant too if you want to avoid expensive product recalls. The packaging copy should include the product name, weight, nutrition information and storage information.
- ✓ **Menu labelling (printed and online)** – all dishes on a menu must include the correct allergen information and this must not be misleading for customers.
- ✓ **Calorie labelling** – due to recent legislation changes, all establishments serving food and drink with over 250 employees must now display calorie and nutritional information at the point where customers choose to order.

Revolutionise your supply chain with Food Alert

A food safety incident is almost definitely the last thing you need on your plate – but you could face one if you're not 100% confident that your supply chain meets the same great safety standards that you've got.

There's a reason our supply chain management services are used by some of the biggest names in hospitality – we're experts in our field and we know the food industry like the back of our hands. Want to benefit from our expertise and support? Speak to your account manager or [**click here**](#) to find out more.