

Cross Contamination Allergens Facts, Hints & Tips

What is Cross Contamination (cross contact)?

This is the contamination of a product by an allergen which is not listed within the ingredients for the food or menu item but may enter the dish unintentionally. This can happen in many ways including, but not limited to:

- Deliveries
- Preparation
- Serving
- Cleaning
- Storage
- Cooking
- Environment
- Communication & Lack of Training

Deliveries

Ensuring the product ordered is the product delivered, replacements could be made by your supplier and the ingredients in the replacement item may vary from the original product. Work with your suppliers!

Check labelling to see if recipes have changed for products - sauces, seasonings, and garnishes.

Storage

Allergen products should be stored in labelled sealed containers on a lower level and where possible in a separate area.

Preparation

When serving the allergic customer ensure that the area and equipment used has been washed thoroughly and wiped over with paper towel to ensure allergens have been removed - (2 stage cleaning).

Use fresh ingredients not those which may have been contaminated with allergens

Always check labelling for specific allergenic customer.

Cooking

Double check the order with the server to ensure you understand requirements of the customer.

If necessary, the chef should speak to the customer direct this will reassure them you are taking the time to understand.

Clean out & rinse off cooking vessels prior to use for the food allergy customer.

Serving

Ensuring the order is taken and understood correctly, reading back to the customer their order to reaffirm

Discuss directly with the main person in the kitchen (even if electronic) to ensure requests are understood.

Environment

If products processed in the same premises and therefore maybe airborne (including vapour from steam when cooking) make the customer aware to give them an informed choice. e.g.: nuts, wheat or lupin flour, sesame products.

Cleaning

Use clean cloths which will not have been contaminated by the allergen to clear serving and production areas.

Communication & Lack of Training

Poor communication can be an issue from either the customer to server, or the server to the chef. Sauces, dressings, and garnishes could be added in error and then removed by the server who may think that this is adequate to be allergen free. e.g.: removing a nut from the cream of a finished dessert.

Areas of Risk

- Fast food counters
- Take-away – Ethnic
- Ice cream counters
- Frying Oils
- Buffets
- Salad bars
- Grills
- Woks
- Meat slicers
- Breakfast buffets – toasters
- Sandwich counters – spreads & fillings
- Dessert trolleys & counters

How to avoid cross contamination risks in the kitchen

Place clear signage on dedicated equipment in appropriate areas to highlight and remind staff of their responsibilities. e.g.: toasters, fryers, on spreads, storage containers and areas.

Cover grill pan with foil or use foil or baking parchment when cooking in the oven to avoid splatters.

Dedicated equipment for specific allergen controls – stored in sealed containers.