

SECTION 4 - FOOD ALLERGENS

FA/05: Control of allergenic ingredients

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The following information should be used as general guidance when deciding when and how to implement and manage measures to effectively control food allergens within food preparation and food service areas. Information provided is by no means exhaustive.

2.0 Management of food allergens

- 2.1 Managers must identify and document local procedures that are designed to take into account constraints and shortfalls of the work-flow process and shall take into account the type of business and layout of each individual premise.
- 2.2 Managers must ensure that all food handlers are instructed on, and fully understand the requirements of such procedures. On completion of such instruction signatures from food handlers should be secured and retained on training records for due-diligence purposes and future reference.

3.0 Purchasing and delivery of food

- 3.1 Accurate details must be obtained from suppliers' in respect to the inclusion of allergenic ingredients in products purchased.
- 3.2 It would be deemed 'best-practice' if 'Product Information Sheets' for commodities were obtained from suppliers, such information would be invaluable when ascertaining the inclusion of allergenic ingredients, nutritional content, ingredients listing etc.
- 3.3 Food that has been delivered must be checked to ensure that it is of the brand ordered and normally used, as different brands vary and may contain different ingredients.
- 3.4 Suppliers must be encouraged to communicate to the business if a product has been substituted with an alternative brand at the point of delivery and/or if recipes have been changed.
- 3.5 Respect shall be given to the appointment of new food suppliers whereby the acquisition of information on allergenic ingredients shall be considered at the 'Service Level Agreement' stage.

4.0 Storage and decanting of food

- 4.1 Where storage space allows then allergenic ingredients shall be stored separate to other foods and in any event must be kept separate.
- 4.2 Where possible dedicated containers must be used for the storage of specific food allergens and once decanted from the original aseptic packaging the manufacturers'/suppliers' ingredients listing must be secured and kept with such ingredients.
- 4.3 Once opened allergenic ingredients must be effectively resealed in order to prevent spillage and the potential for cross-contamination.
- 4.5 Care must be taken when decanting allergenic ingredients that have the potential to become airborne and subsequently contaminate food, equipment, surfaces and food handlers, for example; milk powder, flour, mustard powder etc.

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5.0 Preparation and cooking of food containing 'allergenic ingredients'

- 5.1 The preparation of food containing any allergenic ingredients must be undertaken in a part of the kitchen and/or on a separate worktop away from allergen-free foods to prevent 'as far as is reasonably practicable' the risk of cross-contamination.
- 5.2 Cleaning procedures must be effective in removing allergenic ingredients and their residues to prevent traces of these foods contaminating other dishes.
- 5.3 Once an area has been cleaned; cloths and spent water must not be used for the cleaning of areas that are to be used for the preparation of allergen-free food.
- 5.4 Food handlers must wash their hands thoroughly after they have prepared dishes containing allergenic ingredients in order to remove residues.
- 5.5 Protective clothing may be contaminated and therefore appropriate action must be taken before handling allergen-free foods in order to eliminate the risk of further contamination.
- 5.6 Allergenic ingredients such as; nuts, cream etc. must never be removed or extracted from food and then offered as allergen-free food.
- 5.7 Subsidiary ingredients' to a dish which could potentially become contaminated with food-allergens must not be used for the preparation of allergen-free food, for example spreads, chutneys etc.
- 5.8 Food handlers must inform the senior chef on duty/manager in respect to any recipe changes.

6.0 Preparation and cooking of allergen-free food

- 6.1 The preparation of allergen-free dishes must be undertaken in a part of the kitchen and/or on a separate worktop away from foods containing allergens to prevent 'as far as is reasonably practicable' the risk of cross-contamination.
- 6.2 It would be deemed 'best-practice' if areas used for the preparation of allergen-free food were identified so, for example physical barriers or in the form of clear signage.
- 6.3 Prior to preparation and upon completion of allergen-free food all food handlers must ensure that worktops, chopping boards, knives and any other equipment used is/has been effectively cleaned and disinfected.
- 6.4 Allergen-free food must be prepared using a designated colour-coded chopping board/knife; however this must not contradict the colour coded system for chopping boards. Refer to **OS/05: Preparation of food.**
- 6.5 Where allergen-free food is to be deep-fried then this must take place in a separate fryer and/or clean unused oil to that where allergenic ingredients have been cooked in otherwise the food will be deemed unsafe to eat by a predisposed person and therefore must not be offered as allergen-free food.
- 6.6 Allergenic ingredients must never be added to foods which would not normally contain such ingredients, always observe and follow the recipe.
- 6.7 On completion of a 'special dietary' requirement which does not contain a specific allergenic ingredient, for example a buffet item, then it must be effectively wrapped/covered and clearly labelled as to the exact nature of the diet.

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7.0 Display and service of food

- 7.1 Service staff must not remove from any ready-to-eat dish any allergenic ingredient, for example a nut from a 'coffee & walnut' gateau and then offer it as allergen-free food e.g. nut-free
- 7.2 All reasonable precautions must be taken to ensure that foods containing allergenic ingredients do not give rise to contamination to foods that do not contain allergens. This would normally mean:
- keeping such foods separate;
 - if displayed in a cabinet products decorated with nuts/ seeds shall be stored underneath foods that do not contain nuts/seeds;
 - wherever possible foods must be covered effectively; and
 - where appropriate regular checks should be carried out to identify possible contamination, with the appropriate action being taken, if so required.
- 7.3 Separate equipment/utensils must be used for foods that do and do not contain allergenic ingredients.
- 7.4 Where food is displayed on an unmanned buffet then contact details or a telephone number must be made readily available to customers so that they can obtain information on allergenic ingredients.

8.0 Menu and recipe design

- 8.1 Menu design should allow for allergenic ingredients to be included within the description of a dish, for example:
- Waldorf Salad; chicken, walnuts and cold pressed oil dressing
 - Bakewell Tart; made with ground almonds and eggs
- 8.2 Information on menus must be updated on a regular basis as and when recipes change.
- 8.3 Where unrefined nut or seed oils (cold-compressed or crude) are used in cooking or in dressings this information shall either be included on the menu or made readily available.
- 8.4 Menus must not claim that dishes are 'free-from' a particular allergenic ingredient; unless steps have been taken to check that this is correct.

9.0 Communicating information

- 9.1 Prior to each food service the senior chef/person on duty must obtain the correct information from food production staff as to what allergenic ingredients have been included in which dish, of which should be recorded. Refer to ***FH/04: Allergenic ingredients checklist***.
- 9.2 Any such information shall be validated and subsequently passed to the senior person in charge of the restaurant/ manager for that food service.
- 9.3 Prior to each food service, staff wherever appropriate should be briefed on dishes containing allergenic ingredients.

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10.0 Providing information to and dealing with customers

10.1 A menu footer must be incorporated into menus of which must be displayed in a prominent position to let customers with food allergies know that they can ask a member of staff for advice. Such a statement must be worded as follows:

'Some of the dishes on our menus contain allergens. If you have any questions then please speak to any member of the team who will be more than happy to help'.

10.2 Wherever possible labelling of food must reflect the inclusion of allergenic ingredients and must not claim that dishes are 'free-from' a particular allergenic ingredient; unless steps have been taken to check that this is correct.

10.3 Information on allergenic ingredients shall be made readily available for all products on sale and/or available to customers. Dependant on the type of business information may be presented in any of the following formats:

- product information sheets - provided by the supplier
- product labelling - provided by the supplier
- product matrix - provided by the supplier
- spreadsheets - compiled in-house
- standard recipes - compiled in-house
- allergenic ingredient checklists - compiled in-house e.g.
 - FA/06: Individual recipe
 - FA/07: Food service - staffed event
 - FA/08: Food service - unstaffed event

10.4 Any information provided shall be dated and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that ingredient listings and recipes are still valid and have not changed.

10.5 Food service staff must be competent and confident when dealing with food-allergen related enquires and need to understand that they must never make assumptions as to whether or not a particular allergenic ingredient is present in a dish.

10.6 When taking orders service staff should encourage customers to discuss any dietary requirements that they may have and listen to them carefully in order to assess whether or not they can provide a safe meal for them to eat.

10.7 If a member of service staff does not feel confident in dealing with a food-allergen related enquiry effectively then they must ask for assistance from someone who can. If there is any doubt about whether a dish is 'free-from' a certain allergenic ingredient service staff must admit to the customer that they are unsure.

11.0 Training and instruction

11.1 All food handlers must receive training and/or instruction appropriate to the level of undertaking based on allergen awareness and departmental methods of work. Such instruction should include:

- recognition of the major food allergens and why they give rise for concern;
- identification of situations that have the potential to give rise to cross-contamination;
- effective hand washing;

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- clothing requirements;
- re-work procedures (subjected to a repeat or new process);
- the importance of providing clear and concise information to all customers.

11.2 Managers must also receive training and/or instruction to enable them to monitor, manage and review procedures at local level.

11.3 Training and instruction must be documented, reviewed and refreshed as and when deemed necessary.

Version	Date of issue	Author	Endorsed by
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