



Nottinghamshire  
County Council

# Business Information

## Artificial colours in restaurant and takeaway meals

The Colours in Foods Regulations 1995 restrict the use of artificial colours in foods. Certain foods are not permitted to contain certain colours, while others may only contain specified colours and/or colours below restricted maximum amounts.

These regulations apply to foods sold by restaurants and take-aways as well as food sold in retail shops.

### **Problems associated with artificial colours**

Excess artificial colours in food can pose potential long term health problems to consumers. An excess of these colours are reported to cause migraines, skin rashes, gastric problems, vomiting and breathing problems.

Foods sold from restaurants and take-aways are not required to be marked with lists of ingredients or to declare the presence of additives. Therefore consumers need to be able to rely on businesses knowing what colours can be used and in what quantities.

### **Legal Requirements**

- Basic and unprocessed foods should not be coloured e.g. rice, flour, milk
- Meat, fish and shellfish should not be directly coloured. However, accompanying sauces and seasonings may contain colours
- Chicken Tandoori is not permitted to contain colour – except by virtue of the Tandoori/curry spice mixes used, which themselves may contain no more than 500 milligrams per kilogram of artificial colours
- Rice can only contain colour introduced by ingredients added to it e.g. seasonings
- Raita may contain colour of no more than 500 milligrams per kilogram of artificial colours

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## Legal Requirements (continued)...

- Sauces cannot contain more than 500 milligrams per kilogram of colours either singularly or in combination.

## Alternatives

The levels quoted are **maximum** levels. Some foods are sold in bright vivid colours which are not their natural colours. Similar colouration can be achieved by using natural herbs and spices. Owners may wish to 'educate' the consumer into expecting more healthy, natural dishes and explaining vivid colours are not a reflection of quality.

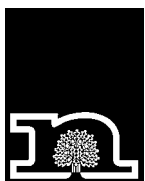
It is the responsibility of the caterer to ensure that you make and sell foods that comply with legal limits. Follow the colouring manufacturer's instructions precisely. Ensure all staff are fully trained in and understand the importance of avoiding using artificial colours to excess.

## Penalties

It is a criminal offence to sell food containing excess artificial colour. The maximum penalty on conviction in a Magistrates Court is a fine of £5,000.

This Service routinely take samples of takeaway restaurant food and submits them to the Public Analyst to ensure compliance with regulations

*This leaflet is a brief summary of the Colours in Food Regulations 1995. It is not an authoritative document on the law and is only intended for guidance. For further details or clarification please contact the Trading Standards Service.*



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