

Unilever releases Food Label Guide

Unilever Food Solutions (UFS) has a new, easy-to-use 'Food Labelling Ingredients and Legislation Guide', developed in South Africa to help food service operators all over the world cater more easily to their guests' nutritional requirements.



It answers many questions that frequently come up in the food service industry - nutritional values, labelling and legislation which are becoming increasingly important, as new trends and food labelling legislation create a need for accurate information to be constantly available to consumers.

The new guide, which will be released globally following its successful launch in South Africa last year, is demystifying food labels - from nutritional content and additives to allergen information and food safety - while also helping chefs to adapt the menus easily to guests' specific nutritional needs and dietary requests.

Available free for download, the Guide is accessible to all chefs throughout South Africa. "At last nutrition labelling, food safety and special dietary requests are made simple and practical in this new easy-to-use tool," says the company's nutrition expert Keegan Eichstadt.

It has distributed over 150 copies of the hardcover guide to chefs, operators and schools around the country for their use and it is being hailed as a valuable book that is providing a wealth of the right type of information.

Wide industry acceptance

Says SA Chefs' Association (SACA) President Stephen Billingham, "A practical and very relevant publication, the guide is an invaluable tool for chefs and hospitality professionals wishing to successfully comply with the Consumer Protection Act and food labelling regulations. It is imperative that menu descriptions are not misleading in any way and every chef and foodservice professional needs to be aware of, and able to clearly communicate, not only the ingredients that make up the dish, but also the possible allergies and food tolerances related to the dish. As South Africa's food industry continues to develop, a publication of this nature becomes increasingly important; guiding our chefs successfully through these changing times."

UFS' MD, Michel Mellis is delighted that the amount of work that went into developing the guide is paying off in the food service industry in South Africa. "The positive response to the book is encouraging because it indicates a continued growth and maturing in the industry and a commitment to complying with relevant legislation and meeting consumers' expectations and needs."

He adds that chefs are facing increasing demands from guests to be transparent about their ingredients. Global research conducted with 3 500 diners in the UFS' 2011 'World Menu Report: What's in Your Food?' survey showed that 90% wanted more transparency in their food when they eat out. "This book is helping chefs and operators ensure that they are fully catering to diners' needs and offering transparency to their patrons. Lack of knowledge about ingredients should never be a barrier to choosing one restaurant or menu item over another."

Invaluable guide for students

According to Thomas Overbeck, project manager for SACA's National Youth Chefs Training Programme (NYCTP), the book and accompanying poster were distributed to every school that does the NYCTP diploma-level training, which is 22 academies and chef schools country wide, reaching 784 diploma and certificate students directly.

"It has proven particularly valuable in enhancing the course material and underscoring the knowledge of the students studying the City & Guilds Diploma in Food Preparation and Cooking (Culinary Arts) and Patisserie and the Advanced Diploma in Food preparation and Cookery Supervision.

He believes the book should be available for every kitchen library. "The information is written clearly, and it is user-friendly and easily accessed and referenced. The access to further back-up on the company's website is an added value, which is very useful."

Mellis concludes, "The guide is not just a way of complying with the various acts governing food safety. It gives chefs the ability to market their operation, as one that has the capabilities and knowledge to provide food for any nutritional requirement, which, at this early stage of legislation, is a unique selling proposition for any restaurant. In the future, however, restaurants that do not have the know-how to provide educated guests with information about what's in their food will be severely handicapped and chefs would be well advised to use this opportunity to establish their credibility and reliability in food safety and nutrition to full advantage."

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