What you can and can’t say about food and drink on Instagram

Food claims have fixed meanings. Healthy, high protein and low sugar all come with conditions.

Use this rulebook: affilo.app/playbooks/food-and-drink/use
Read it online: affilo.app/playbooks/food-and-drink

A first pass, not legal advice

This playbook sets out the main rules for ads seen in the UK, as we read them on 7 November 2026. It is a starting point for briefing creators, not legal advice. Check your claims with your compliance lead or a lawyer before an ad runs.

Say it’s an ad, up front

`CAP 2 · Influencer guidance`

Paid or on commission, the post is an ad, and people have to know that before they tap or read on.

Don’t say

- Sunday brunch sorted #sp
  Flagged by the #ad check · CAP 2
- My new favourite snack, link in bio
  Flagged by the #ad check · CAP 2

Say instead

- #ad Sunday brunch with this
- #ad The snack I keep in my bag

Put #ad at the start of the caption and turn on Instagram’s paid partnership label too. In Stories, label every frame the product is in.

Nutrition claims have set meanings

`CAP 15`

High protein, low sugar, sugar free and the rest each have a legal threshold. Use one only if the product meets it.

Watch for

- “Basically sugar free”, when it isn’t
  For your reviewer · CAP 15
- “Loaded with vitamins”, with no amount to back it
  For your reviewer · CAP 15

Instead

- There’s 15g of protein in each bar, it’s on the label

Healthy needs a reason beside it

CAP 15 · GB register

Healthy or good for you needs a specific authorised claim beside it, and health claims come from the GB register.

Don’t say

- It boosts your immune system.
  Flagged by the claims check · GB register
  Try: Talk about your routine, not what it does: “It’s part of my morning now.”
- The healthiest snack you can buy.
  Flagged by this rulebook · CAP 15, GB register
- Detoxes your body.
  Flagged by this rulebook · CAP 15, GB register

Say instead

- Vitamin D contributes to the maintenance of normal bones.
- Iron contributes to normal cognitive function.

Each line needs the nutrient at a significant amount: at least 15% of the reference intake.

Food can’t treat anything

CAP 15

A food or drink can’t claim to prevent, treat or cure a disease, or a symptom of one.

Don’t say

- Cures bloating.
  Flagged by this rulebook · CAP 15
- Kombucha that heals your gut.
  Flagged by this rulebook · CAP 15

Say instead

- I have one with lunch most days.

Alcohol has its own rules

CAP 18

Anyone drinking or central to the ad must be 25 or over and look it. No link with confidence, popularity or success.

Don’t say

- The drink that makes you more confident.
  Flagged by this rulebook · CAP 18
- Life of the party after one of these.
  Flagged by this rulebook · CAP 18

Say instead

- What we’re pouring at Sunday lunch.

Less healthy food: check the paid ad rules

`Less healthy food rules · CAP 15`

Since 5 January 2026, paid online ads for identifiable less healthy food and drink are restricted for businesses with 250 or more staff.

Watch for

- A paid partnership ad for an in-scope product
  For your reviewer · Less healthy food rules, CAP 15
- An ad for one aimed at under-16s
  For your reviewer · Less healthy food rules, CAP 15

Instead

- Check whether the product is in scope before it runs as a paid ad

Made with AI? Say so

`CAP 3`

AI-made people, results and testimonials need a label wherever a viewer would take them as real.

Watch for

- An AI-made person giving a testimonial, with nothing to say so
  For your reviewer · CAP 3
- A result the product can’t give, made with AI
  For your reviewer · CAP 3

Instead

- Add a short on-screen line: “Made with AI”.

Authorised wording from the GB register

Word for word from the register. A line can be used only when the product has the nutrient at a significant amount: at least 15% of the reference intake in a daily dose, or 3 g a day for creatine.

Vitamin C

“contributes to the reduction of tiredness and fatigue”
“contributes to the normal function of the immune system”
“contributes to normal collagen formation for the normal function of skin”
“contributes to normal energy-yielding metabolism”

Vitamin D

“contributes to the normal function of the immune system”
“contributes to the maintenance of normal bones”
“contributes to the maintenance of normal muscle function”

Iron

“contributes to the reduction of tiredness and fatigue”
“contributes to normal cognitive function”
“contributes to the normal function of the immune system”

Zinc

“contributes to normal cognitive function”
“contributes to the maintenance of normal skin”
“contributes to the maintenance of normal hair”
“contributes to the normal function of the immune system”

Magnesium

"contributes to a reduction of tiredness and fatigue"
"contributes to normal muscle function"
"contributes to normal psychological function"
"contributes to normal energy-yielding metabolism"

The rulebook

Sign up as a brand and these lines go on every product you add, ready to edit. Creators see them with the brief, and every script is read against them when it comes in for review.

Lines creators may not say

- Healthiest
- Detox or cleanse
- Cures, heals or treats any condition
- More confident or more popular
- Life of the party

Lines creators may say

- I have one with lunch

Disclosure `#ad`

Use this rulebook: affilo.app/playbooks/food-and-drink/use

Sources

CAP Code section 2: recognition of marketing communications
An ad must be obviously identifiable as an ad.
www.asa.org.uk/type/non_broadcast/code_section/02.html

CAP Code section 3: misleading advertising
Evidence for objective claims, testimonials, prices and edited images.
www.asa.org.uk/type/non_broadcast/code_section/03.html

CAP Code section 15: food, food supplements and health or nutrition claims
Nutrition claims, health claims and medicinal claims for food.
www.asa.org.uk/type/non_broadcast/code_section/15.html

CAP Code section 18: alcohol
Who can appear in alcohol ads and what they can imply.
www.asa.org.uk/type/non_broadcast/code_section/18.html

The GB nutrition and health claims register
The authorised health claims, word for word, and the conditions for each.
www.gov.uk/government/publications/great-britain-nutrition-and-health-claims-nhc-register

The less healthy food and drink advertising restrictions
Paid online ads for identifiable less healthy products from larger businesses.

The ASA and CMA guide for influencers on making clear that ads are ads
Where #ad goes, and which labels aren't enough.
www.asa.org.uk/resource/influencers-guide.html