

Adapt and thrive in food retail

A guide to legislation and best
practice in food labelling

brother.co.uk/food-labelling





Challenging times, changing approaches

They say necessity is the mother of invention. And that's something that rings true for the food industry right now.

In one of the most challenging times the sector has ever faced, many have stepped up with innovative new ways to keep customers satisfied – and the tills ringing. From introducing takeaway services to the sale of 'cook-at-home' kits, the response has been swift, effective and impressive. And while there is sure to be uncertainty ahead, many in the industry can use what they've learned to create an even brighter future for their business.



Serving up a better future



From 1st October 2021, Natasha's Law (known officially as The Food Information [Amendment] Regulations 2019) will be enforced.

Natasha's Law mandates that food businesses must include the name of the food and a full list of ingredients on pre-packed for direct sale foods (PPDS). Allergen information must also be emphasised within the list, for instance, highlighted in bold or a different colour. PPDS foods are those that are prepared, packaged and sold by the same business on-site or from a mobile location, such as salads in café chains or a 'grab and go' sandwich from your local deli. If implemented diligently, these new rules will help to greatly increase safety for allergy sufferers and give them confidence when choosing which foods to eat.

So what does all of this mean for you? And how can you adapt to this new age of catering and keep your business on the front foot? In this guide, we'll explore the laws you need to follow, as well as outlining best practice that will give customers a better experience, ultimately helping your business flourish.

Knowing the risks

With two million allergy sufferers in the UK and studies showing numbers rising by 5% every year, allergen information is an inescapable part of daily life for food businesses.

But which allergens need to be declared?

The legislation lists 14 allergens in total that food businesses have a legal requirement to highlight if the allergen, or a derivative of it, is used as an ingredient:

- **Celery**
- **Cereals containing gluten** (such as barley and oats)
- **Crustaceans** (such as prawns, crabs and lobsters)
- **Eggs**
- **Fish**
- **Lupin**
- **Milk**
- **Molluscs** (such as mussels and oysters)
- **Mustard**
- **Peanuts**
- **Sesame**
- **Soybeans**
- **Sulphur dioxide and sulphites** (if they are at a concentration of more than ten parts per million)
- **Tree nuts** (such as almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, brazil nuts, cashews, pecans, pistachios and macadamia nuts).

This information must be provided before the purchase of the food is completed.

<https://www.narf.org.uk/the-allergy-explosion>

Knowing your responsibilities

Every person with dietary preferences or allergies will have experienced that feeling of looking forward to a meal, only to discover they can't eat it once it arrives.

By providing more clarity on ingredients and allergens, you'll give customers more confidence. And once they know they've found a place they can trust, they'll be more likely to return. We'll outline the rules below, as well as some best practice guidance that will help you provide your customers with the best possible experience.

Takeaway

If you are delivering pre-packed foods, ingredient and allergen information must be shown firstly on the website or menu, and then on a label on the food itself. For takeaway food that isn't pre-packed, labelling is not legally required, as customers can check for allergens or ingredients when they order. However, being transparent shows those with special requirements that you are serious about their needs.

We would recommend including a printed label on each meal, highlighting allergens or dietary preferences. You could also label the allergy sufferer's meal differently – for instance with a distinctive colour label – to avoid mistakes on delivery and unpacking. If customers will be picking their orders up from your premises, post signage that makes them aware of common allergens used in your ingredients, as well as prompts to ask staff for clarity.

Chilled for heating and eating and cook-at-home kits

If you are selling pre-prepared meals for customers to heat at home, or meal kits for them to recreate your recipes, you must follow PPDS labelling rules. Make sure you include a label with the name of the food and the full ingredients list.

It's also a good idea to provide cooking instructions, as well as tips on how customers can avoid cross contamination when preparing the food themselves. How hot and chilled foods are transported is also key. For a more in-depth look at storage and temperature regulations, the Food Standards Agency has lots of helpful information.

General advice

For all three options – takeaways, heating and eating, cook at home – it's good practice to include a receipt and order summary on the bag. Using a printed, adhesive label not only provides clarity here, but can also be used as a tamper-evident seal, giving customers added peace of mind.





Providing clarity in the kitchen

Maintaining the highest standards

Most chefs worth their salt will know how to minimise the risk of contamination in the kitchen. But with the introduction of Natasha's Law and the new reality facing the food industry, it always pays to be up to date. The government offers a 'Safer Food, Better Business' pack that provides regulations and guidance for businesses working with food. This is well worth obtaining and displaying in a prominent position to remind staff of their responsibilities.

Best practice guidance for kitchens

Storage containers should be clearly identified if foodstuffs contain an allergen. Where possible, you should keep ingredients in the original containers, or keep a copy of the labelling information in a central place (whether printed or electronically). There may be many types of ingredients that you receive in bulk and transfer to new containers. Always make sure these containers are clearly labelled, with allergens and other information easy to spot. For pre-packed foods such as sauces, you might find it useful to keep ingredient information in your menu management database, so it is easily accessible should customers have any questions.

It goes without saying that it's also essential for all catering establishments to comply with general food standards legislation. That means keeping track of food preparation and storage dates, using stored products in the right order and always maintaining the correct temperatures in fridges or freezers.

Rotating stock

Stock rotation labelling is a key facet of food safety and the guidelines of the Food Standards Agency. While you may already be aware of your responsibilities when it comes to stock rotation, you might not know that a food label printer can greatly improve the process. Professional printed labels are much more legible than handwritten 'day-dot' alternatives, offering staff and customers much more clarity. Especially as the thermal printing technique used in label printers like Brother's prevents any smudging or fading.

It's also a great way to cut wastage. You can use the same label roll for every day of the week, rather than having separate coloured rolls. A label printer will also put time back on your side. With Brother machines, for example, you can upload all of your product information directly on to the machine itself, rather than inputting it all manually. And because the labels used are much bigger than day-dot labels, you can include more information, such as allergens, use-by dates, ingredients, and the details of the staff member who handled the produce.





‘At your side’ for all your food labelling needs

**Brother is a market-leading brand in labelling,
with experience spanning over 30 years**

Whether it’s by forming new partnerships to drive innovation in food safety or ensuring we deliver features that really matter to you, we are committed to helping food businesses be the best they can be. Our experience in the food industry covers everything from nationwide restaurants and multi-site takeout chains to small cafes and independent delis.

The ingredients you need for effective food labelling

With a Brother label printer, you can produce high-quality, professional labels to share information such as:

- Ingredients and allergens
- Special orders – such as gluten free or vegan
- Calories
- Storage instructions
- Cooking instructions
- Use-by and best before dates
- Order summaries and receipts
- Delivery addresses
- Product identification
- Company logos
- Barcodes
- Pricing
- Stock rotation details.



Works well with others

Brother label printers can be used as a stand-alone solution or integrated with your existing software.

We work in partnership with leading food data management specialists including NT Assure, Navitas, PREPsafe and Nutritics and can help you find the perfect software solution if you don't already have one. A good example of integrated use is menu management. Including a Brother label printer in your menu management process ensures those preparing recipes can leave crystal-clear information for both staff and customers about what's included.

Options such as Wi-Fi and Bluetooth connectivity are great for working from smartphones and tablets, and our label printers are made to withstand life in a busy kitchen. We can even offer a range of extras like external roll holders, tablet mounts and label peelers to make life that bit easier for you and your staff.

Our food labelling solutions

Our TD and QL professional desktop thermal label printer ranges offer high-speed, high-quality printing up to 4 inches in width for labels and GS1 compliant barcodes. Operating without inks or toners, they enable you to keep supplies costs low, especially as you can use the same roll for multiple label designs.

If your labels are going to be used in tough conditions like hot food counters, the innovative thermal transfer technology of our TD-4 range creates highly durable, long-lasting results. There's a 3-year warranty as standard to protect you from kitchen mishaps, and we use tough materials that withstand strong cleaning chemicals.



TD-4: Long-lasting labels that make a big impact

- Thermal transfer and Direct thermal print technology available
- Up to 108mm print width
- Up to 300dpi print resolution
- Up to 3m print length
- USB and wired LAN connectivity as standard*
- Free design and barcode label software
- Optional accessories available including wireless Lan adaptors
- Easy to integrate with existing systems, software and accessories.*



TD-2: High-speed, high-resolution desktop label printers for fast, effective labelling

- Direct thermal
- Up to 56mm print width
- Up to 300dpi print resolution
- Optional accessories available including battery and battery base
- Free design and barcode label software
- Easy to integrate with existing systems, software and accessories.



QL: Low-volume printing in both 2 and 4 inch widths

- Print labels up to 4" / 105.4mm wide
- Various connectivity options including USB, Wi-Fi, Ethernet and Bluetooth
- Many types of labels available, including die-cut and continuous length rolls to print labels the size you need
- Choose from traditional paper labels, or plastic film labels in white, yellow or clear material - ideal for indoor signage
- Print from PC and Mac, or from your smartphone or tablet using the free apps available for iOS and Android.



Focus on pre-prep to provide the best customer experience

Any new laws or regulations can cause trepidation for the food industry. It can be hard to know the scale and cost of adapting to meet new rules. But as we've seen with the COVID-19 situation, it can also be a chance to find new ways to impress and delight customers. Plus, showing customers you're serious about what can be a life and death situation for them will give them confidence in your business, which can only be positive in the long run.

In the end, it's all about doing the right prep work, with the right technology at hand to make it easier. A professional label printer will ensure you're ready for legislation changes like Natasha's Law in advance – as well as being able to pre-empt customers' questions about what's in their food.

If you'd like to learn more about how Brother can help you with all your food labelling needs, visit our food labelling hub now.

brother.co.uk/food-labelling

brother
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