

FOOD SERVICE RISK ASSESSMENT: 10 POINTS OF FOOD ALLERGEN LIABILITY



Kitchen
Confidence

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Jacqueline Church is a private cooking instructor, a freelance food and travel writer, and a food allergic (adult onset) diner. She also trains restaurants in food allergy awareness and as a retired attorney and corporate trainer, she's always eager to help restaurants avoid risks. You can find her at JacquelineChurch.com and follow her online @LDGourmet.

Every three minutes a food allergy reaction sends someone to the emergency room. The top eight allergens (Soy, Dairy, Fin Fish, Shellfish, Egg, Wheat, Tree Nuts, Peanuts) account for 90 percent of the food allergic reactions in the US and over 15 million people in the US have food allergies.

Do you and your staff know how to keep diners safe from exposure to these allergens and how to avoid cross-contact in food preparation?

Massachusetts was the first to require food allergy awareness training for restaurants and Rhode Island followed our lead. It is expected that other states will also enact similar legislation soon.

Beyond what is required by law, are you prepared to handle the growing numbers of food allergic diners? Reap the rewards of proper food allergy handling as diners return with their friends and families to your restaurant. Get it wrong, and you could face devastating consequences.

For product manufacturers the e Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act (FALCPA) of 2004 requires the disclosure of the presence of these top eight allergens. It's widely hoped and assumed that the next iteration will expand the requirements of FALCPA.

While this checklist is not a substitute for training, it can help you identify areas of risk for your restaurant. To learn more about training for your staff in the Boston area, [Email Me](#) or check the [Food Allergy Research and Education site](#).

Ten Points of Liability in Serving Food Allergic Diners

1. Reservation

Do you ask whether anyone in the party has a food allergy or intolerance? Does this info get captured in your reservation system? Once captured will it be confirmed at the time of future reservation?

Best practice: Confirm at each opportunity.

2. Host stand/check in

When guests are welcomed, is the food allergy noted and confirmed?

Best practice: Have a FA menu ready to go or ready to print with eight major allergens identified.

3. Drink order

Does your staff know of hidden allergens in cocktails, beer, and wine? For example, many beers are fined with isinglass (a fish product.) Craft cocktails may contain egg, or nut extracts.

Best practice: include bar staff and bar menus in food allergy awareness training.

4. Food order

Are your servers prepared to identify eight major allergens in each preparation if asked? How many hands will touch this order? Each hand-off carries the potential for deadly error.

Best practice: have FA aware manager or designated server handle the FA order from beginning to end.

5. Ticket in

Is the FA ticket clearly identified and the kitchen notified that there is a special FA order?

Best practice: use color-coded tickets or plates to flag FA orders.

6. Kitchen - clean station/handling

Does your staff know the difference between cross-contact and cross-contamination? Are flattops, tongs, ladles in use?

Best Practice: Designate a separate work area for prep of food allergy orders.

7. Preparation of dish

Have you checked labels of packaged ingredients used in your dish? Ingredients can change without notice. Oil for frying potatoes same as oil for dairy items and seafood?

Best Practice: Have more than one set of eyes review these steps, the order, your ingredient lists.

8. Plating of dish

If one salad is getting a topping of pecans, is the nut-free salad in proximity? Is the same gloved-hand plating both?

Best practice: Have FA order "owner" designated to help prevent cross-contact.

9. Over the pass

Food going over the pass can come in contact with allergens. Hands garnishing plates must not have touched allergens without thorough hand-washing or fresh gloves before touching "clean" order.

Best Practice: Have a separate area for FA orders and ensure one "owner" of the dish tracks its progress.

10. Served to FA guest

Designated FA server, places plate in front of guest "salad, no nuts" giving the diner confidence of safe handling throughout.

Best Practice: Ensure that the allergen info is repeated as guest is served.