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trading standards law explained

Jam and similar products

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Although the United Kingdom left the European Union (EU) in 2021, certain pieces of legislation (known as 'assimilated law') continue to apply until such time as they are replaced by new UK legislation, revoked or permitted to expire. This means that our guidance still contains references to legislation that originated from the EU.

In this guide, the words 'must' or 'must not' are used where there is a legal requirement to do (or not do) something. The word 'should' is used where there is established legal guidance or best practice that is likely to help you avoid breaking the law.

This guidance is for England

The labelling and composition of jam and similar products is controlled by legislation. Jam, marmalade and certain other names are 'reserved descriptions' that can only be used to describe a product if it meets the compositional requirements of the Jam and Similar Products (England) Regulations 2003.

There are general labelling requirements for these products, as well as requirements for specific labelling stating the fruit and sugar content.

This guidance relates to the labelling of all these types of products, regardless of whether they are sold prepacked, prepacked for direct sale or non-prepacked.

Reserved descriptions

The legislation specifies a number of 'reserved descriptions'.

Products with reserved descriptions must follow a set of compositional requirements (which ingredients must be in the product and how much of them) that must be met for the product to be described using the reserved description - for example, 'jam'.

If the product cannot meet the compositional requirements of the reserved description, then it must not be used to describe the product.

If the product has been manufactured in compliance with a reserved description, then the reserved description must be used.

The reserved description is the name of the product.

Compositional requirements

The following are reserved descriptions, each of which have compositional requirements.

Jam

Jam is a gelled mixture of sugar, water and fruit (from pulp, puree or both). It must contain the following amounts of fruit per kilogram of finished product:

- 250 g - redcurrants, blackcurrants, rosehips, rowanberries, sea buckthorns or quinces
- 150 g - ginger
- 160 g - cashew apples
- 60 g - passion fruit
- 350 g - any other fruit

In all cases, where the product contains multiple types of fruit, you must use the combined weight of fruit.

Marmalade

Marmalade is a gelled mixture of sugar, water and citrus fruit pulp, purée, juice, peel or aqueous extract (water in which all the soluble elements of the fruit have been dissolved) in any combination.

Marmalade must contain not less than 200 g of citrus fruit (from pulp, puree, rind, juice or any combination) per kilogram of the finished product; at least 75 g of this must come from the 'endocarp' (in citrus fruits this is the main part of the fruit, the part that is usually eaten). Marmalade can only be made from citrus fruits.

Other reserved descriptions include 'extra jam', 'jelly' and 'extra jelly'. In each case, the minimum amount of fruit per kilogram of finished product is as follows.

Extra jam:

- 350 g - redcurrants, blackcurrants, rosehips, rowanberries, sea buckthorns or quinces
- 250 g - ginger
- 230 g - cashew apples
- 80 g - passion fruit
- 450 g - any other fruit

Jelly:

- 250 g - redcurrants, blackcurrants, rosehips, rowanberries, sea buckthorns or quinces
- 150 g - ginger
- 160 g - cashew apples
- 60 g - passion fruit
- 350 g - any other fruit

Extra jelly:

- 350 g - redcurrants, blackcurrants, rosehips, rowanberries, sea buckthorns or quinces
- 250 g - ginger
- 230 g - cashew apples
- 80 g - passion fruit
- 450 g - any other fruit

Jelly marmalade is the same as marmalade, but contains no insoluble matter (nothing that won't dissolve), except possibly for small quantities of finely sliced peel.

The Regulations forbid the use of the following fruit in the manufacture of extra jam and extra jelly:

- apples
- pears
- clingstone plums
- melons
- watermelons
- grapes
- pumpkins
- cucumbers
- tomatoes

All of the above products (jam, jelly, etc) must have a soluble solids (solids that can be dissolved in the product) content in the finished product of not less than 60%, as determined by a refractometer at 20 °C (a refractometer is a piece of equipment on to which a small quantity of jam is smeared, allowing the sugar content to be measured).

Other reserved descriptions

X curd

A curd is an emulsion (a mix of two liquids that do not dissolve) of edible fat and/or oil, sugar, whole egg and/or egg yolk, and any combination of fruit, fruit pulp, fruit purée, fruit juice, aqueous extract of fruit or essential oils of fruit, with or without other edible ingredients. In the description, X is the name of the fruit (or fruits) used to make the curd.

The quantity of:

- fat and oil used for every kilogram of the finished product must not be less than 40 g
- whole egg and egg yolk used for every kilogram of finished product must not be less than 6.5 g of egg yolk solids
- fruit, fruit pulp, fruit puree, fruit juice, aqueous extract of fruit and essential oil of fruit must be sufficient to characterise the finished product

Y flavour curd

A flavour curd is the same as a curd, but the fruit has been replaced with fruit flavouring. In the description, Y is the name of the flavouring.

The quantity of:

- fat and oil used for every kilogram of the finished product must not be less than 40 g
- whole egg and egg yolk used for every kilogram of finished product must not be less than 6.5 g of egg yolk solids
- flavouring material used must be sufficient to characterise the product

Mincemeat

Mincemeat is a mixture of sweetening agents, vine fruits (raspberries, gooseberries, etc), citrus peel, suet or equivalent fat and vinegar or acetic acid, with or without other edible ingredients.

The quantity of:

- vine fruits and citrus peel used for every kilogram of finished product must not be less than 300 g, of which not less than 200 g consists of vine fruits
- suet or equivalent fat used for every kilogram of the finished product must not be less than 25 g

Curds and mincemeats are required to have a soluble solids content of 65% or more, as determined by a refractometer at 20 °C.

Sweetened chestnut puree

The quantity of chestnut used per kilogram of finished product must not be less than 380 g.

The soluble solids content must not be less than 60% as determined by a refractometer at 20 °C.

Additional ingredients

If you want to describe your product using any of the reserved descriptions above, then you must only use the additional ingredients in the list below. You can still manufacture products using ingredients that are not on the list, but you cannot then describe them as jam, marmalade, etc; instead you would need to use descriptions such as 'preserve' or 'conserve'.

The permitted additional ingredients are:

- honey - in all products, as a total or partial substitute for sugars
- fruit juice - only in jam
- citrus fruit juice - in products obtained from other types of fruit - only in jam, extra jam, jelly and extra jelly
- red fruit juices - only in jam and extra jam manufactured from rosehips, strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries, redcurrants, plums and rhubarb
- red beetroot juice - only in jam and jelly manufactured from strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries, redcurrants and plums
- essential oils of citrus fruits - only in marmalade and jelly marmalade
- edible oils and fats as anti-foaming agents - in all products
- liquid pectin - in all products
- citrus peel - in jam, extra jam, jelly and extra jelly
- leaves of *Pelargonium odoratissimum* (apple geranium / apple pelargonium) - in jam, extra jam, jelly and extra jelly, where they are made from quinces
- spirits, wine and liqueur wine, nuts, aromatic herbs, spices, vanilla and vanilla extracts - in all products
- vanilline - in all products
- permitted food additives

A list of permitted food additives can be found on the Food Standards Agency website.

Permitted treatments

If you want to describe your product using any of the reserved descriptions above, you are only permitted to use certain treatments on your product.

Fruit pulp, fruit puree and aqueous extract of fruit must only be treated in the following ways:

- heated, chilled or frozen
- freeze-dried
- concentrated, to the extent that is technically possible

Sulphur dioxide (E220) or its salts (E221, E222, E223, E224, E226 and E227) can be used as an aid to manufacture, provided that the maximum sulphur dioxide content is not exceeded (10 mg/kg in relation to jams, jellies and marmalades made with sulphited fruits). This does not apply to extra jam or extra jelly.

Apricots and plums for jam can be subjected to other drying processes, but cannot be freeze-dried.

Citrus peel can be preserved in brine.

In the same way as for additional ingredients above, you can apply other treatments to your products than

those listed, but if you do so, you cannot then describe them using a reserved description.

Sulphur dioxide

If sulphur dioxide (SO2) is present at greater than 10 mg/kg, it must be declared in the ingredients list in the same way as any other ingredient.

Sulphur dioxide at levels greater than 10mg/kg is an allergenic ingredient specified in Annex II to assimilated Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 *on the provision of food information to consumers*; therefore, it must be emphasised in some way in the ingredients list (bold text, capital letters etc).

Please see 'Food allergens and intolerance' for more information.

It is best practice to include a statement on the packaging explaining to customers how allergenic ingredients have been emphasised - for example, 'For allergens, see ingredients in **bold**'.

Reduced sugar

In the case of all products, permitted sweeteners can be used as a partial or complete replacement for sugar.

A list of permitted sweeteners can be found on the FSA website.

Where sugar has been partially or completely replaced by permitted sweeteners, the description 'reduced sugar' may be used.

In order to comply with other food legislation, the amount of sugar must have been reduced by at least 30%.

Products described as 'reduced sugar' must have a soluble solids content of not less than 25% and not more than 50%.

Labelling

Name

If your product has been manufactured to meet the compositional requirements of a reserved description, then you must use the reserved description in the name of the food.

The name of the fruit(s) used in jam, marmalade, etc must be included in the product name ('Strawberry Jam', 'Seville Orange Marmalade', etc).

If the product is made from more than one type of fruit, each must be stated in the name in descending order by weight of fruit (flesh, pulp, juice, etc combined) used in the product.

If a product is made from three or more types of fruit, each must be stated in the name in descending order by weight of fruit, and you must also state either 'mixed fruit' (or similar) or state the number of different types of fruit used. For example - 'Mixed Fruit Jam made with strawberries, blueberries and

blackcurrants'.

If a product is made from three or more types of fruit, each must be stated in the name in descending order by weight of fruit, and you must also state either 'mixed fruit' (or similar) or state the number of different types of fruit used. For example - 'Mixed Fruit Jam made with strawberries, blueberries and blackcurrants'.

In the case of curd, X (see above) must be replaced with the name of the fruit(s), or the words 'mixed fruit', or the number of fruits used in its manufacture (for example, 'Three Fruit Curd').

In the case of flavour curd, Y (see above) must be replaced with the name of the fruit flavour or the words 'mixed fruit'.

The same rule will apply for any product that is using a reserved description (where relevant).

Fruit and sugar content

This is not required for curds, flavour curds or mincemeat.

The label for jams and similar products must include the two following statements:

- 'Prepared with X g fruit per 100 g', where X is the amount of fruit used in 100 g of finished product
- 'Total sugar content: X g per 100 g', where X is the amount of sugar in 100 g of finished product determined by a refractometer at 20 °C

Both statements must be in the same field of vision as the name of the product, which means that you must be able to hold the product so that the statements and the name are visible at the same time.

This is in addition to the food information requirement that the net quantity declaration must appear in the same field of vision as the name of the food (see 'Labelling of prepacked foods: general'). Therefore, all four pieces of information must appear in the same field of vision.

Where the product is made from two or more types of fruit, you must specify the amounts of all of the fruits - for example, 'Raspberry and Apple Jam made with 45 g of raspberry and 35 g of apple per 100 g of finished product'. If you are describing the product as 'mixed fruit', 'three fruit', etc, you do not need to break it down in this way.

General requirements for prepacked food

The requirements above are mandatory, regardless of how the products are being sold (prepacked, prepacked for direct sale or non-prepacked).

If the product is prepacked, the above requirements are in addition to the mandatory food labelling requirements of assimilated Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011. Mandatory requirements for the labelling of prepacked food are:

- the name of the food
- a list of ingredients
- the quantity of certain ingredients or categories of ingredients (QUID)

- indication of specified allergenic ingredients
- 'use by' date or an indication of minimum durability (in the form 'best before' or 'best before end') and a lot or batch number (unless the date is sufficient to specify this)
- any special storage conditions or conditions for use
- name and address of the responsible food business operator
- net quantity
- place of origin, if not stating it could mislead
- any instructions that are necessary to use the food
- a nutrition information declaration consisting of the energy value and the amounts of fat, saturates, carbohydrate, sugars, protein and salt

For more information, see 'Labelling of prepacked foods: general'.

Use of the term 'organic'

For any product being made from organic ingredients and intended to be marketed as an organic product, the name of the food must still be 'X Jam made from organically produced X'. An appropriate organic certification mark must be included on the label. Registration with an appropriate United Kingdom certification body is also required.

Please see 'Labelling and describing organic food', which explains the extra legal controls that apply.

Use of prescribed names for other products

The use of the terms 'jam' and 'jelly' are permitted where they are in use as a customary name (such as 'Jelly Babies', 'Mint Jelly' or 'Table Jelly') and where this will not mislead the consumer.

The terms 'conserve', 'preserve', and 'fruit spread' are not reserved descriptions, and products with these names are not required to meet specific compositional standards; therefore products described in this manner can use additional ingredients not on the list, contain different proportions of fruit, and so on.

Trading Standards

For more information on the work of Trading Standards services - and the possible consequences of not abiding by the law - please see 'Trading Standards: powers, enforcement and penalties'.

In this update

General detail added, particularly in the 'Suphur dioxide' section'.

Last reviewed / updated: October 2025

Key legislation

- Food Safety Act 1990
- assimilated Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 *on the provision of food information to consumers*
- Jam and Similar Products (England) Regulations 2003
- Food Additives, Flavourings, Enzymes and Extraction Solvents (England) Regulations 2013

- Food Information Regulations 2014

Please note

This information is intended for guidance; only the courts can give an authoritative interpretation of the law.

The guide's 'Key legislation' links go to the legislation.gov.uk website. The site usually updates the legislation to include any amendments made to it. However, this is not always the case. Information on all changes made to legislation can be found by following the above links and clicking on the 'More Resources' tab.

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