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No Reservations

No Reservations **is a monthly newsletter published by RQA Inc. for the restaurant industry.**

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Food Allergy Awareness

A food allergy is the body's negative reaction to a particular food protein, and approximately seven million people in the United Sates have food allergies. Each individual is different, but an allergic reaction may occur immediately after the food is consumed or several hours later.

The reaction can include the following symptoms:

- Itching in and around the mouth, face or scalp
- Tightening in the throat
- Wheezing or shortness of breath
- Hives
- Swelling of the face, eyes, hands, or feet
- Gastrointestinal symptoms, including abdominal cramps, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Loss of consciousness
- Death

There are eight common food allergens often referred to as "The Big Eight" in the United States. They are milk and dairy products, eggs and egg products, fish, shellfish, wheat, soy and soy products and peanuts (including tree nuts).

It is very important that the foodhandlers and the servers go through a form of allergen training so they are aware of these items. Failure to prepare for this type of risk could lead to a potential incident including death.

Servers, foodhandlers and especially managers should be able to inform customers of potential allergens that may be in menu items. At least one person per shift, preferably a manager, should be available to answer any questions regarding possible allergens in menu items. Each server should be able to fully describe each of the menu items when asked by a customer. If the server isn't sure if the menu item contains an allergen they should say so and consult with the manager on duty. Encourage servers to recommend different items on the menu that do not contain any known allergens to the guest for their enjoyment.

Foodhandlers in the kitchen must be notified when they are preparing food for a guest with an allergy. It is critical that the food they are preparing does not come into contact with the allergen or a surface the allergen has come into contact with. Ensure that all cookware, utensils and tableware are allergen free to prevent food contamination.

National Restaurant Association, Educational Foundation, ServSafe, 5th Edition

Contamination: Chemical & Physical

Chemical contaminants are responsible for many cases of foodborne illness. Contamination can occur from several substances normally found in a restaurant and foodservice establishments. These include toxic metals, pesticides, cleaning products, sanitizers, and lubricants.

Equipment and utensils that contain toxic metals (e.g. lead in a pewter pitcher, copper in a saucepan, or zinc in a galvanized bucket) can cause toxic metal poisoning. When an acidic food is used in a pewter pitcher, the toxic metal can leach into the food. Food establishments must only use food-grade equipment and utensils to prepare, store and handle food.

A hazard can occur when a carbonated-beverage dispenser is improperly installed. If the carbonated water is allowed to flow back into the copper supply lines, it could contaminate the beverage. A professional who has been properly trained to service and maintain the carbonated-beverage dispenser will ensure that a proper backflow-prevention device is installed.

Cleaning chemicals such as polishes, lubricants and sanitizers can contaminate food if they are used or stored improperly. In order to prevent contamination to food and food contact equipment with these products, the staff should be trained to do the following: Follow the directions supplied by the manufacturer when using chemicals; exercise caution when using chemicals during operating hours to prevent contamination of food and food preparation areas; store chemicals away from food, utensils, and equipment used for food; keep them in a separate storage area in their original container; when chemicals are transferred to smaller containers or spray bottles, label each container properly.

Physical contamination occurs when foreign objects are accidentally introduced into food. Common contaminates may include: Metal shavings from cans, staples from cartons, glass from broken light bulbs, blades from plastic or rubber scrapers, fingernails, hair and bandages, dirt and bones. The food you receive should be closely inspected and stored to ensure it will not become contaminated during the flow of food in the facility.

Kosher Restaurant, NYC, NY. October 2012

A well known kosher restaurant in New York has been shut down by the city's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene after department inspectors found a large number of violations during an inspection carried out early last week. Restaurant employees were caught scooping food with their bare hands. Evidence of live mice was discovered, as were roaches in food areas. Food was also transported uncovered by restaurant employees. In Jan. 2011, a Department of Health and Mental Hygiene inspection reportedly found even more violations, giving the restaurant 93 violation points for food safety and cleanliness issues including failure to refrigerate food and lack of a proper hand-washing facility.

http://failedmessiah.typepad.com/failed_messiahcom/2012/10/kosher-restaurant-closed-by-city-over-food-safety-and-related-violations-456.html

Mexican Restaurant, Marin County, CA. October 2012

Well here's a new strategy. A California eatery was experiencing a pretty serious cockroach problem. In an effort to be transparent to its customers, the restaurant posted a sign on its front door, explaining that the restaurant was infested by cockroaches. A manager explains,"The owner decided, if I can't tell the truth to my customers, then why have a restaurant."

Earlier this week the restaurant posted a note on its Facebook page that read in part:

> Despite our best efforts to do and continue to do everything we can to keep our café and the surrounding areas as clean as possible, we feel we are fighting a losing battle because from what we have seen and experienced (been told by outside contractors) the building we are located in is infested with German cockroaches.

That wasn't enough for the restaurant though. The restaurant also reported itself to the health department. This likely accelerated the process of bringing an inspector in because yesterday, the restaurant posted on Facebook again:

> This afternoon, October 30th, we were visited by Environmental Health Service of Marin County and upon inspection it was decided that our café would be closed as a result of an infestation of German cockroaches. Their inspection of our facility came as a result of restaurant reporting itself as a food facility with a infestation that we alone, despite a concerted and combined effort of working with a certified pest control company and Environmental Health Service of Marin County were not able to control and eradicate the problem.
>
> While we are not happy about the closure and the effect it has on the families of what I consider the best group of employees anywhere, it is my hope that this closure and the closure of other facilities within the plaza will help us all find the resolution required to provide the best service and food to our community.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com

Chinese Restaurant, Bellevue, WA. October 2012

The Chinese restaurant was closed by a Public Health food inspector on Tuesday, Oct. 30, for multiple violations. The establishment will be reopened once the inspector confirms that all issues have been resolved. The violations include the following: Potentially hazardous foods at unsafe temperatures, improper cooling of potentially hazardous food, poor personal hygiene practices, handwashing facilities inaccessible, toxic items not properly stored/labeled (i.e. pesticides in food preparation area).

http://bellevue.patch.com

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