

# Food allergic consumers more confident about eating out

July 18 2017, by Andy Dunne

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People with allergies are more confident about eating out thanks to new rules introduced in 2014, according to new FSA-commissioned research from the University published today. Credit: University of Bath

New University research into food allergies will be published today by

the Food Standards Agency showing that people with food allergies and intolerances are more confident about eating out since allergen information rules were introduced in 2014. The study presents strong evidence that the legislation has had a positive impact and that good allergen information is good for business.

## **Living with food allergies and intolerances**

Over 2 million people in the UK have a food [allergy](#) and an estimated 600,000 have coeliac disease. In December 2014, the EU Food Information for Consumers Regulation (EU FIC) changed the way food businesses had to provide [allergen](#) information to consumers.

To understand the effect of this change, detailed research – on a UK representative sample of people with food allergies and intolerances – was commissioned by the FSA and carried out by Professor Julie Barnett in the University's Department of Psychology.

The study focused on consumer preferences when eating out, both before and after the implementation of the EU FIC. The study also compared views from consumers on how food businesses responded to the allergen rules pre and post-implementation.

The research found that, post legislation:

- 70 per cent of food allergic and intolerant consumers feel more confident in asking staff for allergen information
- 56 per cent of food allergic and intolerant consumers value staff more as a source of information
- 44 per cent of food allergic and intolerant consumers are more 'adventurous' about eating out
- 67 per cent feel allergen information on food [business](#) websites is dependable

- 63 per cent say talking to the chef about their allergen needs can be relied on
- 35 per cent report an improvement in allergen information in the menu.

Food allergic and intolerant customers also said that improved confidence in allergen information led them to eating out more frequently and that they were more likely to return to and recommend venues with staff that were helpful and attentive about their allergen needs.

Heather Hancock, Chairman of the Food Standards Agency, said: "Everyone should be able to trust their food. When people live with a [food allergy](#) or intolerance that can make them really ill or be life threatening, that trust becomes critical. This new research shows that many food businesses have a good understanding of the allergen information rules, with the result that consumers trust them and feel confident that they'll be safe when eating out.

"I'm delighted that we've been able to work with food businesses to make such a difference, improving public health and enhancing choice and confidence for millions. Some, often smaller, food businesses haven't got on top of providing allergen information yet. I hope this research helps them see the importance of meeting their obligations and the benefits it delivers. At the FSA, we'll be increasing our efforts to ensure businesses understand their responsibilities and their customer."

Professor Julie Barnett, who led the research from the University's Department of Psychology, added: "Our findings are important because they inform food businesses about how [consumers](#) want [information](#) about allergens - both written and directly from staff. Going forward I hope this work helps to inform the provision of detailed practical guidance to inform the practice of [food](#) businesses as they seek to give a

great service to all their customers."

**More information:** To find out more about the work and access FSA allergen resources see [www.food.gov.uk/allergen-resources](http://www.food.gov.uk/allergen-resources)

Access today's report [www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/ ... 013-final-report.pdf](http://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/...013-final-report.pdf)

Provided by University of Bath

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