

Safe method:

## Food allergies

It is important to know what to do if you serve a customer who has a food allergy, because these allergies can be life-threatening.



### Safety point

If someone asks if a dish contains a certain food, check **all** the ingredients in the dish (and what they contain), as well as what you use to cook the dish, thicken a sauce and to make a garnish or salad dressing. **Never guess.** A customer may also give you a 'chef card' listing the foods that they are sensitive to.

Keep a copy of the ingredient information of any ready-made foods you use.

When you have been asked to prepare a dish that does not contain a certain food, make sure work surfaces and equipment have been thoroughly cleaned first. Make sure staff wash their hands thoroughly before preparing the dish.

Give detailed information in the name or description of dishes on the menu, especially if they include the foods listed below, e.g. chocolate and *almond* slice, *sesame* oil dressing. Remember to update the menu when recipes change.

### Why?

If someone has a severe allergy, they can react to even a tiny amount of the food they are sensitive to. You can find out more about allergies, including chef cards, at [food.gov.uk/safereating/allergyintol/guide/](https://www.food.gov.uk/safereating/allergyintol/guide/)

This is so you can check what is in them.

This is to prevent small amounts of the food that a person is allergic to getting into the dish accidentally.

This allows people with food allergies to spot that dishes contain certain foods.

### Type of food

Peanuts



### What to look out for

Peanuts, also called groundnuts, are found in many foods, including sauces, cakes and desserts. They are common in Thai and Indonesian dishes, e.g. satay sauce. Watch out for peanut flour and groundnut oil too.

Lupin



Flour or seeds from the lupin plant are used in some bread, pastries, pies, waffles, pancakes, battered products and doughnuts.

Nuts



People with nut allergy can react to many types of nut, including walnuts, almonds, hazelnuts, Brazil nuts, cashews and pecans. Nuts are found in many foods, including sauces, desserts, crackers, bread and ice cream. Watch out for nut oils, marzipan and ground almonds too.

Milk



People with milk allergy need to avoid foods containing milk, yoghurt, cream, cheese, butter and other milk products. Watch out for dishes glazed with milk and ready-made products containing milk powder.

Eggs



Eggs are used in many foods including cakes, mousses, sauces, pasta and quiche. Sometimes egg is used to bind meat products, such as burgers. Watch out for dressings containing mayonnaise and dishes brushed with egg.

Type of food	What to look for
<b>Fish</b> 	Some types of fish, especially anchovies, are used in salad dressings, sauces, relishes and on pizzas. Fish sauce is commonly used in Thai dishes.
<b>Shellfish</b> 	People who are allergic to shellfish often need to avoid all types, including scampi, prawns, mussels, oysters, cockles, scallops, crab and squid. Watch out for shrimp paste and oyster sauce in Chinese and Thai dishes. When you are checking food labels, look out for the words 'shellfish', 'crustaceans' and 'molluscs', as well as the names of the individual types of shellfish.
<b>Soya</b> 	Soya comes in different forms, for example, tofu (or beancurd), soya flour and textured soya protein. It is found in many foods, including ice cream, sauces, desserts, meat products and vegetarian products such as 'veggie burgers'.
<b>Gluten</b> 	People who have gluten intolerance (also called coeliac disease) need to avoid cereals such as wheat, rye and barley, and foods made from these. Wheat flour is used in many foods such as bread, pasta, cakes, pastry and meat products. Watch out for soups and sauces thickened with flour, foods that are dusted with flour before cooking, batter and breadcrumbs.
<b>Sesame seeds</b> 	Sesame seeds are often used on bread and breadsticks. (Be careful because the seeds can fall off and get into other foods.) Sesame paste (tahini) is used in some Greek and Turkish dishes, including houmous. Watch out for sesame oil used for cooking or in dressings.
<b>Celery</b> 	People who are allergic to celery can react to celeriac (the root of the plant), celery stalks and leaves. Celeriac and celery are sometimes used in salads and soups, or served as a vegetable. Watch out for celery salt and celery seeds, which are used as a seasoning in lots of foods, such as soups and meat products.
<b>Mustard</b> 	People who are allergic to mustard will react to any food that comes from the mustard plant, including liquid mustard, mustard powder, the leaves, seeds and flowers, sprouted mustard seeds and mustard oil. Mustard is sometimes used in salad dressings, marinades, soups, sauces, curries and meat products.
<b>Sulphur dioxide</b> 	Some people with asthma can react to sulphur dioxide. This is used as a preservative in a wide range of foods, particularly meat products such as sausages, and dried fruit and vegetables. Sulphur dioxide is also found in wine and beer.

## What to do if things go wrong

If you think a customer is having a severe allergic reaction:

- Do not move them.
- Ring 999 and ask for an ambulance with a paramedic straight away.
- Explain that your customer could have anaphylaxis (pronounced 'anna-fill-axis').
- Send someone outside to wait for the ambulance.

## How to stop this happening again

- Make sure all your staff understand how important it is to check all the contents of a dish if asked by someone who has a food allergy.
- Make sure you keep ingredient information for all ready-made products and staff know to check it.
- Review the way that staff prepare a dish for someone with a food allergy – are they cleaning effectively first and using clean equipment?
- Improve the descriptions on your menu.
- Train staff again on this safe method.
- Improve supervision.



**Write down what went wrong and what you did about it in your diary.**

