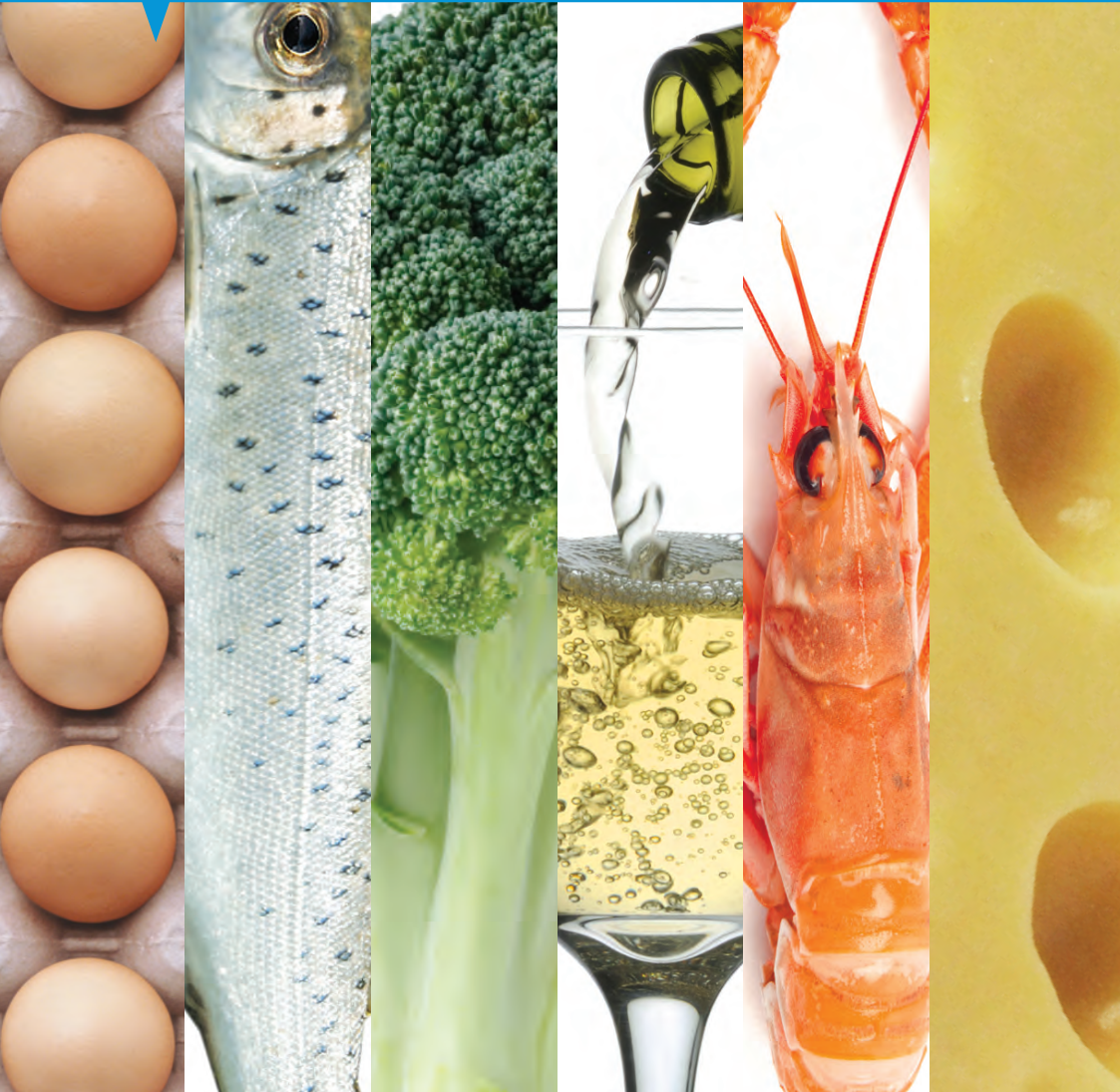


Food Allergy & Intolerance

Guidance for the Catering Industry



This booklet has been produced as part of the all island Food Safety Training Programme on Food Allergen Control which is sponsored by **safefood**

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Disclaimer: This guidance is provided in good faith and outlines the general principles of good food allergen management. **safefood** disclaims any responsibility for any adverse effects resulting from following the information in this publication. **safefood** does not give any guarantee that following the advice in this publication will prevent an allergic reaction from occurring. The food business should ensure that it complies in full with the legislative requirements for the manufacture, preparation and sale of safe food. Sole responsibility for the safety of supplied food rests with the proprietor.

Food Allergy & Intolerance in the Catering Industry

In these islands it is estimated that approximately 10 percent of the population suffer from a food allergy or a food intolerance (including coeliac condition), the effects of which range from mild discomfort to life threatening. This booklet and accompanying poster are designed as an educational resource for caterers and serve as a practical guideline for serving customers who may have a food allergy, a food intolerance, coeliac condition or who may wish to avoid a particular food for other reasons. Since all catering staff must receive induction training before they start work for the first time and at regular intervals thereafter, the booklet should be used as part of this training to increase catering staff knowledge and awareness of this issue. The poster is designed as a quick reference source for staff who need to serve an allergic customer or a customer who wants to avoid a food or food ingredient for any other reason. In this context, the booklet and poster will help food businesses meet their legal obligations.

It is recommended that a copy of this booklet should be placed in the food safety management file. Please place a copy of the poster at strategic locations such as counter/servery areas, and make all staff members aware of this information and its location.

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Introduction

Since the 1950s, the incidence of allergies in developed countries has shown a steady rise. This is particularly noticeable where food allergy is concerned. For example, peanut allergy – the most common food allergy to cause fatal or near fatal reactions – has trebled in the last twelve years affecting almost 2% of children at school entry level. In Ireland, it is estimated that up to 3% of the population have a food allergy. Approximately 5% of the adult population are lactose intolerant while approximately 1% have coeliac condition.

EU legislation now recognises 14 foods as being responsible for the majority of allergic reactions in Europe. In Ireland, the primary causes of allergic and intolerant reactions to food are peanuts, fish, eggs, tree nuts & seeds, fruits & vegetables, milk and wheat. If you work in the food industry, particularly in the catering sector, you need to know how you can control food allergens on your premises. This can be a matter of life or death.

Definition

A food allergy is an abnormal, exaggerated reaction (hypersensitivity) of the immune system to certain proteins in food. These proteins are known as 'allergens'. A food intolerance is also an adverse reaction to a protein or non-protein constituent of a food. However, the immune system is not involved. Examples include lactose intolerance due to the absence of the enzyme lactase and migraine induced by red wine. Therefore, while the use of the term 'allergens' to describe the causative agents that can trigger an allergic or intolerant reaction is not technically true, it is frequently used as a collective term in the literature and is used in this context in this document as well.

... peanut allergy – the most common food allergy to cause fatal or near fatal reactions – has trebled in the last twelve years...



an allergy to peanut is the most common food allergy to cause fatal or near fatal reactions

Gluten intolerance – also called coeliac disease – is an auto immune disease where the immune system attacks its own tissues.

However, it is not an allergy. The reaction is triggered by gluten which causes the lining of the gut to become damaged. The manufacture of totally gluten-free food is difficult.

Consequently, many foods currently on the market that address this particular nutritional requirement, although labelled “gluten-free”, may actually contain low residual amounts of gluten. A higher standard for gluten-free foods has recently been introduced but it will exist beside the original 1988 standard until 1st January 2012. Under the original standard, gluten-free foods must have less than 200 mg/kg (ppm) gluten. Foods manufactured under the 2009 standard can be called (1) ‘gluten-free’ if they have less than 20 mg/kg gluten or (2) ‘very low gluten’ if they have less than 100 mg/kg gluten. From 1st January 2012 only the new standard is permitted.

Causes

It is not clear why someone develops an allergy or intolerance to food. People with conditions like asthma, eczema or hay fever,

or families that have these conditions, seem to be more prone to developing allergies in general. Most food allergy fatalities have occurred in people with asthma. The prevalence of food allergies and intolerances, including coeliac condition, seems to vary between different populations and regions indicating a strong genetic influence.

Symptoms

The most common symptoms of an allergic reaction may include any combination of the following:-

- Coughing
- Dry itchy throat and tongue
- Wheezing and breathlessness
- Runny nose
- Itchy eyes
- Flushing of the skin
- Nettle rash (hives) anywhere on the body
- Swelling of lips and throat
- Changes in heart rate
- Feeling bloated
- Abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting

People with severe allergies can take a reaction which can be life threatening. This reaction is called anaphylaxis or “anaphylactic shock” which is characterised by:-

- a sense of impending doom
- a dramatic fall in blood pressure (hypotension)
- a swelling in the throat and mouth

- chest tightness, breathlessness from severe asthma
- collapse and unconsciousness

Sometimes it is difficult to know if a slight reaction like a rash will proceed to the more serious anaphylactic shock but urgent medical treatment is advised if the customer has difficulty in swallowing or breathing or if there is sudden weakness.

Food allergy is the most common cause of anaphylactic shock outside the hospital setting and an allergy to peanut is the most common food allergy to cause fatal or near fatal reactions.

Food intolerant reactions tend to be less severe than those experienced during an allergic reaction. Symptoms are usually gastrointestinal, including nausea and diarrhoea, but can also include those more usually associated with a food allergy such as flushing, headache, hives or wheezing. Unlike a food allergic reaction where symptoms begin to manifest immediately, the symptoms of a food intolerant reaction usually take time to develop, although there are exceptions to this.

Avoidance and Treatment

There are no widely-available medical treatments to prevent someone taking an allergic/intolerant reaction. Treatment is provided after an allergic reaction has taken

place either by the patient's use of antihistamines or, if the reaction is severe, by self medication with an adrenaline (epinephrine) auto-injector followed by hospital admission. Autoinjectors are marketed under the Epipen and Anapen brands. A food intolerant reaction usually resolves with time once the offending food is removed from the diet.

Avoidance is the key to controlling food allergy and intolerance and those at risk must avoid contact with the foods to which they are allergic/intolerant in any form.

Impact on quality of Life

The diagnosis of a food allergy or intolerance is very stressful for the person and their immediate family. Many life style changes have to be made, all to ensure that the patient's health is protected. What to eat, where to eat, how to cope at parties or at a new school or when going to college – these are all considerations that take on a heightened importance when a family member has a food allergy or intolerance, especially if the allergy is life-threatening. As a caterer, you can help the allergic/intolerant customer by having an understanding of their problem and helping them to choose food that is safe.

Foods that can trigger an allergic reaction

A customer can be allergic or intolerant to, and wish to avoid, any food. In the EU, there are 14 major allergens of concern which must be identified on the label when used as a deliberate ingredient in any prepacked food product. The 14 major allergens are detailed below, along with information on foods in which they are commonly found. Of these, the following feature most commonly in causing allergic reactions, groundnuts (peanuts), tree nuts (eg. almonds, walnuts, cashews, Brazils), sesame (eg. seeds, paste and oil), fish, shellfish, dairy products and eggs. In Ireland, certain fruits and vegetables have caused allergic reactions in susceptible individuals but these do not appear on the EU list. This is because the listed allergens are the most prevalent on an EU-wide basis. Note, certain foods such as milk and wheat are associated with both allergy and intolerance.

Avoiding foods like peanuts, nuts, seeds, milk and eggs in packets, bottles or in jars is relatively easy. It is more difficult where they could be hidden in a multi-ingredient food. For example, peanut traces can occur in a wide range of foods, cosmetics and even in medicines where the ingredient labelled arachis oil is, in fact, peanut oil. Gluten containing wheat is used in many baked goods and fish protein is a hidden ingredient in Worcester sauce.



Identification of major allergens

Fortunately, information is available to help caterers identify foods which contain major allergens. EU legislation (Directive 2000/13/EC as amended) requires the labelling of 14 major allergens if they are deliberate ingredients in pre-packed foods that are delivered to the 'ultimate consumer' and supplied to restaurants, hospitals, canteens and other mass caterers.

For allergens which are not subject to the allergen labelling requirements, the label should still give an indication if the allergen is present as a deliberate ingredient, eg. kiwi fruit. The 14 major allergens subject to EU labelling requirements are described below. Of these, peanuts, fish, shellfish, egg, tree nuts, milk and gluten are most relevant for the peoples on the island of Ireland:-

Allergen: Peanuts

Peanuts can trigger severe reactions including anaphylaxis.

Other names for peanuts include groundnuts, earth nuts, goobers, goober peas, ground peas, pindas, monkey nuts and Chinese nuts.

Peanut is also used to produce oil and flour.

Refined peanut oil is unlikely to cause a reaction but unrefined peanut oils are unsuitable for anyone with a peanut allergy.

Found in:

Breakfast cereals, cakes, biscuits, pastries, breads, cereal bars, mixed nuts.

Chinese, Thai or Indonesian dishes including curries. The ethnic cuisines may also use unrefined peanut oil.

Chilli, satay or pesto sauce; lasagne; mixed salads, salad dips and dressings; desserts including ice cream; peanut butter and nut spreads; vegetarian products; confectionery and nougat products; fruit yoghurts; hydrolysed vegetable protein; sausages and stuffing; boullion and Worcester sauce.

**Allergen: Fish**

Fish can trigger severe reactions including anaphylaxis.

Some people can react to the vapours during the cooking of fish. Some people who are allergic to one species of fish have been advised to avoid all species of fish because the allergic proteins are similar.

There is a risk of cross contamination during harvesting and processing.

Found in:

Anchovies are a common ingredient of sauces like Worcester sauce, Caesar salad, salad dressings and pizza toppings

Fish is often used in soups and stocks, pastes, stir-fry mixes and oriental sauces.

Surimi is a white fish-based food that mimics more expensive crab, lobster and other crustaceans and shellfish.



Allergen: Shellfish

Shellfish can trigger severe reactions including anaphylaxis.

People who react to one type of shellfish may react to other types and very sensitive people can react to the vapours during the cooking of shellfish

Shellfish includes:

- Crustaceans – eg. crab, lobster, prawn, shrimp, langoustine and crayfish
- Molluscs – eg. mussels, scallops, oysters, clams, snails, periwinkles, whelks, squid and octopus

Found in:

Shellfish may be served on their own or as a hidden ingredient in dishes like fish pie or seafood chowder. They may be present in soups, stocks and highly processed foods.

**Allergen: Eggs**

Allergic reactions to egg and egg products can range from slight to very severe including anaphylaxis. This applies to Eggs from all species including duck, goose, turkey and quail as well as hens.

The main proteins causing reactions are in the egg white. Also derived from egg are:-

- Albumen
- Lecithin-emulsifier (E322)
- Lysozyme

Egg allergy in children is very common but by the age of three about 50% will have grown out of it.

Found in:

Eggs are used as ingredients in many foods such as baked goods including bread and cakes, meat products, fresh pasta dishes, sweets and ice creams. Egg also performs specific functions, eg. as binders to stick down the ends of spring rolls, to glaze pastry and to bind the meat in burgers.



Allergen: Tree Nuts

Tree nuts can trigger severe reactions including anaphylaxis.

Tree nuts include almond, hazelnut, walnut, cashew, pecan nut, Brazil nut, pistachio nut, macadamia nut and the Queensland nut.

Unrefined nut oils like sesame and walnut oil are unsuitable for people with a nut allergy.

Found in:

Breakfast cereals, cakes, biscuits, pastries, breads, cereal bars.

Chinese, Thai or Indonesian dishes including curries. The ethnic cuisines may also use unrefined nut oils.

Chilli, satay or pesto sauce; lasagne; mixed salads, salad dips and dressings; desserts including ice cream; and nut spreads; vegetarian products; unrefined cooking oils including walnut and hazelnut oils.

Marzipan confectionery including praline and nougat products; fruit yoghurts; hydrolysed vegetable protein; sausages and stuffing; bouillon and Worcester sauce.

**Allergen: Milk**

People may be allergic or intolerant to milk.

Cows milk allergy is normally associated with infants and young children, the majority of whom grow out of it. Allergic reactions to milk and milk products can range from slight to very severe including anaphylaxis.

Milk allergic people will need to avoid milk and milk products from cows, sheep, goats and other milk-producing animals.

People intolerant to milk are usually intolerant to lactose. They do not have the enzyme lactase in their gut to help them digest lactose.

Found in:

In addition to milk, the main foods to avoid are dairy products including butter, buttermilk, milk powder, cream, cheese, yoghurt and ice cream.

Milk is also found in butterfat, butter oil, Ghee (clarified butter), curds and whey, caesin, sodium and calcium caesinate, fromage frais and crème fraiche. These foods are found on their own or as ingredients in many products.



Allergen: **Gluten**

Gluten-containing cereals (eg. wheat, barley, oats, rye, spelt and kamut).

People need to avoid gluten containing cereals either because they are allergic or they are intolerant (Coeliac condition).

Found in:

Gluten containing cereals are found in breads, cereals, pastry products, pasta, pizza, biscuits and cakes and many bread crumbed or battered products or those dusted with flour before cooking.

Wheat can be an ingredient in sauces as a thickener, in stock cubes, gravy granules and spice mixes in sausages and burgers.

Allergen: **Sesame**

Sesame can trigger severe reactions including anaphylaxis.

Sesame is also used to make pastes and oils.

Found in:

Sesame seeds are used in bakery products, breads and rolls and may contaminate other bakery products.

Sesame paste (Tahini) is used in middle eastern cooking and as an ingredient in humus a chickpea based dip, in Halvah a sweet confection and in a dry condiment called Gomashio.

Sesame oils used for cooking or stir-fry may contain unrefined sesame oil and are considered high risk.



Allergen: Celery

Celery, including the stalk (stick) and the root (celeriac), celery salt and seeds. People are more likely to be allergic to celeriac than the stalk but both can cause severe reactions.

Celery is a common cause of oral allergy syndrome which causes redness, itching and blistering of the mouth, lips, tongue or throat immediately after touching the food.

Found in:

The sticks are commonly used as a salad vegetable or with a dip. Diced celeriac is also used as a vegetable in mashed form or roast or fried as a chip. Celery salt made from celery seeds is a micro ingredient of many soups, sauces, stocks and tomato based drinks like Bloody Mary.

**Allergen: Mustard**

Allergy to mustard is uncommon on this island being more prevalent on mainland Europe.

Mustard comes in many forms including sprouted seeds, leaves, flowers, powder/flour and oil. All must be avoided by the allergic consumer.

Found in:

Sauces, marinades, curries, soups, salad dressings, eg. salad creams and thousand island dressings, and as a condiment on its own.

Also used for coatings on meat or fish products.



Allergen: **Sulphur**

Sulphur dioxide (SO₂) and Sulphites at concentrations of more than 10 mg/kg or 10 mg/litre expressed as SO₂. Sulphites include Sodium sulphite, Sodium bisulphite, Potassium bisulphite and Potassium metabisulphite (E220-228).

They are used as a preservative in many foods to maintain appearance and extend shelf life.

SO₂ may trigger asthmatic attacks.

Found in:

SO₂ is commonly found in wine, beer and carbonated soft drinks.

It is also added to foods like salads, fruits like pre-packed apricots and pre-prepared vegetables such as raw potato chips to maintain appearance and freshness.

It is used as a preservative in meat products like sausages and beef burgers.



Allergen: **Lupin**

Because lupin is botanically related to peanut, it contains similar allergens and can trigger anaphylaxis, so people with peanut/nut allergy should avoid lupin products.

Found in:

Lupin seeds from lupin flowers may be seen in, or on, speciality breads but are mainly used in the form of flour in pastry products including pies, pizzas, pasta and baked foods with batter eg. waffles and onion rings.



Allergen: **Soybeans and soya**

The soya bean can be ground to produce soya flour and textured vegetable protein and can be fermented to produce bean curd (tofu). Lecithin (E322), which is used as an emulsifier, can be made from unrefined soya oil.

Found in:

Soya flour is commonly found in baked goods, pastry, pasta dishes, cereals and processed meats.

Tofu is made from coagulating soy milk into curd and pressing it into blocks.

Textured vegetable protein is a meat substitute and used as a consistency enhancer in meat products.

Refined soya oil is used in vegetable oil.

“May contain” statements

The EU legislation does not cover allergens accidentally present as a result of cross contamination at some point in the manufacturing process but this hazard has been recognised by many manufacturers who have chosen to highlight the risk in advisory warning statements such as “may contain nuts”. This information is usually found on food packaging in addition to the ingredients list, but is not required by law. The frequent use of “may contain” statements has been criticised and the Food Standards Agency (UK) takes the view that these statements should only be used where the likelihood of allergen contamination has been properly assessed and the risk cannot be reduced or eliminated.

That said, “may contain” statements should not be ignored. The caterer has no way of assessing their worth and must therefore err on the side of caution, assume they are credible and make the information available to the customer.



Communication with the customer

Communication with the customer is very important. This lets them know that you are aware of the problem of food allergy and intolerance and encourages them to ask questions about the foods you sell.

You may want to let the customer know about your policies by:-

- 1 Appropriate notification advising them to ask staff for further information if they have any dietary concerns
- 2 Highlighting major allergens on menus/chalk boards/food displays etc.

It is important for caterers to realise that customers can be allergic to any food and new allergens are being recognised all the time. Caterers should be aware of the following foods which regularly cause allergic reactions, but not in sufficient numbers to warrant addition to the EU list of 14 allergens:-

- Fruits such as kiwi and strawberry
- Tropical fruits such as mango, papaya
- Other legumes eg. beans and lentils



Food allergens, the Law and Food Safety Management Systems

Many people who suffer an adverse reaction to food, including an anaphylactic reaction, do so following consumption of food from a catering business. It is therefore vital that catering staff play their part in protecting the health of their allergic and food-intolerant customers.

All catering businesses have a legal requirement to sell safe food. They are required to have in place a food safety management system based on HACCP principles to assess risks and control food safety hazards (Regulation (EC) No. 852/2004). The regulation was transposed into national law in the Republic and Northern Ireland by the following legislation:-

- ROI: Corrigendum to Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs. (see also S.I. No. 910 of 2005, S.I. No. 369 of 2006 and S.I. No. 387 of 2006).
- NI: Food Hygiene Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 (SR 2006 No 3).

Traditionally, the hazards to be assessed included temperature control of hot and cold foods and cross-contamination of cooked food by raw food. Food allergies and intolerances are emerging risks and, like any other risk, should be considered and handled in the same systematic way.

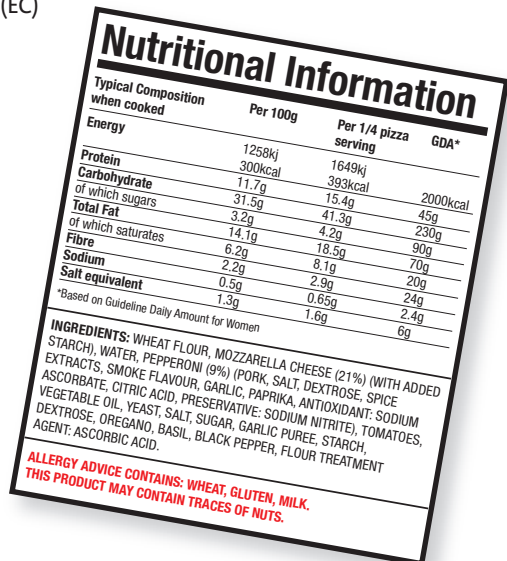
Due Diligence

The defence of due diligence is acceptable in both jurisdictions. In Northern Ireland, Regulation 21 of the Food Safety Order NI 1991 introduced the concept of due diligence to food legislation. Where a person was charged with any offence under the Food Safety Order, they could now claim due diligence in respect of their food business if they could prove that they took 'all reasonable

precautions and exercised all due diligence' to avoid committing an offence. A food business may be able to use the defence of due diligence in a food allergy prosecution if it can demonstrate that appropriate food allergy controls were in place and working effectively at the time an adverse event occurred on site.

In the Republic of Ireland, Paragraph 5 (3) (a) of European Communities (General Food Law) Regulations 2007 (S.I. No. 747 of 2007) refers to the due diligence defence particularly with respect to the offence of placing unsafe food on the market (in contravention of Article 14 of Regulation (EC) 178/2002).

... protecting the health of their allergic and food-intolerant customers...



Typical Composition when cooked	Per 100g	Per 1/4 pizza serving	GDA*
Energy	1258kJ 300kcal	1649kJ 393kcal	2000kcal
Protein	11.7g	15.4g	45g
Carbohydrate of which sugars	31.5g 3.2g	41.3g 4.2g	230g
Total Fat of which saturates	14.1g 6.2g	18.3g 8.1g	90g 70g
Fibre	2.2g	2.9g	20g
Sodium	0.5g	0.65g	24g
Salt equivalent	1.3g	1.6g	2.4g 6g

*Based on Guideline Daily Amount for Women

INGREDIENTS: WHEAT FLOUR, MOZZARELLA CHEESE (21%) (WITH ADDED STARCH), WATER, PEPPERONI (9%) (PORK, SALT, DEXTROSE, SPICE EXTRACTS, SMOKE FLAVOUR, GARLIC, PAPRIKA, ANTIOXIDANT: SODIUM ASCORBATE, CITRIC ACID, PRESERVATIVE: SODIUM NITRITE), TOMATOES, VEGETABLE OIL, YEAST, SALT, SUGAR, GARLIC PUREE, STARCH, DEXTROSE, OREGANO, BASIL, BLACK PEPPER, FLOUR TREATMENT AGENT: ASCORBIC ACID.

ALLERGY ADVICE CONTAINS: WHEAT, GLUTEN, MILK. THIS PRODUCT MAY CONTAIN TRACES OF NUTS.

Best practice food allergen management

When a customer explains that they have a food allergy or intolerance and asks if a food is suitable for them, the business must have a system in place to handle their request and give them accurate advice. For that system to be effective, all staff should get basic training in food allergen management before they first start work so they are aware that the request must be taken seriously.

Many businesses are routinely controlling the traditional hazards using either their own food safety management system or an off-the-shelf one provided by the Food Safety Authority of Ireland or the Food Standards Agency Northern Ireland. Working in partnership with representatives of the catering industry and Environmental Health Officers, they have developed a guide for caterers entitled, 'safe catering — your guide to making food safely'. This joint initiative is intended to ensure consistency in the application of food safety legislation in the catering industry right across the island of Ireland. The guide provides the caterer with practical advice on food allergies, their symptoms, the main foods that can cause reactions and, importantly, information on how to control allergens in a food business. The information in this booklet is meant to supplement this guide.



Nominating an Expert

It is a good idea to nominate a responsible member of staff who will be charged with facilitating all allergy/intolerance related requests and who is trained in the topic. A request should always be passed to the nominated staff member who can then talk to the customer to find out just what foods and ingredients they are trying to avoid.

Tact and Diplomacy

The staff member needs to deal tactfully with the customer to gain more information and although most allergic customers will welcome an open discussion, some people, particularly teenagers and those with other underlying health problems may be more reticent about discussing their dietary needs in detail, especially in public.

Ingredients

The nominated staff member needs to find out the ingredients of the food. This can be done by considering how the food was made up. Was it bought in? If so, the label on the ingredients packaging should be examined for allergen information (not forgetting the “may contain” warnings). If it was bought in and part prepared in house, look at the labelling information and examine recipe information to find out just what the ingredients are. You can make these tasks easier by setting up a system to retain ingredients information with the product, or on computer or in a file. You should also have a copy of all recipes in an easily accessible position. Staff should follow recipes closely and if changes have to be made, the recipes should be updated to include the addition or removal of an allergen.

Cross contamination

The nominated staff member needs to find out the potential for allergen cross-contamination. Again this is assessed by considering how the food was prepared. The following points should be considered as essential in the control of cross contamination and are similar in principle to the practices for preventing contamination of cooked food with raw food.

1 Food to equipment contact

Could the food being asked about have been in contact with equipment such as spoons, mixers, etc., without first washing them properly.

2 Food to food contact

Could the food being asked about have been in contact with the allergen or food containing the allergen, for example through shared storage or preparation areas? Oil that has already been used to cook other foods should not be used to cook the food in question. For instance, oil used to cook prawns could cause a reaction in someone who is allergic to shellfish.

3 Food to hand contact

Could the food being asked about have been in contact with the allergen on someone's unwashed hands by which allergen was transferred from another food?

Once you have found the required information (and this should only take a few minutes if you have set up a system) it should then be given to the customer who must make the final decision as to whether or not the food is suitable for them.

Remember if you are unsure of any of the ingredients, or if there is any doubt about cross contamination, you must tell the customer.

Food safety management system

The key to help you answer customer queries correctly is your food safety management system which should have the following controls in place.

- Train all staff from day one to make them aware of basic allergen controls and in-house procedures plus regular refresher courses.
- Appoint a responsible member of staff to handle all food related queries and ensuring that all staff know who he/she is. Have a fall back position in case that person is absent.
- Maintain a thorough knowledge of your recipes and ingredients with regular updating.
- Manage recipe and ingredients information and have it available if requested.
- Ask suppliers to notify you of any ingredients changes.
- Check that items delivered match exactly those that were ordered.
- Store major allergens like nuts, peanuts and seeds separately and in lidded containers that should be marked or colour coded if possible.
- Alert your staff to cross contamination risks and how to control them.
- Train all staff how to clean utensils and equipment to avoid cross contamination.
- Where practicable, ensure the information provided to customers on menus, signage, etc. highlights the presence of food allergens.
- Encourage the food allergic or intolerant customer to ask about the foods on sale through the use of appropriate signage.



A customer may ask you to prepare a meal free of an allergen

The points to remember are:-

- Make sure worktops and all the equipment used are thoroughly cleaned. This includes chopping boards, knives, mixers, bowls, pots, pans, griddles and utensils.
- Thorough cleaning can be achieved by the use of detergent and hot water.
- Where relevant, dismantle equipment to ensure that all allergen residues are removed.
- Do not use equipment which is encrusted with carbonised food residues eg. woks.
- Don't cook food in oil that has already been used to cook other foods.
- Ensure staff wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water before they prepare the meal and avoid touching other foods until they have finished preparing it.
- Assemble all the ingredients, check the labelling and recipes for the ingredient to be avoided.
- Control Cross contamination risks (described above).
- Think about how you control cooked and raw foods – same principles apply to the control of allergens.

Service: Points to remember

Once the special meal has been prepared, it should be kept labelled and protected from contamination. It should be kept separate from other meals until served. The manager or nominated staff member should deliver it, on its own, to the table of the allergic person to ensure that no mistakes are made.



If the worst does happen

If a customer takes an allergic reaction, you should act quickly as follows:-

- 1 Dial 999 immediately and advise the ambulance service that the person may be taking an anaphylactic (pronounced 'anna-fill-ak-tic') reaction and that immediate help is required.
- 2 Advise them of the location and telephone number of the premises and, where appropriate, of the post code.
- 3 Someone should go outside to wait for the ambulance to guide them to the premises as quickly as possible.

It is useful to keep a copy of this information including premises name, address, postcode and telephone number by the phone and advise staff accordingly.



Procedure for dealing with a query from your customer

This should be accessible to all staff

The customer wishes to know if a meal or other food is suitable for them.

1 Seek further clarification from the customer

- Are they allergic or intolerant to that food OR is it for another reason, eg. dietary or religious reasons or simply they may not like the taste.
- Which specific ingredient(s) do they want to avoid.
- Don't guess about the ingredients

2 Refer the query to the manager or a senior member of staff:-

- The designated person to deal with allergy related requests is

- If unavailable, please contact

3 The person dealing with the query/request will need to find out:-

- Does the food in question contain the ingredient(s) the customer has asked about.

- The chef can advise on the ingredients that were already in it or subsequently added to it.

- Ingredient information should be kept available for the customer if they request this.

4 Where to find ingredients information:-

- If the product is bought-in and sold in its original package: show the label to the customer.
- If you use bought-in pre-packed products as ingredients: information will be on the packaging or on the documentation delivered with the food. This can be shown to the customer.
- If you use fresh ingredients: know these and show the recipe to the customer.

5 If the food contains the ingredient which must be avoided:-

- Tell the customer. ALWAYS BE TRUTHFUL. Remember, you can always recommend a safe alternative.

- 6 If the food does not contain the ingredient to be avoided:-
- Inform the customer.
 - Consider the possibility that it could have been contaminated during the preparation, perhaps by sharing a spoon or knife or cutting board. Again inform the customer.
- 7 The customer makes the final decision
- Once the information on the food, its ingredients and the possibility of cross-contamination has been provided, assessed and given to the customer, the customer must make the final decision whether or not to purchase the food.



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