



Soil Association
FOOD FOR LIFE
CATERING MARK

**What you can
say about the
Catering Mark**

How should we talk about the Catering Mark?

The messages below can be used in any Catering Mark communications, across print, digital, press and social media.

Use these messages in conjunction with the SA tone of voice document to create strong, factually correct pieces of communication with your chosen audience.

Note: Even though these messages are approved, you will still in most cases need to have the whole document approved in its final state.



Explaining the Catering Mark

These statements can be used by bronze, silver and gold Catering Mark holders.

- The Catering Mark provides independent endorsement that caterers are taking steps to improve their food, through meeting standards on nutrition, freshness, sustainability and animal welfare.
- The Catering Mark recognises caterers that serve at least 75% freshly prepared food on menus which are also free from controversial or undesirable additives, GM and artificial trans fats, and are better for animal welfare.
- The Catering Mark is a widely respected scheme that is raising standards of food quality, provenance and sustainability in public and private sector catering.
- The Catering Mark requires that at least 75% of dishes on the menu are freshly prepared (on site or at a local hub kitchen) from unprocessed ingredients.
- The Catering Mark guarantees that at least 75% of food on menus is freshly prepared, and that menus are free from controversial additives, GM and artificial trans fats.
- The Catering Mark champions the economic and social importance of public procurement; and creates local economic and social value. By encouraging the use of ingredients produced in the UK, we support British farmers and the wider economy – research shows a return on social investment of over £3 for every £1 spent.
- The Catering Mark supports a broad approach to improving sourcing practices and environmental sustainability, and provides an independent endorsement for claims caterers can make about their food.
- The Catering Mark Standards incorporate sector-specific nutrition standards, as well as sustainability standards and assurance schemes (at silver and gold), including LEAF, Fairtrade, RSPCA Freedom Food, Marine Stewardship Council and organic.
- Caterers who are accredited by the Catering Mark are subject to an annual inspection, including a site visit, so we – and you – can be sure that your food meets our quality standards.
- The Catering Mark is a caterer-level assurance scheme that encourages progression towards better practice in food provision.
- Catering Mark menus have been assessed in advance to ensure they meet sector-specific guidelines on nutrition.
- The Catering Mark is providing routes to market for producers, processors and wholesalers who can provide products that meet the standards.
- At silver and gold, caterers are recognised for taking steps to reduce the amount of meat in their menus. At silver and gold, the Catering Mark can reduce the carbon footprint of menus.
- The Catering Mark is recognised by the Department for Education as a tool which can support school caterers to make improvements to food quality.
- The Catering Mark is recognised by the Department of Health as a tool which can support hospitals and their caterers to make improvements to the quality of food served to patients, staff and visitors.
- The Government's Plan for Procurement Balanced Scorecard tool states: "The Food for Life Catering Mark is a well-established scheme for caterers that cover similar issues to the balanced scorecard. Membership of the scheme provides caterers with independently verified evidence of their achievements. It incorporates a wide range of product assurance schemes including Red Tractor and other farm assurance schemes, Fairtrade, LEAF Marque, Marine Stewardship Council, Freedom Food and Organic, and will generally guarantee good or excellent performance by caterers against the award criteria in the balanced scorecard."

Bronze

These statements can be used by bronze, silver and gold Catering Mark holders.

Fresh food

- The Catering Mark guarantees that fresh food is always on the menu.
- At least 75% of food on Catering Mark menus is freshly prepared on site or in a local kitchen.
- Catering Mark holders make at least 75% of meals from scratch on site or in a local kitchen.
- At least 75% of meals on Catering Mark menus are made from scratch in our own kitchen **[for onsite kitchens]**.
- At least 75% of meals on Catering Mark menus are made from scratch in our local kitchen **[for hub kitchens]**.

Animal welfare and traceability

- All meat on Catering Mark menus is from animals reared on farms which meet UK legal welfare standards as a minimum.
- The Catering Mark is helping to build the market for farmers who are producing meat from farms certified to UK legal welfare standards, such as Red Tractor, Farm Assured Welsh Livestock or Quality Meat Scotland.
- Catering Mark holders have been annually inspected to ensure that all meat is from farms certified to UK legal minimum welfare standards.
- All eggs on Catering Mark menus come from free range hens.
- All eggs on Catering Mark menus come from hens which live in free range systems, meaning they have access to the outdoors, where they can exhibit natural behavior.
- Catering Mark menus are free from endangered fish – as recognised by the Marine Conservation Society ‘fish to avoid’ list.

Additives, artificial trans fats and GM

- Food served on Catering Mark menus is free from additives like aspartame and MSG.
- All food on Catering Mark menus is free from artificial trans fats.
- Undesirable additives, artificial sweeteners and controversial food colours are banned from Catering Mark menus.
- Catering Mark holders don't use any GM ingredients.
- All ingredients on Catering Mark menus are free from GM.
- GM ingredients are not used in Catering Mark menus.

Seasonal ingredients

- Seasonal ingredients are used on Catering Mark menus.
- Catering Mark holders use seasonal ingredients which can be produced outdoors in the UK at that time of year.
- Menus are seasonal.
- Menus are designed to make the best use of seasonal ingredients.
- Serving seasonal produce can help get the best value for money: food is often fresher; food miles are reduced; and there is no need for energy-hungry heated glass-houses.

Staff training

- Catering staff are supported with training in fresh food preparation.
- Catering staff are trained in fresh food preparation.
- Fresh food preparation training is provided for all kitchen staff.

Silver and gold

Everything you can say for bronze, plus:

- The silver Catering Mark recognises that we serve a range of ingredients from ethical and more environmentally friendly sources, including at least 5% organic food.
- The gold Catering Mark recognises that we serve a range of ethically and more sustainably sourced ingredients, including at least 5% free range meat and at least 15% organic ingredients.
- At silver and gold the Catering Mark encourages the use of organic ingredients. Overall plant, insect and bird life is 50% more abundant on organic farms, and there are 30% more species.
- Silver and gold mark holders are encouraged and rewarded to use ingredients that are grown in the UK, and even more so for using ingredients grown by farmers in the region where the food is served.
- Silver mark holders spend a minimum of 5% of their total ingredient spend on organic ingredients.
- Gold mark holders spend a minimum of 15% of their total ingredient spend on certified organic ingredients and an additional 5% or more on free range meat.
- At silver and gold, caterers are recognised for using organic milk, which has proven nutritional benefits such as high levels of Omega-3 essential fatty acid.
- Silver and gold mark holders use a range of organic ingredients, including at least one organic animal product at gold. Organic has high standards of animal welfare.
- Silver and gold mark holders can use a range of organic ingredients. Overall, organic farming supports more farmland wildlife than non-organic farming.
- Silver and gold mark holders use a range of organic ingredients; supporting a system which works with nature, using crop rotations and nitrogen-fixing crops such as clover to build fertility in the soil.
- Silver and gold mark holders use a range of organic ingredients; supporting a system which provides animals with a great quality of life and supports biodiversity by providing natural habitats for wildlife.
- Silver and gold mark holders use a range of organic ingredients. Organic farmers don't use manufactured (or artificial) fertilisers, herbicides or GM feed.
- Silver and gold mark holders use a range of organic ingredients. Pesticides are rarely found in organic food.
- Silver and gold mark holders use a range of organic ingredients. Research published in the British Journal of Nutrition has found significant differences between organic and non-organic farming.
- Silver and gold mark holders' purchasing practices and supply chain are assessed to reward and encourage spend on sustainable fish and also require that a proportion of their ingredients are from environmentally friendly and ethical systems such as: organic, free range, Fair Trade, LEAF-certified.
- Silver and gold mark holders support sustainable fishing practices, by sourcing Marine Stewardship Council certified fish or using fish from the Marine Conservation Society's 'fish to eat' list.
- In 2014, spend on organic produce in catering and restaurants was up by 13.6%.
- Catering Mark holders spent over £7m on organic produce in 2014.
- Serving local, seasonal food can contribute to the local economy and support local farmers and traders.
- For every £1 invested in silver and gold Catering Mark menus, there is a local social return on investment of over £3, mostly in the form of more jobs and opportunities for local food producers.
- The Food for Life Catering Mark recognises caterers that serve seasonal, unprocessed, organic food, and champion meat-free options, reducing the overall carbon footprint of menus.

Silver

Everything you can say for bronze, plus:

- 5% of ingredients are organic, which supports increased biodiversity and wildlife.
- 5% of ingredients are organic – a more environmentally sustainable type of farming.
- 5% of ingredients are organic, which means working with nature.
- 5% of ingredients are organic – from farms which are better for nature.

Caterers who are using more organic ingredients can adjust the % claim, or make additional claims about their specific organic products.

- The silver Catering Mark helps to ensure that at least 75% of food is freshly made, and that caterers are encouraged to use UK, seasonal and organic ingredients.
- The silver Catering Mark guarantees that a selection of organic ingredients are used to prepare fresh meals.
- Spending 5% (of total ingredient spend) on organic ingredients helps to support wildlife – up to 50% more wild plants, insects, birds and animals live on organic farms and up to 30% more species.

Gold

Everything you can say for bronze and silver, plus:

- 15% of ingredients are organic, and at least one organic animal product is used.
- 15% of ingredients are organic, which supports increased biodiversity and wildlife.
- 15% of ingredients are organic – the most environmentally sustainable type of farming.
- 15% of ingredients are organic, which means working with nature.
- 15% of ingredients are organic – from farms which are better for nature.

Caterers who are using more organic ingredients can adjust the % claim, or make additional claims about their specific organic products.

- The gold Catering Mark helps to ensure that at least 15% of our ingredients are organic.
- Spending 15% (of total ingredient spend) on organic ingredients helps to support wildlife – up to 50% more insects, birds and animals live on organic farms.
- Food for Life Catering Mark gold menus have up to 47% lower climate impact than standard school menus. (Manchester University, 2010)

Depending on the amount and type of organic food on offer, additional claims from 'What you can say when selling organic food' document may be used.

Sector specific messaging

SCHOOLS

- Caterers who are accredited by the Catering Mark are subject to an annual inspection, including an on site visit, so we – and you - can be sure that your school food meets our quality standards.
- The School Food Standards encourage schools to: “use fresh, sustainable and locally-sourced ingredients”, and recognise the Catering Mark as an independent endorsement that these standards are met.
- School Food Standards: A practical guide for schools their cooks and caterers states: “The Food for Life Catering Mark provides independent endorsement that food providers are meeting the school food standards and serving food prepared from fresh, sustainable and locally sourced ingredients”.
- The School Food Plan encourages head teachers to consider “signing up to a quality mark such as the Food for Life Catering Mark”.
- Evidence from the Food for Life Partnership shows that schools adopting a whole school approach to food and serving Catering Mark meals can expect to see a significant increase in school meal take-up.

HOSPITALS AND CARE SETTINGS

- NHS England’s 2015/16 guidance for commissioners and care providers includes two hospital food goals (the Hospital Food CQUIN) citing the Catering Mark as a way to raise standards for patients, staff and visitor food.
- The 2014 Hospital Food Standards Panel Report recognises the Catering Mark as a way to raise hospital food standards.
- Achieving the Catering Mark is in line with the Public Services (Social Values) Act 2012, which requires that Trusts commissioning catering services consider: “how what is proposed to be procured might improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the relevant area”.
- The Catering Mark helps measure Care Quality Commission standards in relation to patient food and hydration.
- The Catering Mark Standards require hospital caterers to make sure menus meet the nutritional element of the Government Buying Standards.

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