

# SALSA BITES

Seasonal Newsletter | Autumn 2023



## #SafeFoodSells

Edition 08

Autumn is a busy time for the SALSA team, reviewing the many audits that take place before the Christmas period. When planning your audit give yourself plenty of time to book a convenient date, complete your action plan and remember the time taken for review of evidence. See below for our Auditor's 'Top Tips' for a successful Audit.

As we celebrate one year since the launch of Issue 6 and the Plus Ice Cream and BFBi Standards, we have taken some time to reflect. Since these Standards were published, over 1400 successful audits have taken place. In this edition we look at how members are navigating the changes of the new Standard and have provided resources to help with the challenges.

*The SALSA Team*

## Good to See You!

Speciality Fine Food Fair was a very busy event this year and we were pleased to see so many of our Approved members. The stands were exciting and vibrant, showcasing the high quality, innovative and safe products.

Members told us how SALSA Approval differentiates them from their competitors when talking to buyers. Many of them displayed their certificate on their stands, which we love so see!



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# SALSA Issue 6

## One Year On

We launched Issue 6 of the SALSA Standard for Food & Drink on the 1st of September 2023, with the plus modules for Beer and Specialist Cheese. This update ensures SALSA remains a robust third-party, food safety standard for micro and SME UK food & drink producers. With food safety culture at its core, the new Standard reflects legislative changes and keeps pace with industry best practices.

Since September 2022, over 1400 members have completed an Issue 6 audit. Whilst adapting to the changes has been challenging, members have utilised the support resources and continued to improve their food safety systems. To support our members we have produced a series of webinars that tackle the most common non-conformances we see when reviewing audits:

### Traceability

- What is end-to-end traceability?
- Why is traceability important?
- How do you set up an effective traceability system?

### Food Defence

- What is food defence?
- Where can issues relating to food defence happen?
- The SALSA requirement
- How can we protect our food?

### Food Safety Culture

- Practical tips for building a strong food safety culture
- Setting clear expectations for food safety
- Employee engagement
- Encouraging open communication



## DEFRA Food Masterclasses

DEFRA is holding a series of **free** master classes across the country, designed to help UK food producers grow their businesses. This month we joined DEFRA, Coop and Asda at the North West Food and Drink SME Masterclass in Manchester. It was exciting to meet so many producers who are taking their businesses to the next level.

The next dates are:

2nd November - Chelmsford

12th November - Newcastle

**Look out for booking details [here](#)**

North West  
Food and  
Drink SME  
Masterclass

September 12<sup>th</sup> 2023

 Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



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# SALSA Star - Kerr's Dairy

SALSA Go! is a program that helps businesses prepare\* for SALSA Approval in structured and supported steps. We spoke to Kerr's Dairy, who completed the program and, subsequently, only had one action in their audit.

## Why did you choose SALSA Go?

The SALSA Go Program was offered to us when we decided to commit to achieving SALSA Approval. As the company was highly invested in this process, we were glad of the opportunity to have an expert on hand to guide us through the implementation process.

## SALSA Go is a Mentoring Program, how has mentoring improved your food safety practices?

Very much so. Even though we were practicing a high standard of food safety already. The mentoring given to us by Margaret was outstanding in that she enabled us to understand why certain process had to be carried out, and why control and staff awareness is key to compliance being achieved.

## Small food businesses are often reliant on a few key personnel, how did mentoring empower and educate your team to take on critical roles in ensuring food safety?

The Mentoring was instrumental in empowering our allocated SALSA Manager Paul Johnstone, even if it was just to confirm that what was being done was the right way to do things.

## How has mentoring helped you prepare and undertake the SALSA audit?

Margaret was professional, understanding and informative giving us a clear indication of what needed to be done to achieve approval. We knew exactly what was required for each clause of the standard and through new compliance software this was easy to track and verify.

## How has mentoring assisted your business in establishing a positive reputation for food safety and have you leveraged this to attract more customers?

As part of Kerr Dairy's growth strategy it was important for us to be able to project the capability of the company within designated growth areas. What better way than to achieve SALSA approval and confirm to larger companies that we meet and exceed required standards.

**\*The SALSAGo program does not include an audit.**



# Interview With an Auditor

## Amol Gandhi is one of our newest Auditors, we talked to him about working with SALSA

I always had a true love for the dairy products and love most of the dairy based desserts and cheeses. Also, I have an undefined love for authentic Indian curry .. sizzling, hot and full of spices !!! A good paneer tikka masala, butter nan, biryani and glass of whisky is truly heaven.



### How long have you worked in the food industry and what was your first job?

My first job was with the R & R Ice-cream working as a Lead Quality Controller in their brand-new site in a beautiful countryside of the North Yorkshire.

### You are one of our newest Auditors (and a Mentor), how are you finding working with SALSA?

I am finding it quite exciting to go to new places to carry out SALSA audits. I must admit sometimes I feel nervous before the audit, but once prepared, I really enjoy the whole experience of auditing.

Although, I have done a good number of supplier audits previously, SALSA members have different dynamism. It is great to know about different businesses, their product range and their aspiring future plans. Also, SALSA audits are different in comparison to other standards as they allow me to make recommendations, and in some way, there is freedom for me to exchange ideas to support the food businesses whilst carrying out a professional audit.

The support and communication from the SALSA allocation team and operation team are also very good.

### What is the most important piece of advice you can give a Supplier preparing for an audit?

The suppliers can benefit by reading the SALSA Standard. SALSA offers generous support to members including an Interpretation Guide, Tools & Tips, on-call support, social media updates, sector-specific training etc. Also, if suppliers wish, they can go to SALSA directory for mentors who can provide them support, this is especially useful if the supplier needs help in internal audits, HACCP, food defence and training. Particularly useful if you are preparing for yo and training. Particularly useful if you are preparing for your first SALSA audit.ur first SALSA audit.

### What do you enjoy most about SALSA auditing and mentoring?

The new software-based SALSA auditing and mentoring system is just a wonderful way of demonstrating to SALSA members that the SALSA Scheme is leading in innovation and modernisation of audits. The electronic auditing app allows us to see the previous year's improvements and clauses related to food safety culture. Also, during an audit it allows me to track the progress of the audit and any actions and recommendations I am raising. Not only this, starting from setting up an opening meeting to automatically generating action and improvement plan for the closing meeting, it is truly an impressive tool. Bye Bye to the old days of manually generating audit reports!

I also enjoy SALSA audits as they are relatively short but valuable audits which allow members to dedicate necessary time on the day of the audit without affecting their day-to-day function.

### What is a key issue facing British food producers in 2023/ 24?

I just feel rising cost of ingredients, utilities and overall cost of living is a key challenge for British Producer. Also, it has been difficult for food businesses to retain staff and skills due to increase turnover of staff. Overall, a great challenge for most of the food businesses to maintain the commercial viability in the current circumstances.



# Top Tips for a Successful Audit

A clear indicator of food safety culture is a member's preparedness for their SALSA audit. Typically, after preparing for your audit (and paying for your audit and membership), Approval takes between one and three months. Our webinar 'Introduction to SALSA' describes the audit process in detail, it is available to watch [here](#).

Webinar presenter and SALSA Auditor and Mentor, Alison Sawyer shares her Top Tips for a successful audit:

- Book your audit in good time.
- Download the Audit standard – be familiar with it
- Complete the Self-Assessment Checklist in bite-size chunks
- Use the SALSA Interpretation Guide and Tools & Tips to help you - this saves you loads of time!
- When you are ready train out your procedures using a simple training matrix:
  - Procedure/record name – Across the Top
  - Name of person – Left-hand side
  - Date trained - in the box

 **WATCH NOW**



## SALSA Training

SALSA courses are delivered by approved SALSA HACCP trainers, all of whom are on the IFST's Register of Professional Auditors and Mentors. Product-specific courses are now also available, with trainers who have proven sector technical experience and expertise.

Our online courses have been developed to maintain high quality, allowing plenty of time for discussion and shared learning. Small groups only - spaces are strictly limited.

Our packed series of training courses are offered to our members at a discounted rate of only £165 pp + vat.



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