

Common food complaints

Some problems with food occur naturally, and whilst they may appear alarming, are harmless. Some examples of these are listed below.

Carbon in Bread

Small hard drops of carbon are sometimes found in bread or cakes. These can vary in size and are usually black or grey. The carbon (or char) is overcooked dough which has flaked off the baking tins and there is no risk to health. Sometimes these can be mistaken for rodent droppings. We would advise you to contact the manufacturer.

Carbonised Grease in Bread

Sometimes areas within a loaf of bread or cake can appear grey and greasy. The moving parts of food manufacturing equipment is lubricated with food safe grease which may occasionally contaminate the dough or mix and then baked in. This can also occur in products other than bread. We would advise you to contact the manufacturer.

Whitish Coating on Chocolate

If chocolate is stored too high a temperature, fats within the chocolate separate and form a 'bloom' on the surface. This may look like mould. This complaint is common during the festive season when gift wrapped chocolate may be stored in warm living rooms, or in hot summer weather if it is not stored in the fridge. This is completely harmless.

Red/Pink Colouration of Cooked Chicken Meat

Sometimes a pink, brown or reddish colouring of poultry meat may occur giving the meat an undercooked appearance. This can be due to **myoglobin**, a pigment which is rich in iron. Myoglobin is similar to haemoglobin and is found in muscle fibres and may be present in higher concentration near to the bone, leading people to believe that the chicken or turkey has not been cooked through. There are a number of reasons why myoglobin can be present in enough concentration to change the colour of the meat, the method of packaging, cooking and the type of bird that the meat came from are some of the factors. Uncooked meat has a more translucent appearance and the fibres break less easily than cooked meat. Sometimes the dark colour can disappear on contact with air. Uncooked areas will only change colour when cooked further.

Cardamom Pods in Pilau rice

Cardamom is the common name for certain plant species native to India and south-eastern Asia. The fruit (pod) is a small capsule with 8 to 16 brown

seeds; the seeds are used as a spice or the pods can be used whole in pilau rice. Cardamom pods are sometimes mistaken by members of the public as rodent droppings or cockroaches!

Spiders in Bananas

Sometimes, spiders can come to Britain in fruit, vegetables and other products. One species of spider, The Huntsman or Giant Crab Spider, are large, brown, crab-like spiders that have flattened bodies that enable them to fit into very small crevices. This spider lives in tropical and subtropical regions and is common in houses where they eat cockroaches and other insects, but not Europe where it is too cold. It is transported throughout the world in banana shipments. It is harmless, but a large one can deliver a painful bite if carelessly handled. In the unlikely event that you are bitten contact a doctor.

Stones in canned peas

During harvesting, sometimes small stones can be accidentally collected too. Stones of certain size, weight and appearance can be missed during the sorting process. As long as the manufacturer can show that all reasonable precautions were taken to try to stop this from happening, it is accepted that a number of these complaints will occur.

Mushroom fibres

Sometimes we get complaints about hairs in food such as pizza, often these 'hairs' turn out to be mushroom fibres.

The mushroom that we know is actually the fruiting body of the hidden mushroom plant!. This plant is made up of microscopic filaments (hyphae) which combine to form strands called **mycelium**. The mycelium grows in the soil on wood and leaves, or in commercial mushroom farming, compost. The mushroom body first develops as a tiny ball on the mycelium and grows to a certain size before being picked to eat! Sometimes, strands of mycelium can remain with the mushroom during preparation and cooking. When cooked, the fibrous mycelium can look like a coarse hair.