

Vegan, Vegetarian and the Allergy Customer

'Allergen Free' & Vegan claims?

The increasing popularity, whether it is a choice made for dietary or more ecological reasons, of the vegan diet brings about its own issues when considering the allergy customer. The FDF (Food & Drink Federation) have compiled guidance that aims to dispel any misunderstanding that a vegan claim automatically means that the food product is safe and suitable for the FHS (Food Hypersensitive) customer. Food product labelled as 'suitable for vegans' may not be appropriate for certain allergic consumers due to unintentional cross-contact with allergenic ingredients, many vegan foods carry a 'May contains' statement for this very reason.

Keeping the customer informed

'Allergen'- Free and 'Vegan' are independent claims and are aimed at separate groups with separate information provided for each. Only 'Allergen' -Free claims can be used as food safety information by consumers.

[The vegan society](#) states "It is especially important for people with allergies to understand food labelling. Companies have to highlight certain allergens on food labels, including the following animal allergens: shellfish, fish, milk, eggs, and molluscs. If a risk assessment determines that a product may contain a major allergen, the label carries a warning."

What does this mean

The Vegan Societies accredited trademark allows producers to use 'May Contains or Not safe for...' statements for any of the applicable #14 allergens. They do not currently have a strict protocol in place to ensure the elimination of animal proteins in their registered members products.

Popular Vegan Foods outside of the #14

- **Legumes & Pulses:** These ingredients are commonplace within vegan foods and dishes. This food group is acknowledged within the allergy sector. Although not currently listed as one of the 14 Food Allergens that need to be identified to consumers, there are a growing number of consumers who are affected by pulses and legumes.
- **Pea Protein:** is frequently being used within plant-based dishes and vegan dishes. Evidence is emerging that there may be a link to the increased use of pea protein and the recent increase to allergies developing towards peas.

Legumes & Nuts inside the #14

- **Peanuts & Tree Nuts:** There are a high number of vegan and plant-based foods that use various nuts as the base of the dish. Plant-based milks, such as almond or hazelnut, especially in hospitality outlets, will need to be considered carefully to prevent cross-contamination
- **Gluten:** Most vegan foods will still use ingredients containing gluten in their products. Similarly, to above, plant-based milk such as oat milk needs careful handling for the FHS customer.
- **Soya:** Another popular ingredient found in vegan foods that poses the same cross-contamination risks as the above.

Please remember!

Vegan foods can be found in the same 'Free-From' aisles in the supermarkets as other non-allergen containing foods. The labelling should always be checked to ensure safety for the consumer.

<https://foodallergyaware.co.uk/resources/factsheets/>