



# 2026 HFSS Advertising Compliance Guide

Helping restaurants navigate paid  
advertising rules and stay compliant

# Introduction

From January 2026, new UK rules will restrict the paid advertising of High Fat, Salt and Sugar foods. These changes affect restaurants, cafés, pubs, and takeaways that run paid advertising campaigns online or through other media.

Many businesses are not yet aware of these changes. This guide explains what HFSS is, where the rules apply, and how restaurants can continue advertising effectively without disruption.

## 1. What is HFSS?

**HFSS stands for High Fat, Salt and Sugar.**

Foods are classified using the UK government's nutrient profiling model. Many popular restaurant menu items are likely to fall into this category, including:

- **Burgers, fried foods, pizza, and loaded fries**
- **Desserts, cakes, pastries, and ice cream**
- **Sugary drinks and milkshakes**
- **Chocolate, sweets, and indulgent side dishes**

**In simple terms, most indulgent or treat focused menu items are likely to be classed as HFSS for advertising purposes.**

## **2. Where the rules apply**

The HFSS advertising rules apply to paid promotion that features identifiable HFSS food or drink items.

### **Digital and online**

- Paid social media adverts on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok
- Google Ads and YouTube advertising
- Sponsored influencer content
- Paid display and banner advertising
- Paid promotional placements on third party platforms

### **Traditional and offline**

- Television and on demand TV advertising
- Radio advertising
- Print advertising in newspapers and magazines
- Outdoor advertising such as billboards and transport ads
- Cinema advertising

### **Important:**

Organic social media posts, editorial coverage, and standard directory listings, including EatOutMK listings, are not affected. The restrictions focus on paid advertising, not organic visibility or discovery.

### 3. Paid vs organic content

Scenario	Notes
Paid influencer posts featuring HFSS food	HFSS rules apply – payment or incentive counts as paid promotion
Organic influencer posts with no payment	HFSS rules do not apply – safe to post freely
Subscription to EatOutMK or standard directory listing	HFSS rules do not apply – not considered paid promotion
Paid adverts featuring HFSS food	HFSS rules apply – platforms may reject adverts automatically
Organic food photos on EatOutMK or your own channels	HFSS rules do not apply – safe for ongoing promotion

#### **4. How the rules affect restaurants**

- Paid adverts showing HFSS dishes may be blocked or rejected by advertising platforms
- Adverts may be rejected automatically through image and text checks
- Influencer promotions involving payment or incentives count as paid advertising
- Subscription based directory listings without paid promotional placement remain safe

#### **5. How to stay compliant**

Separate organic posts, where food content is fine, from paid campaigns, where HFSS imagery should be avoided.

- Venue or interior shots
- Staff features and storytelling
- Drinks and lighter menu items
- Brand awareness and experience led campaigns

Promote date nights, live music, celebrations, and events without centring adverts on HFSS dishes.

## 6. Quick reference

HFSS foods restricted in paid adverts	Safer content for paid campaigns
Burgers, pizza, fries, fried chicken	Venue and interior imagery
Desserts, cakes, pastries, ice cream	Staff and chef stories
Sugary drinks and milkshakes	Coffee, tea, and drinks
Chocolate, sweets, indulgent sides	Experience led messaging

## 7. Action plan for restaurants

- Audit current paid campaigns for HFSS content
- Prepare HFSS free assets for paid advertising
- Create and maintain a safe image bank
- Update influencer agreements so paid posts avoid HFSS imagery
- Monitor campaigns regularly

EatOutMK helps restaurants review paid campaigns for HFSS compliance, create HFSS safe advertising content, and protect reach while staying within the rules.

This guide is informational and does not constitute legal advice.