

Allergen control checklist: catering premises



FOOD
STANDARDS
AGENCY

Checklist for local authority enforcement officers to audit allergen control measures when carrying out inspections of catering premises

Name and address of premises: _____

Name of inspector: _____ Date: _____ Ref: _____

This checklist is not exhaustive and is intended to be a guide only.

Staff training

- Identify the total number of food handlers and check whether basic allergen training was given on their first day of employment and before food handling duties commenced.
- Has in-house training been recorded?
- Is there a nominated, responsible person who will handle all food allergy queries from customers, and is there a deputy in their absence?
- Is there a written procedure on how to deal with a request for allergy information?

Suppliers

- Are supplier details being noted to assess whether each business is using established suppliers that are likely to be meeting statutory standards?
- Has agreement been reached with the supplier to notify the business about any recipe changes, especially relating to allergenic ingredients?

Purchase and delivery of goods

- Are checks made to ensure deliveries meet the same specification as those ordered?
- Are checks made to ensure that different brands do not have different ingredients or that, if packs have new recipe flashes on the labels, the ingredients are checked?
- Are checks made to see if the supplier has given information about any changes in the ingredients of the foods delivered? This may be printed on delivery dockets or computer generated invoices.
- Are there any labels or stickers, for example special offers obscuring the statutory ingredients information?
- Are deliveries checked to ensure packaging is intact and contamination has not occurred?

Storage of goods (dry/chilled/frozen)

- Is allergen labelling information retained with each product?
- Are the goods suitably enclosed to prevent cross-contamination with other foods when in storage?
- If foods in storage are decanted into smaller containers, are they in closed containers, and have copies of the ingredient information from pack labels been kept?

Handling and preparation

- Is there a cross-contamination risk with ingredients brought from stores, for example have labels been lost?
- Could a recipe be revised to exclude the allergenic ingredient?
- Do kitchen staff check the ingredient labelling information before they prepare the food?
- Do kitchen staff make unauthorised recipe changes without informing front of house staff?
- Do kitchen staff consider cross-contamination in the preparation area, especially when asked to prepare a special meal free of a particular allergen?
- In ethnic catering establishments, is the wok and all associated equipment thoroughly washed before it is used to prepare a meal for an allergic customer? There is a high level of allergy risk from allergens such as nuts, peanuts and seeds in this type of cooking. The wok heats quickly to cook the food and kill bacteria, and it is common kitchen practice simply to give it a quick rinse between dishes. However, allergenic food residues may be easily transferred between dishes.
- Is time separation considered? For example, sesame seeds are high risk because they can get into other foods easily and it is better to use them in a preparation area when no other foods are present.
- Do all staff understand that hands play a major role in allergen cross-contamination and that hand washing is important?

Cooking

- Is cross-contamination during cooking considered?
- Are different spoons and probe thermometers always used or are they washed before use?
- Are kitchen staff aware that certain cooking and drizzling oils pose an allergen hazard, especially when used as salad dressings?
- If foods such as casseroles, pies or fruit tarts containing allergens are batch-cooked with ones not containing allergens, can the different varieties be identified?

Further handling (slicing/portioning/addition of toppings)

- Do kitchen staff consider cross-contamination during the handling of food after it's been cooked? For example, is the cooked meat slicer used to slice all types of cooked meat produce before a thorough clean at the end of the day?
- Is it possible to cross-contaminate the food through food residues on surfaces, for example with allergens like wheat flour and sesame seeds?
- Can cross-contamination take place as a result of poor personal hygiene or dirty coveralls and clothes? For example, staff who handle major allergens such as shellfish, then work with other food without washing their hands.

Hot holding, display and service

- Is care taken to avoid cross-contamination in hot holding and service areas? For example, catering staff normally serve hot foods from dishes on a hot display counter or from a Bain Marie. The main risks are therefore loss of identity and cross-contamination. Are staff aware of the foods containing the major allergens, for examples nuts and seafood?
- Are the foods put in separate dishes and served by staff using separate equipment such as utensils and probe thermometers?
- Are dishes on hot display labelled with their allergenic content?

Cooling and chilled holding

- Is cross-contamination considered during cooling and chilled holding on counter tops, chillers and fridges?

Cold display

- Is cross-contamination at the cold display considered, especially salad bars and buffets?
- Are desserts containing foods that can cause severe allergic reactions, such as nuts or cream, placed close together or touching in chilled display units?
- Is there a sign about allergens in self-service areas, such as salad bars or serve-yourself ice cream counters?

Purchase by customer

- Are there signs or notices to encourage customers to enquire about any allergens they may wish to avoid?
- Are front of house staff aware of the protocol for dealing with customer requests?
- Are all staff trained to deal with the Food Standards Agency's Chef Cards, including what they should do with them if a customer hands them one?
- Does the manager ensure that kitchen staff always tell front of house staff about recipe changes, particularly if substitute foods contain allergens? In these cases, are recipes kept and is packaging from ready made foods retained?

Consumption on the premises

- Is table hygiene checked before food-allergic customers sit down to eat, in cases where the business has been pre-warned by the customer?

Washing up and general cleaning

- Could equipment used to prepare allergenic foods be reused without washing?
- Is the control of allergens included in the cleaning schedule?
- Could cleaning cloths used to clean up spillages of allergenic foods be reused to contaminate surfaces and equipment?

Rework/reuse of leftovers

- Is there adequate control in the handling of leftovers containing allergenic ingredients?