

BBQ & Summer Outdoor Dining – Allergen Management

Key Message: Outdoor dining and BBQ service present increased allergen risks due to relaxed environments, shared equipment, and informal serving styles. Strong controls are essential to maintain safety while delivering a positive summer dining experience.

Outdoor BBQ dining should not reduce allergen safety standards. Strong preparation, clear communication, and disciplined separation are essential to prevent avoidable incidents during high-risk summer service periods.

Key Allergen Risks in BBQ & Outdoor Settings

- **Cross-contact from shared grills**
 - Residues from marinades, sauces, and oils containing allergens can transfer easily
- **Marinades and hidden ingredients**
 - Pre-prepared marinades may contain allergens (soy, mustard, gluten, milk)
 - Brushing sauces onto cooked items can contaminate “safe” foods
- **Buffet-style or self-service setups**
 - Customers using shared tongs or utensils
 - Food labels often missing or unclear outdoors
- **Pre-preparation in mixed kitchens**
 - Allergen controls can break down during transport and staging
 - Outdoor finishing steps may not be fully documented
- **Alcohol-based sauces and glazes**
 - Beer, wine, or spirit-based ingredients may introduce undeclared allergens or sensitivities

High-Risk BBQ Ingredients to Watch

- Wheat-based buns, wraps, and breadcrumbs
- Mustard-heavy marinades and dressings
- Soy sauce and teriyaki-style glazes
- Dairy-based sauces (butter basting, creamy dressings)
- Nut-based pesto’s, sauces, or garnishes
- Pre-marinated meats and plant-based alternatives

Quick Staff Checklist for BBQ Service

- Have I checked all marinade ingredients for allergens?
- Is the cooking surface free from cross-contact risk?
- Has the allergen request been clearly communicated to the grill station?
- Is the allergen-free meal clearly identified and separated?
- Have I double-checked sauces, garnishes, and sides for allergen content?

Best Practice Controls

1. Separation & Equipment

- Use dedicated BBQ zones for allergen-free cooking
- Assign colour-coded utensils and serving tools
- Clean grill surfaces thoroughly between uses or use foil barriers

2. Ingredient Control

- Only use pre-approved, fully labelled marinades
- Keep allergen-free ingredients stored separately and clearly identified
- Avoid “double dipping” sauces or shared basting brushes

3. Communication

- Ensure front-of-house staff can clearly explain all ingredients if asked
- Use simple allergen boards or digital menus outdoors
- Confirm allergen requests directly with the kitchen every time

4. Service Control

- Plate allergen-safe meals separately, never use buffet or self-service style
- Use identifiable markers (flags, stickers, or labelled trays)
- Deliver allergen free meals first to avoid mistakes

5. Training & Awareness

- Refresh allergen awareness training before peak summer events
- Include BBQ-specific scenarios in staff briefings
- Always ensure temporary or seasonal staff are fully briefed on the essential points to observe when serving a customer with an allergy.

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

 Food Allergy Aware