

Eating in and preparing an allergy-safe meal

If you're cooking a meal for someone with an allergy or an intolerance here's our advice on preparing allergy-safe food at home.

Cooking for someone with a food allergy or intolerance can be worrying if you are not used to doing it. If someone is allergic to something, and you have served them a food they can't eat, just taking it off their plate is not enough. This is because an extremely small amount can be enough to cause an allergic reaction. It is important to take care when planning and preparing a meal.

You can plan an allergy-safe meal by:

- asking your guest (or a child's parents or carers) what they can and can't eat
- making sure you keep allergens separate from other foods
- checking the ingredients list on prepacked foods like sauces, dressings, and desserts for allergens
- keeping a note of the ingredients or the food packet itself used in the dish so you can answer any questions your guests may have about the food
- avoiding adding extra toppings or decorations to dishes

There are often good substitutes for allergens available to buy. Your guest will have the best understanding of their specific allergy and will be able to help plan a suitable meal.

It's important to note that heating does not remove the allergenic potential of proteins in food unless they are completely hydrolysed, and heating temperatures in the kitchen will not do this. As most foods are complex mixtures, how allergens will respond to heat is not always predictable.

Finally, it's important to avoid cross-contamination. Clean work surfaces and equipment thoroughly to remove traces of food you may have cooked or prepared before.

Washing your hands thoroughly before preparing food, and making sure cloths used to wipe down surfaces are washed and clean before use, will minimise the risk of cross-contamination.