

IDENTIFYING TREE NUT ALLERGENS

Tree nuts, or simply “nuts”, are extremely potent allergens used extensively in the food industry. Unsurprisingly, nuts are considered a key allergen under the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code.

The Food Standards Code requires these foods to be declared on labels whenever they are present as ingredients or as components of food additives or processing aids, or made accessible to consumers when they ask for it if the food is not labelled.

Any food, food ingredient or ingredient component can cause severe allergic reactions, including life-threatening anaphylaxis, but most food allergies in Australia are caused by peanuts, tree nuts, milk, eggs, sesame seeds, fish, shellfish, soy, lupin and wheat.

People with an allergy to one type of nut have a greater chance of being allergic to others, which is why people who are allergic to some nuts generally avoid all of them. It is also common for people with a nut allergy to avoid eating peanuts — which are, in fact, legumes — even if they are not allergic to peanuts because of the high potential for cross-contamination during food manufacturing and packaging processes.

It is critically important that food businesses are aware of any allergens in the products they prepare and sell. To do so, Food Handlers must read the ingredient labels of all pre-made foods or ingredients that come into the business. Many food businesses delegate these responsibilities to the back-of-house employees who prepare or cook the food. This is done under the supervision of a kitchen manager who coordinates how this information is:

- recorded and stored
- communicated to other Food Handlers or managers
- communicated to customers (e.g. explicitly stated on the website or on menus, available in writing to any customer that asks or through customer-employee interactions)



IDENTIFYING TREE NUT ALLERGENS

It can be challenging to remember the many types of nuts that could be listed on an ingredient label. If you see any of the common nuts listed below, or any of the “ingredients to watch out for”, you must not serve that product to a customer who has disclosed a nut allergy.

Food businesses should avoid using any products that do not have an ingredient list, and should be aware that manufacturers may occasionally change their recipes or use different ingredients for variations of the same product.

Remember to take all reasonable measures to prevent cross-contamination, which can cause “safe” food (food that should not contain a particular allergen) to become dangerous. Be especially careful with baked goods, particularly unpackaged items.

Common tree nuts

- almonds
- brazil nuts
- cashews
- chestnuts
- hazelnuts (filberts)
- hickory nuts
- macadamia nuts
- pecans (mashuga nuts)
- pine nuts (pinon, pignolias)
- pistachios
- walnuts
- non-gai nuts/nan-gai nuts



IDENTIFYING TREE NUT ALLERGENS



Foods, cuisines and products that contain (or may contain) nuts

- African dishes (e.g. dukkah)
- Asian/Indian dishes (e.g. curries)
- Mexican dishes (e.g. chicken mole)
- vegetarian/vegan dishes (e.g. caponata)
- pasta sauces (e.g. pesto sauce)
- sauces and dips (e.g. barbecue sauce)
- stuffing, gravies
- baked goods (e.g. biscuits, cookies, cakes, slices, pastries)
- breakfast cereals, granola, muesli
- chocolate, chocolate spreads
- candy, confectionery (e.g. lollies, marzipan, fudge, nougat, praline, Turkish delight)
- ice cream, frozen desserts
- flavouring (natural/artificial)
- flavoured coffees, drinks
- salads, salad dressings
- snack foods (e.g. dried fruit mixes, trail mix, crackers, popcorn, chips) and health food bars

Ingredients to watch out for

- almond meal, almond paste
- artificial nuts (e.g. Nu-Nuts™)
- beer nuts
- nut meat, nut meal
- nut milks
- nut oils (e.g. peanut oil)
- nut paste, butter or spreads
- pralines
- gianduja (nut mixture found in some chocolate)
- natural nut extract
- nut flavoured alcoholic liqueurs and syrups (e.g. amaretto, frangelico)

Note: This is not a complete or comprehensive list of ingredients to avoid. Food and food products purchased from other countries are not always produced using the same manufacturing and labelling standards as in Australia.