

Lesson 9:

Chapter 3 Module 3

Menu Labeling

Chapter 3: Knowing the Menu

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Chapter 3 – Module 3: Menu Labeling

MENU LABELING

Key Words:

- Food Label
- Consumer Advisory Labeling
- Food Allergy Menu Labeling
- The Big Eight

Main Ideas:

- Consumer Advisory Labeling warn consumers of potential health risks when choosing raw or undercooked menu items
- Food Allergy Menu Labeling provides consumers with food allergy information directly on the restaurant menu

Knowing Foods: Menu Labeling

The menu is both a resource for the customer and a communication tool for the restaurant. Menus should be designed to provide accurate and useful information about the foods served at the restaurant. Written menus often provide descriptive wording that indicates preparation methods and ingredients.

Appropriate descriptive information about menu items can help customers make the right choices. Some examples are:

- Blackened Red Fish served with Jambalaya and Grilled Fresh Vegetables
- Fried Catfish, Hush Puppies, and Country Coleslaw

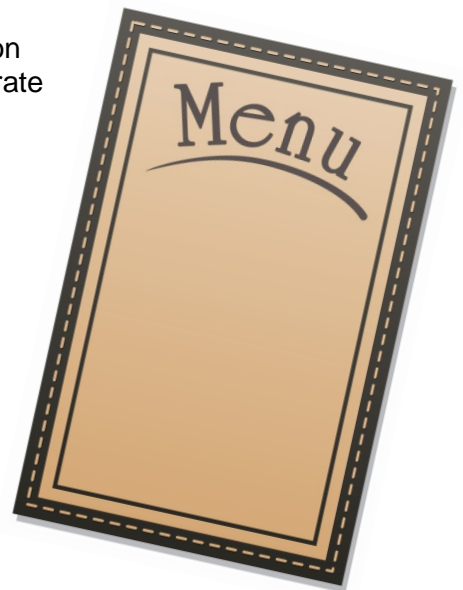
In addition, there are two types of menu labeling that can provide more food safety information to consumers:

- **Consumer Advisory Labeling**
- **Food Allergy Menu Labeling**

Consumer Advisory Menu Labeling

Details about food safety are not usually explained on the restaurant menu. However, certain items such as raw or undercooked eggs, meat, poultry, or seafood present a high, natural risk of exposure to bacteria that can cause foodborne illness. Some individuals, such as the elderly, infants and preschool children, pregnant women, and those with medical conditions, are especially at risk of foodborne illness from these foods. The FDA Food Code provides guidelines for labeling these high risk foods so that customers are informed of the possible danger of consuming these raw or undercooked food items.

According to the FDA Food Code, restaurants must disclose to customers when high risk foods are served raw or undercooked and also an additional warning. Many state and city health codes also have this requirement. This information may be included in descriptive menu wording or provided to the customer in brochures, table tents, or placards.



Some examples of menu disclosure wording provided in the FDA Food Code include:

- Oysters on the Half-Shell (raw oysters)
- Caesar Salad (made with raw eggs)
- Hamburgers (cooked to order)

Raw or undercooked menu items can also be disclosed through the use of an asterisk beside the menu item that is linked to a footnote as in the following example:

Oysters on the Half-Shell*

****These items are served raw or undercooked.***

In addition to disclosing that foods are being served raw or undercooked, restaurants are also responsible for providing a safety reminder to consumers. A typical reminder might be:

*****Consuming raw or undercooked meats, poultry, seafood, shellfish, or eggs may increase your risk of foodborne illness, especially if you have certain medical conditions.***

Restaurant managers may refer to the FDA Food Code for additional examples of appropriate wording for disclosure and reminders.

REMEMBER:

Inaccurate or incomplete information places customers with food allergies at risk.

Food Allergy Menu Labeling

Customers with food allergies rely on the information provided by menus and employees at a restaurant to help them eat safely. The only way for a customer with a food allergy to avoid an allergic reaction to food is to avoid all foods containing the allergen protein. Therefore, it is important that the restaurant have accurate information about each menu item and ingredient. Inaccurate or incomplete information places customers with food allergies at risk. The FDA Food Code and many state and local

regulations require a restaurant to have a manager on duty with knowledge about food safety and food allergens. Placing information about food allergens on menus is an excellent way to inform customers about the food allergens contained in restaurant foods.

There are several ways that restaurants can provide food allergen information to customers through their menus.

- **Develop separate allergen menus:** For customers who are allergic to any of **The Big Eight** food allergens (milk, eggs, soy, wheat, fish, crustacean shellfish, peanuts, and tree nuts), provide menus that include only foods that people with these allergies can safely consume.

Example: If a customer says, “I am allergic to shellfish,” the customer can be handed a menu that only includes those food items that do not contain shellfish. Thus, the customer can order foods that are allergen-free. Many chain restaurants have developed such menus that are available in their



restaurants and online.

- **Provide detailed descriptions** of menu items that include ingredients. The description should provide the main ingredients including those that contain food allergens.

Examples of detailed menu descriptions:

- **Asian Stir Fry** with chicken, rice, mushrooms, sliced water chestnuts, celery, soy sauce, ginger, and assorted spices
- **Clam Chowder** with clams, potatoes, onions, bacon, milk, and cream in a wheat-thickened sauce
- **Deluxe New York Style Cheesecake** made with cream cheese, eggs, sugar, wheat flour, butter, milk, and lemon flavoring

- **Label menu items with warning messages** concerning common food allergens. This allows customers with food allergies to determine which menu items are safe to eat.

Examples of detailed menu descriptions:

- *Beef Vegetable Stir Fry* (contains **peanuts** and **soy**)
- *Clam Chowder* (contains **shellfish**, **wheat**, and **milk**)
- *Italian Sausage Lasagna* (contains **egg** and **dairy** products)



If a restaurant places food allergen information on menus, then recipes and ingredient labels should be checked frequently for any changes or substitutions and menus updated accordingly. Effectively using menus to communicate food allergen information to customers can be an important part of any food safety program.

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES: MENU LABELING

- Know the items on the menu, identifying ingredients that are Time/Temperature Control for Safety foods or those that may cause an allergic reaction to food
- Place Consumer Advisory Menu Labels as appropriate
- Know different ways to inform customers of possible risks:
 - Develop separate allergen-free menus
 - Provide detailed descriptions of ingredients on the menu
 - Label menu items with warning messages

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Menu Labeling

Module Quiz: Please make sure you have read Chapter 3 – Module 3 before you take the quiz. If you have any questions about the information found in Module 3, please ask your manager before you begin.

1. Which of the following people would be at high risk for foodborne illness if they eat raw or undercooked eggs, meat, poultry, or seafood?
 - a. Pregnant Women
 - b. School age children
 - c. People age 65 and older
 - d. All of the above
2. Which of the following menu items would be a high risk food for people who have chronic health conditions?
 - a. Grilled catfish fillets
 - b. Oysters on the half-shell
 - c. Deep fat fried shrimp
 - d. Broiled flounder
3. Many state and city health codes require restaurants both to disclose raw or undercooked menu items to customers and to remind them of the risk of foodborne illness when eating these foods.
 - a. True
 - b. False
4. When people have an allergy to peanuts, what is the best way that they can remain safe when eating out?
 - a. Eat only a small amount of foods containing peanuts
 - b. Eat only at chain restaurants
 - c. Avoid eating all foods containing peanuts
 - d. Order restaurant foods for home delivery
5. Restaurants should use food allergy menu labeling to:
 - a. Comply with state and federal laws
 - b. Make the menu appear more attractive to customers
 - c. Sell more menu items
 - d. Inform customers what food allergens are contained in menu items