

PROVE IT:

Adapting bakery

To meet the needs of food hypersensitive consumers

Délicifrance
LIVE EVERYDAY DELICIOUS



Introduction



Industry context

In the UK alone, an estimated 1-2% of adults and 5-8% of children have a food allergy (NICE 2011). This equates to 2 million+ people living with a diagnosed food allergy - and this doesn't include those with food intolerances.

Worryingly, the numbers are growing. Experts say we're now experiencing a 'second wave' of allergic disease - indicated by a sharp increase in A&E admissions and rising numbers of children and adults being diagnosed with life threatening food allergies ([NARF](#)).

Introduced in October 2021, Natasha's Law recognises the danger faced by people with allergies eating out, ruling that all foods made by food operators - on the premises, pre-packaged for direct sale - must provide full ingredient and allergen labelling.

This has wide-ranging effects on the foodservice industry: adapting food service, training staff, and understanding labelling requirements. Many small businesses are confused by the legislation, and lack the resources to meet requirements - whether this is kitchen space, or printing and labelling equipment. This is while continuing to create and serve delicious products that provide the variety and taste that all FHS (food hypersensitive) consumers expect.

We decided to find out more about FHS consumers and their buying habits, to learn how well our industry engages with and understands their needs, and to provide recommendations and best practice. Helping to make the transition for the foodservice industry as smooth and as seamless as possible.

Survey methodology / objectives

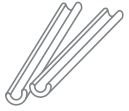
To gather a clear picture of the food allergies consumers live with, their preferred bakery products, buying habits, and ways in which they could be encouraged to buy more, we carried out a UK-wide survey.

Given the high proportion of children with a food allergy, we also spoke to consumers with children that live with allergies as well as those with food allergies themselves.

We also used social listening tool Delve Insights to monitor thousands of online conversations to be better understand what consumers are saying and feeling when it comes to bakery and food allergens. We've provided the findings below, along with recommendations on how you can safeguard operations and improve bakery sales in this currently under-served market.

FHS (food hypersensitive) consumers is a term identified by the FSA, which covers anyone living with a food allergy or intolerance.

The 14 key allergens:



Celery



Cereals
(Gluten)



Eggs



Crustaceans



Fish



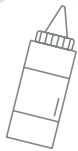
Lupin



Milk



Molluscs



Mustard



Peanut



Sesame



Soya



Sulphites



Tree nuts



JACQUI MCPEAKE

Jacqui McPeake is an award-winning food allergen specialist working alongside [Food Allergy Aware](#) providing training & consultancy, Jacqui has more than 30 years in catering.

"Larger operators were prepared for Natasha's Law and are doing well. However, many smaller businesses were not prepared, and some aren't even aware of the law and their obligations."

"Although the industry started to improve before the pandemic, there's been a backward step since COVID. The first thing that came off the menu during the brief periods of restaurants opening was options for the allergy customer. And this wasn't just smaller outlets – some of these were large chains."

"Increasing numbers of consumers are seeking solutions for their specific dietary requirements and the food industry should be working hard to ensure inclusivity of all diets wherever possible. After all, the FHS consumer is usually the one who decides where to eat, influencing friends and family when choosing a venue."



STÉPHANIE BRILLOUET

Marketing Director at Délifrance

"We've been reducing or eliminating allergens across our product lines for several years now. As such, Natasha's Law hasn't had a major impact for us at Délifrance, but we take it very seriously. We're scrupulous about our labelling and production methods."

"We realise the legislation presents new challenges for food operators. We've been working closely with customers to ensure that we align with their brand standards, providing allergen ingredient declarations and establishing confidence across the supply chain."

"In the meantime, our bakers have continued to innovate, creating delicious products that meet the needs of special diets, while continuing to offer consumers our usual high standards of taste and quality."

Food allergens



STÉPHANIE BRILLOUET

"Despite their allergies, it's clear that these consumers love their bakery! Although we also noticed that, where both parent and child have food allergies, there was a notable decrease in the number who allowed themselves sweet treats - from 82% to 68%. With allergies on the rise, it would be good to help them feel more confident indulging in the occasional cake or doughnut."

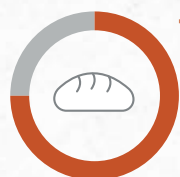
"With milk often used as a binding agent, or to enrich recipes, this can be an easy win when it comes to eliminating allergens. We worked with customers to remove milk powder from our classic bread lines. Sometimes it's not so easy, however, with some ingredients being critical to a product's appeal."

"Gluten-free has never been part of Délifrance's DNA: our heritage is in milling. We do, however, have a group-wide approach towards cutting out, or minimising allergens. All our factories are peanut-free and no sesame is allowed in our viennoiserie. And we've just embarked on a new challenge: removing soya from our chocolate, which is a lot tougher than it sounds!"

"We've also noticed that when it comes to new product development (NPD), consumers are wanting fewer ingredients but with added nutritional benefits - seeds and vitamins for example. This has been challenging for us, given our careful approach to segregating allergens - and in some cases, we've had to reintroduce nuts onto our production lines and sites - walnuts in our breads for example. Peanuts, however, remain forbidden across the group."

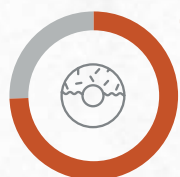
What bakery products do they usually eat?

When asked our respondents said they or their children(s) eat...



75%

Bread



74%

Sweet treats

(e.g., brownies, cakes, macarons, doughnuts, yum yums)



70%

Pastries

(e.g., croissant, pain au chocolat, cinnamon swirl)



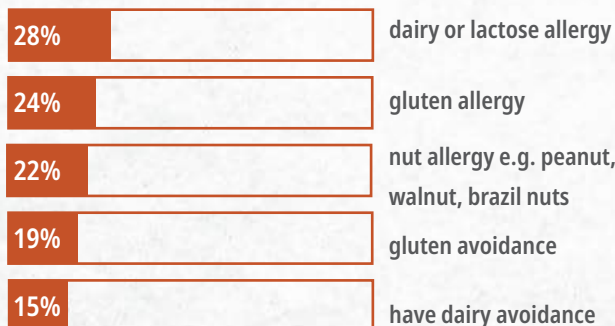
66%

Savoury

(e.g., cheese twists, pizza lattice).

What are their allergies?

When asked our respondents said they or their children(s) have...



Where people are buying bakery



What are they talking about online: Delve Insights

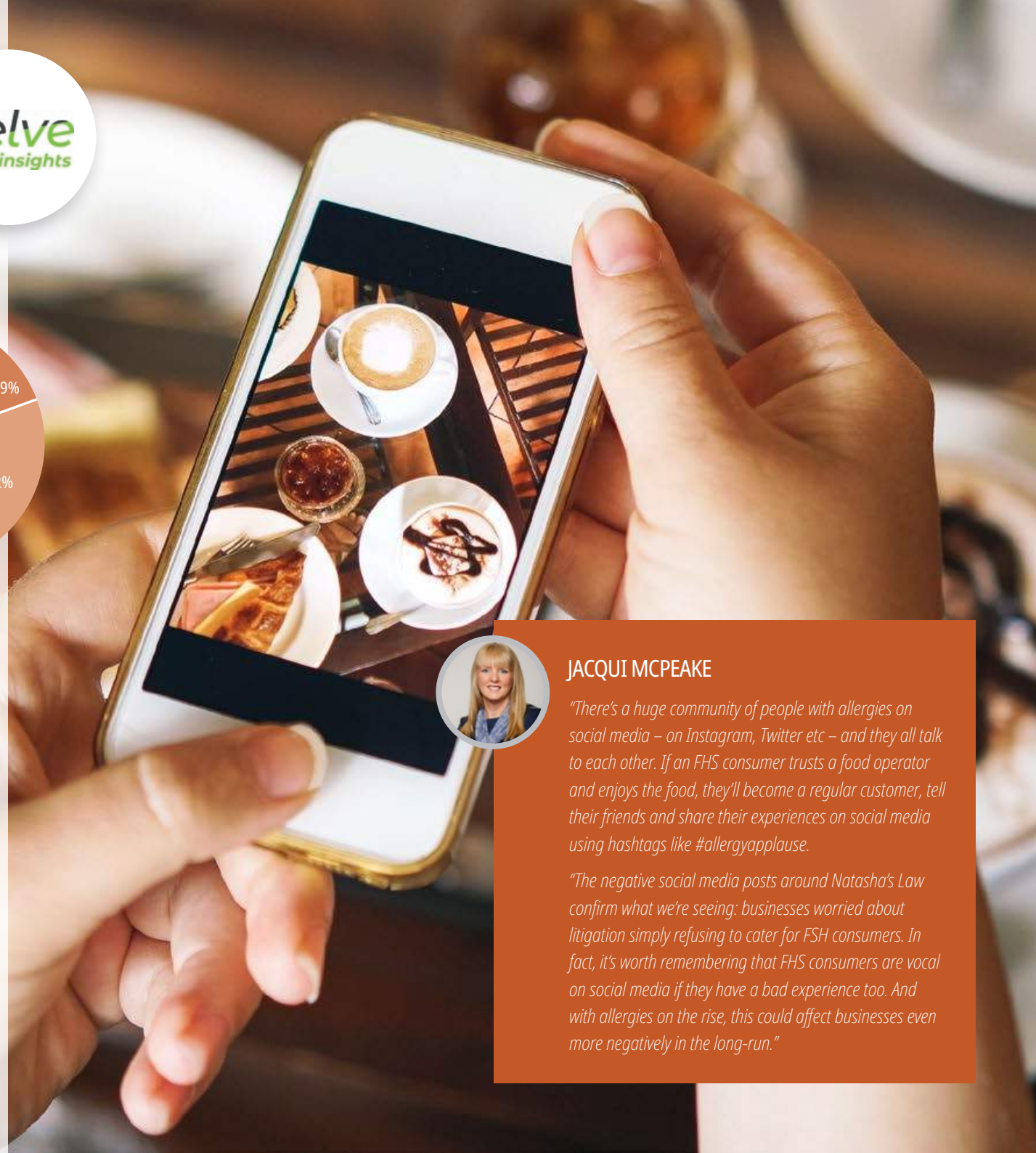
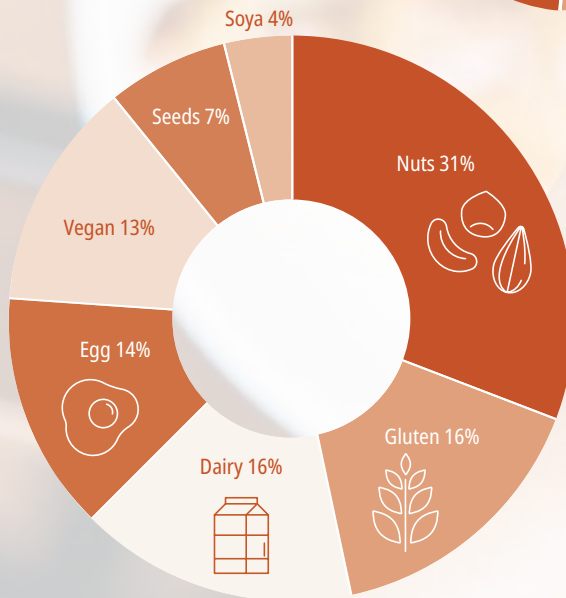
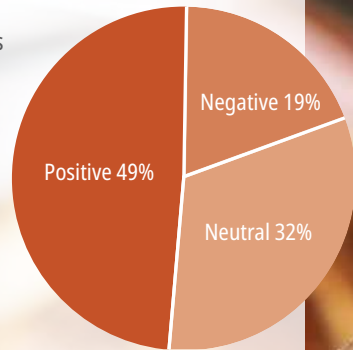


Over the last 12 months there has been 3,896 conversations on Natasha's law. 58% of this online chat has been in the last two months (September and October 2021). Almost half of all conversation has been positive.

Negativity is driven by the "effort" this will cause small businesses and concerns about wasting food that could otherwise be donated, such as to food banks, as executives would "rather be safe than sorry".

1.6% of baked goods conversation mentioned Natasha's law.

Nut allergies were spoken about the most (31%), followed by Gluten and Dairy (both 16%).



JACQUI MCPPEAKE

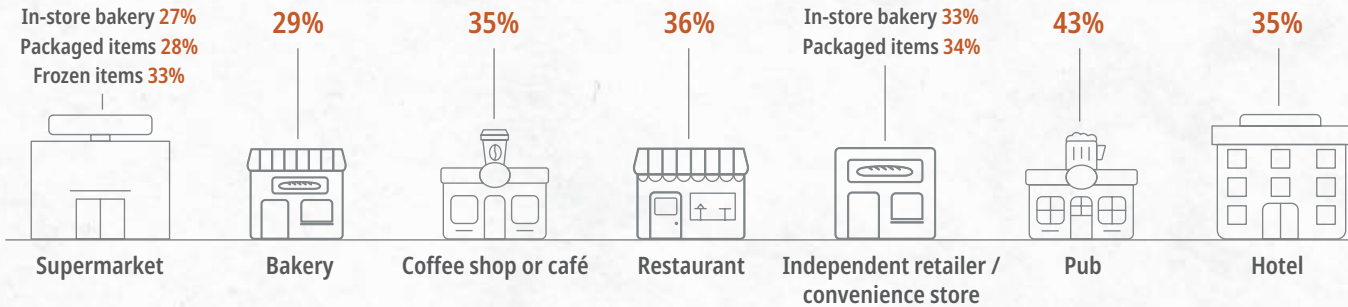
"There's a huge community of people with allergies on social media – on Instagram, Twitter etc – and they all talk to each other. If an FHS consumer trusts a food operator and enjoys the food, they'll become a regular customer, tell their friends and share their experiences on social media using hashtags like #allergyapplause.

"The negative social media posts around Natasha's Law confirm what we're seeing: businesses worried about litigation simply refusing to cater for FSH consumers. In fact, it's worth remembering that FHS consumers are vocal on social media if they have a bad experience too. And with allergies on the rise, this could affect businesses even more negatively in the long-run."

What are their shopping habits?

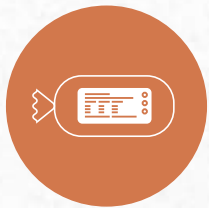
We asked survey respondents what they would like more of, and what would make it easier when shopping at the following outlets.

Respondents who don't feel like there are currently enough bakery products widely available that cater to their dietary requirements, broken down by sector:



When purchasing bakery products respondents said they would find the below most useful:

Better labelling



Supermarket



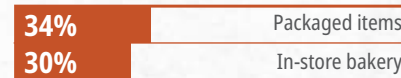
Bakery



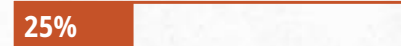
Coffee shop or café



Independent retailer /convenience store



Pub



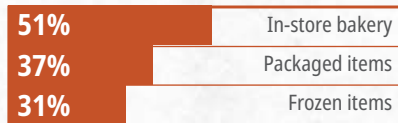
Hotel



Signage Highlighting allergen friendly products



Supermarket



Bakery



Coffee shop or café



Independent retailer /convenience store

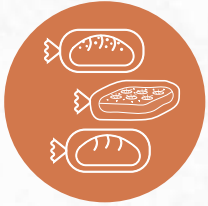


These figures indicate that the key areas for improvement for food operators are:

- ✓ Greater choice: even in bakeries, almost 3 in 10 consumers want more options.
- ✓ Improved labelling and signage for bakery products.
- ✓ Segregated areas for products containing allergens.
- ✓ Also, around 3 in 10 consumers dining in restaurants and hotels would like staff to be more knowledgeable about ingredients and allergies.
- ✓ It is also worth considering offering more wrapped products and dialling up communication on allergy reassurance for customers.



More choice



Supermarket



Bakery



Coffee shop or café



Restaurant



Independent retailer /convenience store



Pub



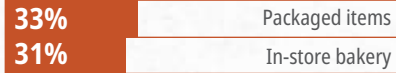
Hotel



Segregated allergen products



Supermarket



Bakery



Restaurant



Independent retailer /convenience store



Pub



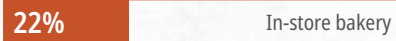
Hotel



Better staff knowledge on product ingredients



Supermarket



Restaurant



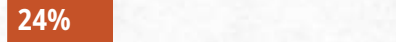
Independent retailer /convenience store



Bakery



Coffee shop or café



Hotel



Women over 55 are the least confident that their allergy needs are understood when eating OOH.



Adapting your bakery offer for dietary needs

Choice

When we asked survey respondents what they do if they can't find the bakery product they want, they answered:

I'll buy a bakery product that 'will do'

31%

I go elsewhere

30%

I won't buy anything

22%

If you're not providing enough choice or helping FHS shoppers find what they need easily through labelling, signage and in some cases product segregation, you could be missing out on sales, or worse, losing customers. And although a significant number of consumers buy a bakery product that 'will do', this isn't ideal for customer experience or loyalty.

To show awareness and understanding for the FHS consumer, look at your product range and rethink what you offer them - as well as people with special diets like vegan, plant-based and vegetarian. Chances are there'll be cross-over with these diets, so you may be able to cater for several different diets with one product.

For your bakery products that do contain allergens; can the allergenic ingredients be eliminated, without compromising on flavour or quality? Allergens may have been added without consideration, and some may be easily taken out such as milk for binding ingredients, or an egg wash. You may be able to find allergen free alternatives, enabling a wider range of consumers to enjoy your bakery.

Some retailers and consumers have different interpretations of vegan. So when creating or serving vegan products, consider your use of ingredients such as honey.



JACQUI MCPPEAKE

"FHS consumers expect continuous improvements in the range of products for dietary needs. If recipes can be easily adapted to suit gluten-free or milk-free and cater to the increasing vegan/vegetarian market, this is always a positive way forward."

"Where possible, operators should ensure dishes are suitable for a range of options e.g., the main course can be naturally gluten free (no need to thicken with flour) or the vegetarian dish can be vegan to support egg free and milk free diets. Offer alternatives on the menu and communicate with the customer honestly and provide accurate information."



Vegan croissant spotlight

It's a delicate balance; creating bakery that tastes delicious and has the right texture, while at the same time taking out what are traditionally key ingredients.

It took time and skill for our bakers to replicate the taste and texture of classic butter croissants using alternative fats like shea butter, while retaining traditional baking methods. Because it has a higher melting point than butter, it can give a "coating feeling" to your mouth. So our bakers took great care to pinpoint the optimal mix of vegetable fat, which kept the melting point the closest to real butter.

The resulting vegan croissants - part of our Feel Good Range - are a milk and egg-free yet delicious alternative for consumers.





Labelling

These days, consumers have limited time to browse and discover the products they want. They want to be able to cut to the chase and rapidly find something that suits their tastes and dietary needs.

Although clarity around ingredients is law, it can be made much easier through well thought-out labelling - at point of sale and/or on pack. This is even more important when you're providing a dazzling array of bread, pastries and patisserie.

Once you've established what you offer consumers with different dietary needs, make sure you shout about your product credentials e.g., gluten-free, vegan, vegetarian etc. Consider putting them into a dedicated allergen-free area, to reassure customers while buying. And speed up decision-making through providing visual cues for ease of selection: clearly highlighting allergens in bold or italics, for example, on all point of sale information.



JACQUI MCPENAK

"Accuracy of labels is extremely important so FHS consumers can choose products safely. All PPDS (pre-packaged for direct sale) items made on the premises and displayed ready for sale must have full ingredient labelling on the product. If a conversation takes place between the customer and staff member, a label isn't needed for unpackaged products – for example, at a deli or hot food counter.

"I strongly advocate a positive food allergen culture. At every opportunity, ask the customer "Do any of the guests have food allergies?" The kitchen will be better prepared if the restaurant can ask the question when the customer books a table. When the FOH staff member takes the order - ask the question again.

"The ideal approach is to offer a separate menu with items clearly listed. For customers on mobile phones, it's also worth considering one of the apps on the market with QR codes, which enable them to quickly and discreetly access all the allergen information they need."

Go clean

Over 61% of the people we surveyed said clean label bakery products 'would encourage' them to purchase more. But, there's still confusion over exactly what 'clean label' is...

34%

Say it's about having simple and recognisable ingredients

33%

Say it's not being processed

19%

Say they just don't know what it means, or that it means nothing in particular

This means there's plenty of opportunity for better communication and improved labelling to raise awareness and understanding of the concept.

Because clean label is so important - reducing salt, sugar, artificial ingredients and eliminating additives - we work in partnership with customers in retail and the foodservice sector. As part of our 'Go Clean' initiative, we're continually reviewing recipes to work out what can be removed while maintaining quality. Alongside, we're always working to improve sustainability through ingredient sourcing.

We spent a great deal of time creating our additives classification system at Délifrance. Cross-referencing data and information from European and local regulation authorities, customer commitments and websites like Open Food Facts, this enables us to develop targets for all our products as well as clear labels for customers.



JACQUI MCPeAKE

"Where possible, I recommend a separate area for preparing allergen free requests: separate table or bench and dedicated equipment. Purple chopping boards and knives can be used to act as a psychological prompt, so the food operator is reminded they need to prepare this order carefully."

"If you have a smaller kitchen, a clear production plan is required and all allergen free items must be prepared and cooked first, then covered and stored away from the production area. If you have a larger kitchen, assign dedicated areas for different preparation and cooking. Separate equipment, utensils and storage areas, and two stage cleaning will also minimise risk."

"If after conducting a risk assessment, you still think there's a chance of cross contamination, you should add a statement on the ingredient information "May Contain"- but only if the risk can't be eliminated or significantly reduced. This should not be used as a blanket statement for all products."

Segregation

If you're baking off allergenic products or special diet products, take care to segregate them from other products - using different machinery if possible.

This can be a challenge if you're baking off small volumes while trying to maximise your offer. However, another approach is to do this by time. So bake off your products containing no allergens first, and then do the most allergenic at a later stage.

Global Food Safety Initiative

To build confidence that your suppliers are reducing the chance of contamination during manufacturing, ask about their quality systems and processes.

All of Délifrance's factories are certified to a GFSI recognised standard and we request this from all our suppliers. It shows they have rigid systems in place, giving you the assurance that you can pass on to consumers.

With 13 factories worldwide, Délifrance takes a rigorous approach to production processes and scheduling.

Segregation controls are complex: whether products are meat, vegetarian or vegan, organic versus standard - this is while taking into account allergens across the board.

We look to segregate by line, machinery and time. All of our factories are peanut free and our viennoiserie factories are sesame free. Where allergens are handled, we have strict procedures in place to ensure any risks are minimised.

We have dedicated nut production lines or facilities. If separation is not possible, however, we develop strict baking schedules so non allergenic products are baked first and the most allergenic later on.

Conclusion



JACQUI MCPeAKE

"In my work training school catering teams, we're seeing more and more children diagnosed with multiple and severe allergies – this is as well as the one in five already living with food allergies. These are allergies outside of the top 14 too, such as kiwi fruit, tomatoes, peppers, pea protein, lentils and chickpeas. In the future, this is likely to lead to legislation for ingredient information for all loose foods, and allergy charts or matrices will have to show full ingredients, rather than just declaring the full 14."

"Because of supply chain challenges around Brexit, many small businesses have had to substitute products for their regular ones making it more difficult to monitor ingredient lists. Keeping this information correct is absolutely critical."

"These are all good reasons why getting solid systems (training staff, reviewing menus and adapting operations) up and running is essential for food operators right now."



STÉPHANIE BRILLOUET

"It's evident that catering to allergenic diets is of increasing importance. At Délifrance, we take this very seriously and are committed to working with our customers to not only keep the growing number of FHS consumers safe but also enhancing their experience of enjoying bakery products that we know they love. Indulgence is a trend equally important for consumers living with allergies to those without and therefore we have a dedicated compliance team that are always working on removing unnecessary ingredients and cleaning our recipes. It's not always easy to achieve due to the nature of our products but we'll continue to work on this as we continue to innovate to support operators and retailers."



The ideal partner



Bread

Using our heritage, artisan techniques, baking tradition and exacting standards of taste and quality, we help our customers around the world attract, satisfy and delight consumers at every moment of the day.

Expertise

We have a dedicated UK and global technical team committed to overseeing food safety and compliance, ensuring we can support our customers varying needs.

A complete bakery offer

Délicfrance offers a wide range of breads including crafted, artisan-inspired and rustic products; a wide range of classic French-style viennoiserie and pâtisserie, as well as international bestsellers; and puff pastry savoury products.

Our solutions to support you

We distribute frozen and easy-to-prepare products in order to provide you with greater flexibility and better cost management thanks to on-demand cooking and waste reduction.



Viennoiserie



Pâtisserie



Savoury



Délicfrance
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To find out more about how we can help you help your customers live every day delicious, please get in touch with the team by contacting us on 0116 257 1871.

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