

Colours in restaurant and take-away food

This leaflet provides guidance on the requirements of the **Colours in Food Regulations 1995** particularly in relation to food sold in restaurants and as take-away meals.

The regulations:

- allow only certain colours to be used in food;
- restrict the use of some colours to certain foods; and
- set maximum levels for some colours in certain foods.

To which foods do the Regulations apply?

The regulations apply to all foods but make specific requirements for certain foods, such as meat, fish and shellfish which may not be directly coloured.

Of particular relevance to restaurant and take-away meals are those which relate to "sauces, seasoning (for example - curry powder, tandoori), pickles, relishes, chutney and picalilli". In these cases, only 500mg/kg in total of the following permitted colours is allowed, whether used singly or in any combination:

E100	Curcumin
E102	Tartrazine
E104	Quinoline Yellow
E110	Sunset Yellow FCF, Orange Yellow
E120	Cochineal, Carminic Acid, Carmines
E122	Azorubine, Carmoisine
E124	Ponceau 4R, Cochineal Red A
E129	Allura Red AC
E131	Patent Blue V
E132	Indigotine, Indigo Carmine
E133	Brilliant Blue FCF
E142	Green S
E151	Brilliant Black BN, Black PN
E155	Brown HT
E160d	Lycopene
E160e	Beta-apo-8'-carotenal (C30)
E160f	Ethyl ester of Beta-apo-8' carotenic acid (C30)
E161b	Lutein

Why are these controlled?

The use of these colours in food is controlled because excessive consumption has been linked to allergic reactions and sickness.

How can I avoid selling food with excess or non-permitted colours?

In each case you should obtain written confirmation from your supplier that a product complies with the provisions of the Food Safety Act 1990 and the Colours in Food Regulations 1995. Always ensure that you and any employees follow the instructions supplied with the seasoning/colour. If there are no instructions, or if the instructions are not clear, ask your supplier for further details in writing. Do not guess or rely on information given only verbally. If you import the seasoning/colour directly, or manufacture it yourself you should seek more detailed advice from your local Trading Standards Service.

What can happen if I sell a food containing excess or non-permitted colours?

Your customers' health may be put at risk. It is a criminal offence to sell food which does not comply with the Colours in Food Regulations 1995, and if you are found guilty a court can impose a fine of up to £5,000.

What about other additives?

There are other regulations which control the use of all additives used in food. It is important that you always obtain written confirmation from your suppliers that their products conform to the relevant requirements. If you import the products directly, contact The Trading Standards Service for further advice. You must always ensure that any instructions for use are followed and, if in doubt, check - do not guess.

This leaflet is not an authoritative interpretation of the law and is intended only for guidance.