

# FOOD SAFETY CONVERSATION



## Allergen Awareness for Front of House Staff

### WHAT WE ARE GOING TO TALK ABOUT

In this Food Safety Conversation we are going to discuss allergies and intolerances, and the controls we should have in place to avoid allergic reactions as well as reactions as a result of an intolerance. Following this conversation, you will understand:

- The difference between allergy and intolerance,
- What steps you should take when serving a customer with an allergy or intolerance,
- The value of good communication with BOH team,
- How to prevent cross-contact of allergenic to non-allergenic food.



### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

#### Background

People often get confused between a food allergy and an intolerance. A food allergy is a response by the body's immune system to a food; the reaction can range from mild to severe and for some people even the slightest trace of an allergen can result in a severe response, including potentially fatal anaphylactic shock.

An intolerance is a non-immune system response to eating certain foods, usually because the body is unable to process the food effectively. Symptoms can affect the digestive, skin and respiratory systems, and although not life-threatening, they can make sufferers extremely unwell.

Coeliac disease is a condition where consuming gluten results in the body's immune system attacking its own tissue, causing a range of symptoms, mostly affecting the digestive system and potentially causing significant damage to the intestine.

In the UK and Ireland food business are legally required to provide information on the 14 allergens that must be declared. However, people can be allergic to any food and allergies can be very specific, such as a raw fruit or vegetable, or certain fish species.

#### Before Service

The pre-service briefing, provided daily by the head chef or back of house manager, will include information on the menu in respect to allergens, and any pre-ordered allergen free meals.

Allergen information must be available and can be provided in paper form in an allergen folder, on a tablet, on menus or via a QR code. In the ROI allergen information must be clearly displayed and accessible to a customer without the need for them to ask to view it. You should always know where the allergen information is and how to access it. Make yourself familiar with the allergen information and if you notice anything missing or a potential error, notify your manager.

#### During Service

In restaurant and hospitality settings, where there is table service, you should ask customers whether they have any allergies or any other dietary requirements before taking their order. If a customer has an allergy to any of the 14 allergens, you should advise them how to access the allergy information. Customers should read the relevant information and use it to make an informed decision. Never advise a customer on what they can or can't eat, or make any assumptions or guesses about the food.

If the customer needs more information, has an allergy to a food other than the 14 or has any other specific concerns, you should get your manager or an Allergen Champion to attend the customer.

#### Buffet or Counter Service

All items on a buffet or served from a counter should be labelled so that it is clear what each item is. Separate serving utensils must be provided for different items, in particular for allergen free dishes. If you see a utensil being used on different foods resulting in potential cross-contact, remove and replace the utensil.

#### Hospitality or Restaurant Service

Where customers have pre-booked they will often have notified us in advance of their allergies or dietary requirements. In this case the manager or Allergen Champion will make contact with the customer to ensure we have the correct information.

The chef will provide separate meals as required and the manager or Allergen Champion will make sure the right meal goes to the right person. Whether serving individual tables or large groups of people, allergen free meals should be served first, to prevent customers with allergies from accidentally being served an incorrect meal.