

Criteria for allergy-friendly cafeterias

Background

Many companies provide their employees with meals in a staff restaurant. But allergy sufferers usually encounter difficulties when it comes to food options. The ingredients in dishes are often not listed and there is a risk of an allergic reaction. This risk can be significantly reduced if the kitchen takes consistent measures to address the specific needs of allergy sufferers and is able to provide detailed information on the ingredients used in the dishes.

However, the possibility of contact with allergens can never be completely eliminated, even in a staff restaurant, which usually relies on food products purchased in bulk. Contamination with allergens may already have occurred during transportation if the same means of transport is used for different raw materials.

The ECARF criteria have been developed according to needs of persons with food and respiratory allergies. The latter are especially sensitive to allergens in the interior air, such as those caused by certain plants. The ECARF Seal of Quality indicates staff restaurants the offer meal option designed to meet to the specific needs of allergy sufferers and are able to provide information on the ingredients used in the dishes the serve.

1. Criteria 1.1 Interior spaces

Public areas

- Avoidance of allergy-causing green plants releasing aeroallergens (in general no blossoming grasses, hazel, birch or olive plants, especially pollinating plants release aeroallergens spread in rooms. Other allergenic plants e.g. Viola or Ficus are also known of but only pose a problem in close contact and thus don't have to be removed from all rooms.)
- Open windows or external monitoring of air conditioners according to manufacturer guidelines and regular filter changes
- A Smoke-free and pet-free environment

1.2 Restaurant

Catering for guests must be adapted to the needs of allergy sufferers. To this end, competent allergen management must be established and a sufficient range of food alternatives must be made available.

Allergen Management

Purchasing and preparation of meals

Allergens can also end up unintentionally in food, for example, if the raw ingredients contain hidden allergens or the same transport container has been used for allergen-free and allergen-containing raw

ingredients. Allergen contamination can also occur when the same machines or utensils (e.g. knives) have been used to prepare allergen-free and allergen-containing meals. Correct allergen management effectively prevents contamination by allergens. It includes:

- Monitoring of raw ingredients
- Monitoring of the food preparation process
- Organised staff training

The kitchen staff should therefore ensure through allergen management that

- Products are always individually packaged and delivered in separate transport containers; this should be specified when ordering the products
- Food items are individually packaged, covered and stored
- Meals containing allergens are prepared in a separate working area
- The kitchen staff changes latex-free gloves or washes hands before entering the separate working area
- In order to prevent cross contamination, kitchen utensils never come into contact with other food items or dishes before or during meal preparation
- Prepared food is portioned out using separate kitchen utensils for each individual meal component
- The kitchen and serving staff are regularly trained in the storage, preparation and distribution of meals and in responding to queries from guests
- A list of all allergenic ingredients is accessible to the staff and guests at all times so that they may always be informed about the composition of all dishes

Labelling of Allergenic Meals

Information on allergenic ingredients used in the meals is accessible at all times.

The following major allergens must be labelled for the meals provided:

The 14 allergens subject to mandatory labelling by law (EU regulation no. 1169/2011):

- Cereals containing gluten, specifically wheat, rye, barley, oats, spelt, kamut or hybrid varieties thereof and products thereof
- Nuts, specifically almond, hazelnut, walnut, cashew, pecan nut, Brazil nut, pistachio nut, macadamia nut, Queensland nut and products thereof
- Eggs and egg products
- Peanuts and peanut products
- Soya and soya products
- Mustard and mustard products
- Crustaceans and crustacean products
- Fish and fish products
- Milk and dairy products (including lactose)
- Celery and celery products
- Sulphur dioxide and sulphites at a concentration greater than 10 mg/kg or 10mg/l specified as SO₂

- Sesame seeds and sesame seed products
- Lupin and lupin products
- Molluscs and mollusc products

Food alternatives

Meals can be pre-ordered to exclude specific individual allergen ingredients OR meals can be put together from dish components and food products from the menu or the buffet. In principle, alternative meal components and foods are made available, e.g.:

- Eggless durum wheat pasta or noodles, semolina, rice, potatoes (not pre-peeled)
- Soya milk
- Lactose-free milk
- Dairy-free, eggless and nut-free desserts
- Gluten-free bread
- Nut-free, peanut-free and almond-free muesli and bread
- Celery-free soup base

1.3 Training

As part of the certification, employees receive training on how to deal with guests who have allergies.

1.4 Validity

ECARF certification is valid for two years. Access must be granted for the ECARF audit, which may be conducted without prior notice at any time within the validity period.

1.5 External Presentation of the ECARF Seal of Quality

Notices can be created according to the restaurant's corporate design, but must include the ECARF Seal of Quality logo.

Notices should be made visible to guests in the countries language and English in the form of a display board or stand as well as on the restaurant's website.

2. Quality Control and Complaint Management

The manufacturer has established a functional system of quality control that effectively documents, processes and follows up complaints. The following aspects and components are in place:

- The general conditions of sale and the warranty conditions don't limit legal consumer rights.

- Product information given to the consumers is complete and easy to understand.
- Contact information such as manufacturer telephone number or e-mail address is easy to find on the packaging of the product.
- A personal response by experienced personnel is guaranteed in the case of any complaint.