

Inclusivity this Christmas

Last year, Christmas was very different for most of us. We stayed away from our loved ones and spent the festive period in isolation in order to keep each other safe. But for some people with severe allergies, this may not have been the first time they felt separated 'for their own protection'.

This year, everyone with food allergies should have a seat at the festive table. There should be safe options for them to eat and information about the ingredients within the food needs to be available. Everyone deserves to eat with confidence whilst dining out, but also at the homes of friends and family. All it takes is some understanding. Improved awareness around allergy helps keep friends and loved ones safe. Being thorough on checking ingredients and limiting risk of cross contamination will definitely help if you are cooking for people with food allergy, but there's lots of other things you could do to make sure they feel included.

We asked our community about inclusivity at Christmas and they gave us some really useful ideas:

- If possible, try to make everyone's food without the allergen so that the person with a food allergy does not feel like the odd one out – there's some fantastic alternatives available which still make for tasty treats! Being inclusive means trying to make all the food available for everyone, rather than just one option, as far as possible.
- Always be kind, try not to make anyone feel like they are the cause of inconvenience.
- Keep the labels from foods so that they can make an informed decision about what they can eat – it also helps if you are putting on a spread, as it's easier to show what's in the food you're offering.
- Remember that people can have more than one allergy so make sure you ask in advance.
- If you're worried about checking labels, then ask the person with the allergy/allergies to double check, they won't mind.
- If you're worried about cross contamination, try to steam clean your kitchen before preparing the food.
- Have fun and be creative. If someone is allergic to milk, it doesn't mean they need a fruit salad – there's so much choice for people with allergy. Here are some recipes to try: https://www.allergyuk.org/allergyuk-resources/?resource_type=277
- And finally, just ask. The parent or person with allergens is usually a pro, they will be happy to help and grateful for your consideration and your efforts to keep them included and safe.

**Be kind, be safe and be merry.
We hope you have a fantastic Christmas.**

