



**MORNINGTON
PENINSULA**
Shire

FACT FILE FOOD ALLERGENS

OVERVIEW

Some people are allergic to particular foods or ingredients in foods. If they eat or have contact with these foods, they may have an allergic reaction, with symptoms ranging from mild to severe to life-threatening. All food businesses should be aware of food allergens in order to protect their customers and avoid legal consequences.

ALLERGENS

Currently there are 10 recognised food allergens:

Wheat, Peanuts, Soy, Milk, Eggs, Tree Nuts, Crustacea, Fish, Sesame, Sulphites

An allergic reaction can occur from consuming or coming in to contact with the food/ingredient.

Symptoms of food allergy can occur immediately, or within 30 minutes, or can even take 12 to 24 hours to develop after eating or coming into contact with the food. Common symptoms can include; low blood pressure, dizziness, faintness/collapse, swelling of lips and throat, feeling bloated, diarrhoea and abdominal cramps, itchy skin (rash or hives), runny nose, breathing difficulties including wheezing and asthma, and vomiting and nausea.

Many people who believe they have a food allergy actually suffer from food intolerance. A food intolerance is a chemical reaction to the food rather than an immune response. In some cases food intolerance involves the inability of the body to digest a food. Symptoms of food intolerance can be similar to symptoms of a food allergy, however the symptoms of a food allergy can be very serious and may even be life threatening. Common food intolerances include gluten and dairy (lactose).

FOOD LABELLING REQUIREMENTS – PACKAGED FOODS

When food is prepared and packaged by a food business it is required to have a label. The label is used to provide important information to customers to correctly identify food ingredients, including allergens. As a food business you are required by law to list all the ingredients contained in food products, including allergens.

Standard 1.2.3 of the *Australian New Zealand Food Standards Code* makes it a legal requirement to clearly declare allergen ingredients on packaged foods. It is recommended that allergen ingredients are bolded and/or highlighted to ensure that they are clearly visible.

NUTRITION INFORMATION		
Servings per package: 3 Serving Size: 150g		
	Quantity per Serving	Quantity per 100g
Energy	608kJ	405kJ
Protein	4.2g	2.8g
Fat, total	7.4g	4.9g
– Saturated	4.5g	3.0g
Carbohydrate, total	18.6g	12.4g
– Sugars	18.6g	12.4g
Sodium	90mg	60mg
*Percentage of recommended dietary intake		
Ingredients: Whole milk, concentrated skim milk, sugar, banana (8%), strawberry (6%), grape (4%), peach (2%), pineapple (2%), gelatine, culture, thickener (1442).		
All quantities above are averages		

ALLERGEN REQUIREMENTS FOR UNPACKAGED FOODS

For unpackaged foods, the law requires that accurate food allergen information be provided to the customer **upon request**. One way to enable this information to be accurately provided is to develop and maintain an allergen matrix for all menu items or food produced by the food business. An allergen matrix clearly lists common allergens in foods prepared at the food business in a simple table that makes it easy for staff to read and convey to the customer. Care must also be given to ensuring menus and other advertising materials are true and correct.

ALLERGEN MATRIX (Sample)

Item	Peanut	Tree nut	Dairy	Egg	Sesame Seed	Fish	Shellfish	Wheat	Soy
<i>Lasagne</i>			✓	✓				✓	
<i>Rissoles</i>				✓				✓	
<i>Pesto</i>		✓	✓	✓					

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR FOOD BUSINESSES

It is difficult for a food business to completely eliminate all food allergens from their food business. To reduce your risk and provide the most accurate ingredient and allergen information, each food business should consider the following:

- ✓ Avoid labelling food items (including on menus, labels, displays, advertising) as 'gluten free' or 'dairy free' unless the food business can guarantee that the food does not contain traces of allergens
- ✓ If the food business cannot guarantee the food is allergens free then ensure that the customer is clearly informed of this (including on menus, labels, displays, advertising) prior to the sale of the food
- ✓ Minimise the risk of cross contamination by having separate utensils, equipment and storage areas available to be used to prepare an allergen-free meal or food item
- ✓ When handling known allergens take care not to contaminate other surfaces, and clean and sanitise all equipment which comes into contact with allergens
- ✓ Keep a copy of the label of any foods which have been removed from their original packing
- ✓ Train staff on allergens, including the risks/consequences, the importance of providing accurate information about the ingredients in food, and the ways to prevent cross contamination

- ✓ If food is contaminated with an allergen inform staff and customers immediately
- ✓ Stick to standard recipes which are documented so that the ingredients are easy to identify
- ✓ When naming food on labels, display or in menus use names which include specific ingredients in the description e.g *fish and almond butter sauce*
- ✓ Engage a suitably qualified food technologist or food safety auditor to develop an allergen action plan
- ✓ Staff handling allergen based ingredients or products should wash their hands /change disposable gloves before handling non-allergen based ingredients/products
- ✓ Develop an allergen matrix for all menu items
- ✓ Use the current Department of Health and Human Services Food Safety Program Template (Version 3)

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information please contact:

Mornington Peninsula Shire Environmental Health Team - phone 5950 1050, email food@mornpen.vic.gov.au

Food Standards Australia New Zealand - www.foodstandards.gov.au

Victorian Department of Health and Human Services - www.health.vic.gov.au/foodsafety

Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia - www.allergyfacts.org.au