

Food Safety

solutions[®]

BACK IN TIME

Travel Through the
History of Food Safety

Buffalo Wild Wings

Cold Beer, Hot Wings and Safe Food

The Revolution Has Begun

Revolution Foods' 30,000 Nutritious
Meals Daily Enhance the Learning
Environment for Children

Receiving

Food Safety Begins Here

State of (anaphylactic) Shock

You Take on a Great Responsibility
When You Serve an Allergic Diner

Special H1N1 Pandemic Flu
Information Inside. See page 26

State of (anaphylactic)

BY DAVID T. DENNEY, ESQ.

Many diners with severe food allergies elect to eschew restaurants in favor of home cooking, over which they have much more control. When the brave few venture out to restaurants, however, the staff can be forced to shoulder the enormous responsibility of serving a safe meal.

An allergy is an abnormal response to food triggered by the immune system. The most common foods to cause allergies in adults are shrimp, lobster, crab, and other shellfish; peanuts; walnuts and other tree nuts; fish; and eggs. In children, eggs, milk, peanuts, soy and wheat are the main culprits. Diagnoses of Celiac disease (gluten intolerance) are also on the rise in children. Allergic reactions can range from the mildly irritating to the instantaneous and catastrophic. Upon being exposed to an allergen, a diner with a severe allergy could experience anaphylactic shock in a matter of seconds.

A 2006 study featured in the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*, involving different types of employees (managers, servers and chefs) across a wide range of restaurant types, found that restaurant workers believe themselves to have a high

knowledge of allergy-related issues, as well as a high estimation of their ability to deal with an allergy emergency. Not surprisingly, however, their actual knowledge was frightening.

For example, 34% of those surveyed believed fryer heat would destroy allergens, and 29% thought removing an allergen from a

Allergic reactions can range from the mildly irritating to the instantaneous and catastrophic.

finished meal would render the dish safe. Alarmingly, only 44% of respondents indicated that a plan was in place in the event of a diner's allergic reaction, and only 48% indicated awareness of a specific plan by which the establishment would work to provide a safe meal for an allergic diner.

In most foodservice situations the customer's first information exchange regarding an allergy occurs with the host or waiter. How, then can an operator protect the restaurant company from

The most common foods to cause allergies in adults are shrimp, lobster, crab, and other shellfish; peanuts; walnuts and other tree nuts; fish; and eggs.



Photo by Wando Studios

Photo by James McQuillan

Photo by Oleksandr Staroseltsev

SHOCK

the ignorance or poor judgment of an untrained Front-of-House? Here are some practical steps that should streamline the process and help protect the restaurant:

- ▲ Educate your staff on the basics of food allergies, and on how to spot an allergic reaction.
- ▲ Menu disclaimers: remind people that they should alert their waitstaff if there is an allergy concern.
- ▲ Establish a chain of command: implement an “Allergy Policy” that governs what happens in the event a diner expresses an allergy concern. Put the Policy into your employee materials (e.g. Employee Handbook), then FOLLOW it. For example, designate a manager-level employee in each shift as the point of contact for an allergy concern. In the event a waiter learns of a guest’s allergy, she would then inform that manager, who will likely be either more situated to answer specific questions about the menu, or can communicate directly with the kitchen to ensure the ingredients remain allergen-free.
- ▲ Upon learning of an allergy concern, the kitchen then takes care to avoid exposure to allergens both from ingredients and cross-contamination (e.g. using fryer oil that had been used to fry shellfish, or using a cutting board that had been used to chop nuts).
- ▲ The Manager should track the ticket from the table to the kitchen and back, and after serving the food, should check on the guest.

When you elect to serve an allergic diner, you take on a great responsibility. If you establish and follow policies and procedures for dealing with allergy concerns, you will reduce your chances of a shocking event and give your diners peace of mind.

David Denney is the Principal of the Law Offices of David Denney based in Dallas, Texas. He can be reached at 214.800.2319 or david@foodbevlaw.com. He may also be contacted via the firm's website at www.foodbevlaw.com. This information provided is general and educational and not legal advice. For additional information, please visit: www.hospitalitylawyer.com.

In children, eggs, milk, peanuts, soy and wheat are the main culprits.



Photo by Ermin Gutenberger



Photo by Susan Trigg

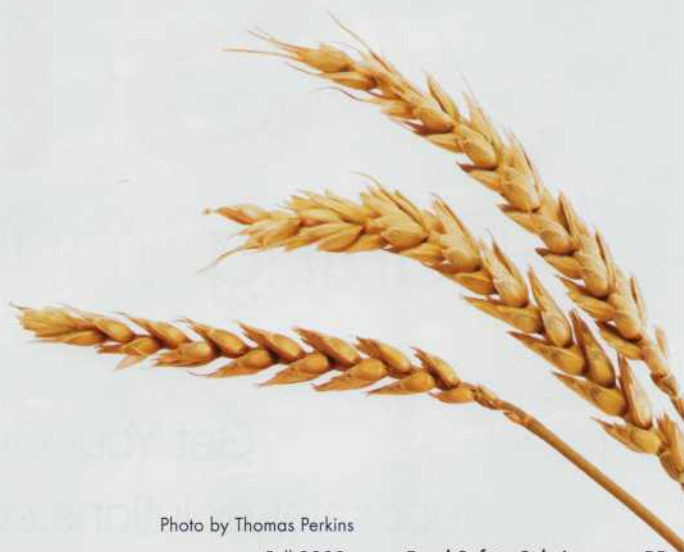


Photo by Thomas Perkins