

Criteria for allergy-friendly restaurants

Background

Restaurant dining often poses a problem for allergy sufferers. The ingredients in dishes or products are often not listed, and ordering a food item of unknown composition means an increased risk of allergic reaction. This risk can be reduced if the kitchen keeps on hand a selection of special products suited to the needs of allergic persons, storing them under appropriate conditions and preparing them with care. The ECARF Seal of Quality stands for this kind of care and precaution.

In a catering atmosphere, the possibility of contact with allergens can never be completely eliminated, as the establishments are often reliant on food products purchased in bulk. Even before products are delivered, contamination with allergens may already have occurred during the storage or transportation process.

The criteria below have been developed according to the needs of persons with food allergies, but also in reference to respiratory allergies, including sensitivity to allergens in interior air caused by the use of particular plants as table decoration or by animal hair.

The ECARF Seal of Quality indicates catering establishments that offer reliable options designed to meet the specific needs of allergy sufferers.

1. Criteria

1.1 Interior spaces

- 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 Gastronomy

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 10 mg/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

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.

The inspection is carried out by in-house ECARF auditors and authorised ECARF partners.

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.

Notices in the restaurant

- Buffet

„In case you suffer from allergies please contact our staff, we are happy to help“.

Next to these notices the ECARF Seal of Quality logo is placed.

Additionally, the following notice must be placed clearly visible:

„Please be sure to only touch the food with the respective cutlery to avoid mixing of different food components.

- À-la-carte

„ In case you suffer from allergies please contact our staff, we are happy to help “.

Next to these notices the ECARF Seal of Quality logo is placed.



2. Quality Control and Complaint Management

The business has established a functional system of quality control that responds effectively to consumer complaints. The system ensures the following:

- The business contact details, such as the address, telephone number and/or email address, are clearly visible on the product packaging;
- Consumer complaints are handled and followed up in an appropriate manner by qualified and experienced personnel of the business;
- The assessment of consumer complaints and, if applicable, any inferred areas of improvement are reapplied to product quality and safety. The business agrees to make this data available to ECARF on an ongoing basis.