

FDA warns top national bakery to stop listing allergens in products when they aren't there

June 28 2024, by Ernie Mundell



The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has sent a [warning letter](#) to one of America's biggest bakeries, asking the company to stop claiming there are allergens such as sesame or nuts in products when in fact they are not

there.

In a statement released Tuesday, the FDA said that Bimbo Bakeries, which includes brands such as Sara Lee, Oroweat, Thomas, Entenmann's and Ball Park buns and rolls, has included known [allergens](#) such as sesame, walnuts, almonds and hazelnuts in their "Contains" ingredients list—even though "those ingredients were not included in the product formulations," as determined by FDA inspections conducted in late 2023.

For example, Bimbo products such as Brownberry brand Whole Grains 12 Grains and Seeds RTE bread loaf product listed the three types of nuts as ingredients, even though they were not actually there. And Sara Lee brand Artesano Brioche, Delightful Multigrain, Artesano Golden Wheat and Artesano Smooth Multigrain all listed sesame as an ingredient, even though no sesame was present.

Why would companies like Bimbo run erroneous ingredients lists?

The FDA does require that [food manufacturers](#) list any potential allergens on packaging ingredients lists.

However, properly separating known allergens such as nuts or sesame in one part of a baking plant from other areas can be labor-intensive and expensive. So, some companies work around the regulation by claiming the allergens are in most or all of their products, to avoid liability and cut down on costs at their plants.

The FDA, as well as groups advocating for people with [food](#) allergies, say the practice is deceptive and unfair to consumers.

Speaking to the Associated Press, the nonprofit group Food Allergy Research & Education (FARE) called the labeling practice "a disservice"

to the roughly 33 million Americans with food allergies.

"Our community relies on accurate product labeling for their health and safety," FARE [chief executive](#) Sung Poblete told the AP. "These findings about Bimbo Bakeries' products undermine their trust and further limit their choices."

In its statement, the FDA agreed.

"People with food allergies need to be able to utilize accurate labeling to feel confident in their food choices," the agency said, and claiming that an allergen is present when it isn't "may lead to a decrease in choices for consumers with food allergies."

Instead of claiming that an allergen is in a product when it is not, the FDA would rather that manufacturers "follow [good manufacturing practices](#) [GMPs] and implement appropriate preventive controls to prevent allergen cross-contact" within their factories, the agency said.

The FDA added that it has asked Bimbo "to respond within 15 days of receipt of the [warning letter](#), stating the specific steps it has taken to address any violations and prevent the recurrence of violations or providing its reasoning and supporting information as to why the company believes it is not in violation of the law."

Mexico City-based Bimbo told the AP that company officials "take their role in protecting consumers with allergen sensitivities very seriously" and that they are in communication with the FDA to resolve the issue.

More information: Find out more about food allergies at the [Mayo Clinic](#).

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