

Michigan Department of Agriculture: Basic Food Labeling Requirements

This is a simplified version of our 6 page detailed guide. To obtain the full one, go to our Food Labeling Guide” link: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mda/MDA_LBLGUIDE061308draft_283638_7.pdf

The following link is for the FDA’s Food Labeling Guide:
<http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/GuidanceDocumentsRegulatoryInformation/LabelingNutrition/ucm2006828.htm>

The basic information required on the label is:

- Common name of the food product.
- The ingredients in descending order of predominance by weight. If you use a prepared item in your recipe, you must list the sub ingredients as well. For example: the name “soy sauce” is not acceptable. This would be acceptable: “soy sauce (wheat, soybeans, salt)”. Please see the example below.
- The net weight or net volume of the food product, (must also include the metric equivalent). There are conversion charts that are available online. The weight has to be preceded by the term “Net wt.”
- Name and address of the firm, including the street address.
- Allergen labeling as specified in the federal labeling requirements.

Here is an example of a label that should help you develop your own labels:

Chocolate Chip Cookies

Artie Pinkster
123 Foodstuff Lane
Casserole City, MI 82682

Ingredients: Enriched flour (Wheat flour, niacin, reduced iron, thiamine, mononitrate, riboflavin and folic acid), butter (milk, salt), chocolate chips (sugar, chocolate liquor, cocoa butter, butterfat (milk), Soy lecithin (as an emulsifier), walnuts, sugar, eggs, salt, artificial vanilla extract, baking soda

Contains: wheat, eggs, milk, soy, walnuts

Net Wt. 3 oz. (85.05 g)

What does allergen labeling, as specified in federal labeling requirements, mean? It means you must identify if any of your ingredients are made from one of the following food groups: **milk, eggs, wheat, peanuts, soybeans, fish, shellfish (such as crab, lobster or shrimp) and tree nuts (such as almonds, pecans, walnuts or coconut)**. For example, if you have an ingredient made with a wheat based product, you have two options:

1. Include the allergen in the ingredient list. For example, a white bread with the following ingredient listing: whole wheat flour, water, salt and yeast meets the allergen declaration, because it includes the word “wheat”.
2. Include an allergen statement (“Contains: ”) after the ingredient list. For example a white bread, with the following ingredients: flour, water, sodium caseinate, salt and yeast is not correct. The statement: Contains: wheat and milk is correct. The “Contains” statement must include all of the allergens found in the product. In this example, the sodium caseinate ingredient comes from milk. The flour contains wheat.

Are there any special requirements for tree nuts labeling for allergens? Yes, if your food product has tree nuts as an ingredient you must identify which tree nut you are using. For example, if you made Nut Bread, an acceptable ingredient list would be: Ingredients: wheat flour, water, almonds, salt, and yeast. The following ingredient list would not be acceptable: Ingredients: flour, water, nuts, salt, and yeast.

Do I have to include my business address on my product labeling or is a post office box sufficient? You must use the physical address of your firm on your product label. The street address must be included, not just the city, state, and zip code, unless your business is listed in the local phone directory. The name of your business and the address must be together. The purpose of having the complete address on labels is to be able to locate the business in case of a recall or to trace the food source back to the manufacturer in response to a foodborne illness complaint or outbreak.

What information has to be on the front of the package where the consumer sees it? This is called the principal display panel and it must have the common name of the product and the net weight. All other label information can be put on the side (the information panel).

Do I need to have a Nutrition Facts panel on the label? You do not need a Nutrition Facts panel as long as you do not make any nutrition or health claims and fall under one of the exemption categories, such as the small business one. A firm that sells \$50,000 or less in food or \$500,000 or less in total sales (food and non-food combined), qualifies as a small business. The nutrition Facts labeling guide is on the following website:

<http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/GuidanceDocumentsRegulatoryInformation/LabelingNutrition/ucm2006828.htm>

What kind of coding is required? If the food is perishable with a shelf life of less than 90 days, a sell-by date must be marked on the package. Otherwise, a lot code must be on it, which is traceable to the batch and date it was made. In some instances, a sell by date can be used as a lot code as well. A lot code is very important in the case of a recall. These codes can be located anywhere on the package.