

Lesson 14:

Chapter 4 Module 5

Safely Serving Customers

Chapter 4: The Flow of Food Safely through your Establishment

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Chapter 4 – Module 5: Safely Serving Customers

SAFELY SERVING CUSTOMERS

Key Words:

- Menu Labeling
- Hidden Ingredients
- High Risk Foods
- Clean Plate Rule
- Labeling
- Consumer Advisory
- Safe Foods
- Cross-Contact
- Sneeze Guards

Main Ideas:

- There are many different forms of service: table service, self-service
- Preventing Cross-Contact
- Take-Out Foods
- Reducing foodborne illness risk from bacteria, viruses, and food allergens

Serving Styles

After foods are prepared safely, restaurant employees may serve meals to customers in several different ways. Some of these ways include table service, counter service, cafeterias, buffets, and salad bars. Restaurants may also sell take-out foods that are transported and consumed off-site.

- **Table or counter service** is when the wait staff takes customer orders and brings plates of prepared food to the table or counter.
- **Cafeterias, buffets, and salad bars** typically allow customers to self-serve portions of foods on their plates.
- **Take-out** foods sold to customers are packaged in a container that will maintain food temperatures.



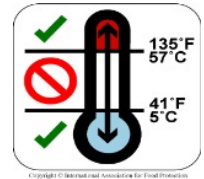
With any of these styles of service, there is the risk that bacteria, viruses, or food allergens could be spread to foods and cause foodborne illness for customers.

Buffets and Salad Bars



Special food handling rules apply to buffets and salad bars. Sneeze guards can be used to prevent customers from coughing or sneezing on the food. Employees should wipe off handles of ladles, dippers, and other serving tools used by customers with a sanitizer solution at least every 2 hours.

- ✓ When a pan of food runs out on a buffet or salad bar, it should be replaced with an entirely new pan of food.
- ✗ Employees should never add newly prepared foods on top of foods that were previously served. This might allow food to remain in the **Temperature Danger Zone** for 4 hours or longer.



Customers should use a clean plate each time they visit a cafeteria line, buffet, or salad bar. If customers return to the buffet or salad bar with a dirty plate, they might spread their germs to the clean food being served.

Buffets and salad bars pose special hazards for customers with food allergies. To reduce the risk of customers having allergic reactions to foods follow these rules:

- All foods on a buffet or salad bar should be labeled and especially those foods that contain ingredients from any of **The Big Eight** food allergens.
- Each type of food should have its own labeled serving utensil, for example “Soup Ladle.”



Take-Out Foods

When customers buy take-out meals, it may be 60 minutes or longer before they actually consume the food. Therefore, foods sold for take-out need to be packaged in containers that can retain hot and cold temperatures. Packaging foods at a temperature above 135°F or below 41°F reduces the time take-out food spends in the **Temperature Danger Zone**.

Assisting Customers with Food Allergies

Knowing Food Ingredients

The manager, chef, or head cook should be aware of **hidden ingredients**. For example, milk or milk products may be contained in hot dogs, canned tuna, or margarine.

- **Eggs** can be an ingredient in bagels, pretzels, and pasta.
- **Nuts** can be found in barbecue sauce, bouillon, and chili.
- **Wheat** protein is found in many processed foods.

Safe Foods for Customers with Food Allergies

Customers with food allergies will be safer if they avoid menu items with many ingredients such as soups, stews, casserole dishes, marinades, sauces, and breaded meats. Be cautious – desserts may also contain many ingredients including tree nuts and peanuts.

Cross-Contact spreads food allergens.

- Buffets allow for **Cross-Contact** between serving utensils
- Fryers transfer allergens from one food to another.
Peanut and Soybean frying oil can cause an allergic reaction in highly sensitive customers.
- Grilling different foods on the same griddle or cooking equipment causes **Cross-Contact**



Labeling Menus

Menus help inform customers about high risk foods:

- that contain undercooked or raw ingredients and
- that contain common food allergens.

High Risk Foods for Food Allergens

Customers who have a food allergy can experience a serious reaction if exposed to the food allergen. **The only way to stay safe is to avoid eating the foods to which they are allergic.** One of the best ways to inform customers about common food allergens in menu items is to print these ingredients on the menu. The menu should especially list **The Big Eight** food allergens (milk, eggs, soy, wheat, fish, crustacean shellfish, peanuts, and tree nuts) that cause most food allergy reactions.

THE BIG EIGHT:

- Milk
- Eggs
- Soy
- Wheat
- Fish
- Crustacean Shellfish
- Peanuts
- Tree Nuts

High Risk Foods for Bacteria

When meats, poultry, seafood, shellfish, or eggs are served raw or undercooked, they may cause foodborne illness. Foods that are sometimes made with raw eggs include Caesar salad, some sauces, eggnog, and egg-fortified beverages. Fried eggs are often served “over easy” with undercooked yolks. Beef patties or steaks may be served as “rare” and not fully cooked. In many places, local health rules require a Consumer Advisory posting to warn customers that they are at risk of foodborne illness when eating these foods.

In a restaurant, waiters are the last line of defense in the process of providing safe food to customers.

REMEMBER:

Never guess what allergens may be in foods on the menu.



Scenario 8: Chinese Restaurant Linked to Peanut Allergy Death

Recently, a seventh-grade student in Chicago died because of an allergic reaction to peanuts from food served at a school party.

A teacher ordered food from a Chinese restaurant. He warned the restaurant staff that some of the children had allergies to peanuts. The teacher said that he asked restaurant staff to make sure that no peanut products, such as oils and sauces, would be used to prepare the food. However, one student with an allergy to peanuts suffered an anaphylactic reaction and died after eating the food.

Later, testing of food samples showed that the food contained high amounts of peanut residue. This is an example of poor communication between restaurant employees who prepare the food and those who take the orders.

Serving Customers

Wait staff must make sure that they correctly receive the customer's food order and correctly give it to kitchen staff. If they give wrong information to customers who ask about food ingredients, the customer may become ill or even die. The wait staff should never guess what allergens may be in foods on the menu. If you do not know, do not guess; ask the manager or head chef to relay the proper information to the allergic customer. Aside from that, the restaurant may be sued.



Special Attention to Food Orders for Customers with Food Allergies

When a customer with a food allergy places an order for a meal, this order should be flagged so that kitchen employees are aware of the food allergy. This can be done by using a red marker to alert the cooks that special care must be taken in preparing this food order. When the meal is ready for the customer the waiter should:

- ✓ Carry the order separately to the table and
- ✓ Verify with the customer that the order is correct.
- ✗ Food Allergy Orders should **NOT** be mixed on a tray with other food items.



All of the staff at a restaurant must work together as a team to ensure that a customer with a food allergy receives a safe food order. The manager, chef, or head cook may also come to the table to discuss safe choices of menu items with the customers.

How to Safely Manage Food Orders for Customers with Food Allergies



The Customer
After explaining he has a food allergy, the customer asks,

“What is safe to eat?”

The Order is Flagged

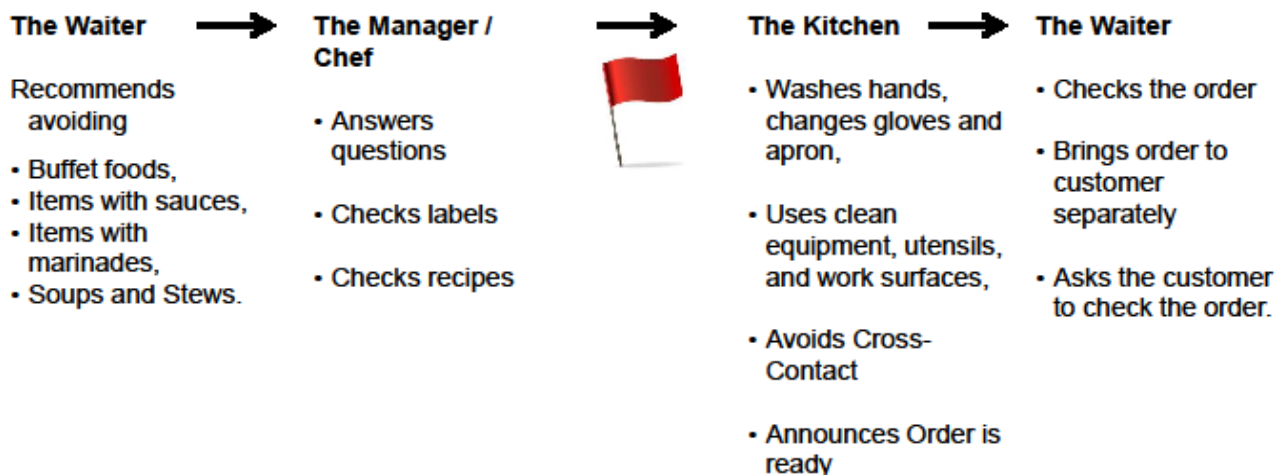


Figure 2: How to serve food safely.

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES: SAFELY SERVING CUSTOMERS

- Post a Consumer Advisory Label notice on the menu or wall if serving raw or undercooked meat, poultry, seafood, shellfish, or eggs
- Label menus with wording that includes food allergen ingredients
- Have one individual on duty (manager, chef, or head cook) who knows what ingredients are included in menu items; wait staff should never guess what ingredients are in the foods
- Train wait staff to flag orders for customers with food allergies
- Know “The Big Eight” food allergens
- Deliver food orders for customers with food allergies separately from other orders
- Check food orders for customers with food allergies carefully to ensure they receive what they ordered
- Wash hands frequently
- Label foods and utensils on a buffet or salad bar
- Avoid spreading food allergens by Cross-Contact
- Avoid touching Ready-to-Eat foods or ice with bare hands; use gloves or utensils
- Avoid touching the rims of plates or edges of glasses when serving foods
- Clean tables, chairs, and booths in dining area with sanitizer solution
- Install sneeze guards for buffets and salad bars
- Require customers to use a clean plate each time they visit a buffet or salad bar

[View Video linked from Chapter 4 Module 5.](#)

Quiz...Next Page

Safely Serving Customers

Module Quiz: Please make sure you have read Chapter 4 – Module 5 and watched the corresponding video before you take the quiz. If you have any questions about the information found in Module 5, please ask your manager before you begin.

1. The only way customers with food allergies can stay safe is by avoiding eating foods to which they are allergic.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. For which of the following foods should restaurant post a Consumer Advisory?
 - a. Fried eggs “over easy” (undercooked)
 - b. Rare hamburgers
 - c. Raw oysters
 - d. Raw marinated fish
 - e. All of the above
3. A customer asks the waiter if a stir fry menu item contains peanuts, and the waiter is not sure. The best response would be:
 - a. I don’t think it does
 - b. No – it doesn’t list peanuts on the menu
 - c. It probably does
 - d. I don’t know, but let me check with the manager
4. Which of the following types of menu items would be considered unsafe choices for customers with food allergies?
 - a. Buffet meals
 - b. Soups
 - c. Stews
 - d. Breaded meats
 - e. All of the above
5. Every restaurant should have at least one person on duty (manager, chef, or head cook) who knows what ingredients are contained in menu items.
 - a. True
 - b. False
6. When a customer with a food allergy places an order for a meal, this order should be flagged so that kitchen employees are aware of the food allergy.
 - a. True
 - b. False
7. Hot dogs, canned tuna, and margarine often contain _____ as a hidden ingredient.
 - a. Eggs
 - b. Milk or milk products
 - c. Wheat
 - d. Tree nuts

8. Customers should use a dirty plate each time they revisit a salad bar to save the kitchen time on dishwashing.
 - a. True
 - b. False

9. A customer who has an allergy to tree nuts orders a green salad. When the waiter picks up the order in the kitchen, he notices that the salad has been garnished with almonds. What should the waiter do?
 - a. Request that kitchen staff make a new salad
 - b. Brush off the almonds and serve to the customer
 - c. Serve the salad and tell the customer to remove the almonds
 - d. Serve the salad and explain that the kitchen workers made a mistake

10. Which of the following is a possible source of Cross-Contact?
 - a. Buffet Lines
 - b. Fryers
 - c. Grills
 - d. All of the above