

Food Standards

Basic Food Labelling Requirements

Introduction

This factsheet provides guidance on the labelling requirements of prepacked and non-prepacked foods.

1) Labelling of food sold loose or pre-packed for direct sale

The term 'loose' means without any packaging when selected by consumers. For example; cakes from a bakery or sausages from a butcher counter. These in terms of legislation are referred to as 'non-prepacked' foods.

Listed below is the required labelling information which must be displayed on or near to the foods sold loose and prepacked for direct sale.

Name of the Food

You should label the cake with the name of the food, use a descriptive name that clearly explains what the product is. Alternatively where a **customary name exists**; a name which may not be a true description of the food, such as 'Bakewell tart' or 'Manchester Tart', but is commonly accepted by the consumer, this name may be used.

There are also names, known as '**legal names**'; prescribed by law which must have certain compositional requirements as set by the regulations, such as 'honey', 'whisky', 'jam', 'butter' along with many others.

The food name should be seen easily and clear, it must not be obstructed or interrupted.

If you choose to do so you must ensure that the description is true and accurate. For example:

- the words 'flavoured' and 'flavour' have very different meanings - for example, vanilla flavoured icing derives its flavour only from real vanilla, but vanilla flavour icing is synthetically flavoured - if neither word is used (vanilla slice for example) the flavour must be only from natural vanilla

- the cream in cream cakes must be wholly dairy cream - if any artificial or imitation cream is used, the name of the cake must be qualified accordingly
- imitation cream and imitation chocolate must not be described as cream or crème, chocolate or choc

Allergen Information

Allergen information now has to be provided on all food (whether sold prepacked or loose). For prepacked foods, the allergens will have to be highlighted on the ingredient list. With regards to the provision of the information for loose foods, the legislation is flexible in how businesses provide this to consumers, for example a notice in the shop.

There are 14 food allergens, which have to be indicated by reference to the source allergen whenever they, or ingredients made from them, are used at any level in foods. These are;

- cereals containing gluten
- crustaceans
- molluscs
- eggs
- fish
- peanuts
- nuts
- soybeans
- milk
- celery
- mustard
- sesame
- lupin
- sulphur dioxide at levels above 10mg/kg, or 10 mg/litre, expressed as SO₂.

Additives

If the product contains any of the following additives;

- Antioxidants
- Artificial Sweeteners
- Colours
- Flavour Enhancements
- Flavourings
- Preservatives
- Flour Treatment Agents

The consumer must be informed these types of additives are present either via a label attached to the product or a sign displayed in the immediate proximity of where the product is sold. For example; 'contains colours and flavourings'. However if any of the following 6 colours are used they must be specifically named in the warning notice;

- Sunset Yellow (E110)
- Alurra Red (E129)
- Ponceau 4R (E124)
- Tartrazine (Yellow 5) (E102)
- Quinoline Yellow (E104)
- Carmoisine (E122).

“Name or E number of the colour(s): may have an adverse effect on activity and attention in children.”

You must indicate the presence of **genetically modified ingredients** or any ingredients which have been **irradiated**.

2) Labelling of Pre-packed Foods

As well as the above requirements pre-packed foods require additional information on the product labels.

List of Ingredients

- Titled 'ingredients'
- Ingredients must be ordered by weight, heaviest first
- The name of the ingredient must be listed as the products true name
- Where the food has been subject to irradiation or has been genetically modified it must be stated

Durability Indication

It is the responsibility of the manufacturer or packer to decide which type of durability date to use.

- The name of the food
- A list of ingredients, headed 'ingredients' in descending order, by weight
- Allergenic ingredients
- A percentage quantity indication for certain ingredients or categories of ingredients (also referred to a 'QUID' declaration)
- A 'use by', 'best before' or 'best before end'
- Lot/batch number
- Any special storage or use conditions
- The name and address of the manufacturer, packer or seller

- Place of origin, if its omission could mislead
- Any instructions that are necessary to use the food

Food Supplied to Catering Establishments

When supplying to catering establishments the information can be supplied on a label on the product or with a commercial document sent before, or accompanying the product which it relates to. However, the following information (where it is required to be given) must be marked on the outermost packaging of the food:

- The name of the food
- Appropriate durability indication (e.g. best before date)
- Your business name and address

The Sale of Food via the Internet

Food produced by you and sold via the internet will require full labelling.

Traceability

As a food business operator supplying food products to other catering establishments, retailers or selling food via the internet, you are required to keep records to ensure that you can trace the ingredients that are supplied to you back to the supplier. You are also required to maintain records that would facilitate the traceability of products that you have supplied to other businesses.

This leaflet is not an authoritative document on the law and is only intended for guidance. For further information visit the Food Standards Agency website: www.food.gov.uk