

The rise of food allergies and how to keep your guests safe and happy

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Roughly **15 million Americans** (including 5.9 million children) are managing **food allergies**—while sensitivities and intolerances to specific ingredients are on the rise.

These allergies can range from a mild sensitivity (which would ruin the memory of a nice meal out) to reactions with much more serious consequences. In fact, **each year, 200,000 people** in the U.S. **require emergency medical attention** from contact with a food allergen.

Accurate allergen information is critical to guarantee your guests' safety, while making sure that information is easily accessible will help deliver a **positive customer experience**.

Ensure accuracy

What happens when you tweak a menu item, or swap one ingredient for another? **With manual processes** for tracking ingredients, the **potential for error abounds**. Servers who may be well-versed in one iteration of a dish may find themselves in a tight spot if a change has been made but nutritional or allergen data hasn't been updated.

Technology can help. With a recipe and menu engineering solution, *each ingredient is tagged with accurate nutrition and allergen information*. As dishes are created or adjusted, their *nutritional value and allergens are then updated automatically*, right down to the ingredient level. This will remove an administrative burden, and allow your chefs to focus their energy on creating innovative and delicious dishes.

Empower your staff

There is often a disconnect from a server's friendly, "and I just have to ask, any allergies or food sensitivities?" at the beginning of the meal to what actually ends up on a guest's plate.

It can also be tough on your **staff if they aren't equipped with the right information in real-time**. During a busy service, a seemingly innocuous question: "do you know if this has sesame in it?" can elicit a **quick—and not exactly reassuring—response**: "I don't think so" or, "it shouldn't." In some cases, servers will resort to sharing whole stacks of ingredient lists or binders of recipes, which puts the burden on your guest, may be difficult to interpret, and could include outdated information.

With a recipe and menu engineering **tool that keeps all the information centralized**, your servers can **deliver the right answers right away**. Accurate information is accessible (and always on hand) **via smartphones and tablets**. Without having to hunt, **your staff will be able to give your guests accurate, up-to-date information—and peace of mind**.

Equip guests with the information they need

Those with severe allergies *are often tasked with picking the location when dining out with friends or family*. Combing through menus online, searching for something that will be safe to eat can take the joy and anticipation right out of a meal.

This is an opportunity for your restaurant. Many recipe and menu engineering tools can upload your updated menus to your website and apps instantly. But the right tool can take this one step further: **allowing a customizable view for guests**. **With a filtered view, your potential customers can select specific ingredients to avoid, resulting in a custom menu that excludes any dishes that could cause a reaction for them**. For those who wish to make swaps or substitutions, they can also see in real-time how the nutritional and allergen values will shift.

Whether they are filtering your menu for vegan-friendly options, or excluding dishes that could cause an allergic reaction, your **potential customers will have all the information they need, plus more confidence in your restaurant before they even set foot inside**.

Conclusion

Some states are beginning the trend towards publishing menu allergen information and preventing cross-contamination in kitchens. As guest safety is at stake, legislation shouldn't have to be the first step for making a change. Your restaurant **can gain competitive advantage by publishing this information**, empowering your servers to deliver accurate information, **and giving your guests the confidence to return again and again**.

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