

HACCP for ALLERGENS

It is a legal requirement for all catering businesses to have a Food Safety Management System, based on the principles of HACCP. This is the "go to documentation" that will tell an Environmental Health Officer exactly how that business produces food that is safe to eat. In catering there are 4 types of HAZARDS (something with the potential to cause harm). These are Microbiological, Physical, Chemical and **Allergenic**. They are **ALL** types of contamination, and we must put some control measures into our daily work routine to reduce the possibility of any harm being caused to customers. We are used to controlling the growth of bacteria by using time and temperature to slow down or destroy bacteria, but how do we control the risk of allergenic contamination? Cross-contact is the greatest risk.

Cross-Contamination- This usually refers to bacteria or viruses that get onto food and make it unsafe to eat. This can happen by direct or indirect contact. An example of **direct** cross-contamination would be defrosting raw meat or poultry on the shelf above salad items or uncovered high risk foods. An example of **indirect** cross-contamination would be using a vehicle, such as our hands or a cloth, to transfer bacteria from a source to a high risk food. We have controls in place to reduce the risk of cross-contamination and if food is cooked the chance of someone getting ill will be greatly reduced as bacteria will be destroyed.

Cross-Contact & Cross Contamination (allergen)- This happens when an allergen is unintentionally transferred from one food to another and their proteins mix. This can be direct or indirect contact. A true allergen is protein based and it is the protein which causes the allergic reaction. As a result of this each food then contains small amounts of the other food, and these amounts may be so small that they can't be seen! Even the smallest amount of an allergen can cause a serious reaction in some people who are highly sensitive. Cooking and refrigeration does **NOT** reduce or eliminate the chances of an allergic reaction.

Reducing the RISK

At every step from Farm to Fork we need to put some control measures in place to reduce the risk of Allergenic Contamination. Think about:

- **Suppliers**
- **Delivery**
- **Storage**
- **Preparation**
- **Cooking**
- **Service**
- **Communication**

Ensure suppliers inform you if there is a change to a recipe which affects its allergen content. Check all deliveries to ensure that the brand you have ordered is the one delivered and that all the ingredient labels are legible.

Store all nuts and seeds on lower shelves and clearly label all allergenic ingredients. Think about positioning in fridges and freezers.

Have a written procedure in place for the preparation of allergen-free meals.

Ensure ALL staff are trained in Allergen Awareness to ideally Level 2 standard.

Have separate utensils and fryers for GF items.

Always ask customers if they have any allergies or intolerances before taking their order.

Have a robust system in place to communicate the customer allergy to the kitchen and for the service of the correct meal to the customer.

Examples of Cross -Contact

Hands - Making a cheese sandwich then preparing a salad.

Utensils - Slicing cheese, then vegetables on the same cutting board

Cooking - Using the same griddle to cook fish and chicken.

Refrigerators - Milk leaks onto vinaigrette stored on a lower shelf.

Dust - Decanting flour into a storage container.

Cooking oils - using the same fryer/oil for breaded mushrooms and chicken tenders and then for French fries.

Butters/ spreads - Using the same knife to butter a standard baguette and then a GF sandwich.

Shortcuts - Making up Caesar salads in advance and removing the croutons for GF

TIP: If you can omit the allergen without compromising the quality then do it!

- Do you need celery on a Ploughman's lunch or in a Bolognese sauce?
- What about going nut-free?
- Do you really need sesame on the burger buns?
- Always check the oil used for frying. Can you use a non-allergenic product?

<https://foodallergyaware.co.uk/resources/factsheets/>