



# TIP SHEET 9 - FOODSERVICE

## ALLERGEN MANAGEMENT

Food allergies are most common in children, although some can be life-long, and can cause mild to severe and sometimes life-threatening reactions. Most food allergens are proteins which are not broken down during the food manufacturing process. Their recognition, management and communication to the consumer are therefore extremely important.

Allergens in food can be intentional (i.e. nuts in nut-based products, milk in milk-based products), or introduced via cross-contact, which is the term used when a residue or trace amount of an allergenic ingredient is unintentionally added to a food product. This can happen due to ingredient mixing, unclean hands or surfaces, or insufficient cleaning and sanitation procedures.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	APPLICABLE CODE ELEMENT(S)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ CONTROL ALLERGENS AND PREVENT CROSS-CONTACT</li> <li>○ CREATING AN ALLERGEN MANAGEMENT PROGRAM</li> <li>○ VERIFY THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CLEANING AND SANITATION PROGRAM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 2.8.1</li> </ul>

## KEY TERMS

- **ALLERGEN**  
A substance that causes an allergic reaction.
- **CROSS-CONTACT**  
Unintentional and undesirable transfer of an allergen from one food or surface to another.
- **VERIFICATION**  
Defined in the Food and Agriculture Organization’s CODEX Alimentarius Commission Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) System and Guidelines for its Application – Annex to CAC/RCP 1 – 1969, Rev. 4-2003) as “A system, which identifies, evaluates and controls hazards which are significant for food safety.”  
  
Verification as applied to control measures seeks to prove that the control measure was done according to its design.



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## PROCESS STEPS

1. Evaluate ingredients and processing aids that contain allergens.
  - a. Some menu items contain ingredients that are known allergens which must be declared and labeled according to the regulatory labeling requirements in the country of origin and country of destination.
  - b. Cross-contact of allergens is more difficult to control. These are trace or occasional allergens that are not intended to be in the food and will not appear on the ingredient listing. They occur through ingredient substitution, unclean hands and surfaces, rework, processing aids, such as lubricants, or unexpected presence in ingredients (e.g. lactose used as a carrier for flavors). Cross-contact allergens can only be controlled through thorough and effective management practices during storage, preparation, service and display such as proper storage, clean utensils and surfaces as well as proper personal hygiene.
2. The food safety plan must show the hazards associated with storage, handling, and use of selected allergens and how those hazards are controlled. All identified intentional and cross-contact allergens must be included in the food safety plan, and their controls identified. This includes, but is not limited to:
  - a. Identifying specific target ingredients or products;
  - b. Proper storage practices for ingredients or products;
  - c. Identifying steps to prevent cross-contact throughout the handling process until service;
  - d. Equipment or smallwares specifically designated and cleaned to prevent cross-contact with undesired allergens; and
  - e. Proper sanitation procedures.
3. Management and staff awareness is essential in avoiding unintentional inclusion of allergenic material in menu items. Provide staff a list of allergens. Use this list as part of a training program that addresses the consequences of the unintentional addition of allergens and the methods required to prevent this from occurring, for example, trace amounts of allergenic materials can be transferred by hands, incorrect ingredient selection, spillages, and inadequate cleaning.
  - a. Include instructions in the allergen management program on how to identify, receive, handle, store ingredients or products containing allergens or those considered free of an allergen.
4. Where "free from" claims are made for a site, menu items or specific types of food being offered, effective cleaning of product contact surfaces must take place between product preparations or recipe changeovers appropriate to the risk and legal requirements, and sufficient to remove all potential target food allergens from product contact surfaces.



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5. The cleaning of areas and equipment in which food allergens are used is to be effectively implemented.
6. The product identification system must include the labeling of all packaged product intentionally or potentially containing allergenic materials according to the allergen labeling regulations in the jurisdiction produced and served.
7. The site must also have in place a means by which to verify the accuracy of allergen information provided to consumers. Look to regulatory information and industry resources to guide the creation of accurate messaging.

### RELEVANT RESOURCES

- US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - Environmental Health Services (EHS)  
How Restaurants Address Food Allergies  
[https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/ehsnet/plain\\_language/allergy-practices.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/ehsnet/plain_language/allergy-practices.htm)
- Food Allergy Research & Education - Resources for Restaurant Workers  
<https://www.foodallergy.org/education-awareness/fare-training/restaurant-workers>
- Food Allergy Research and Resource Program  
<https://farrp.unl.edu/allergen-control-food-industry>