

## Tips for Restaurant Dining with Allergies

### 1. Pick your restaurant carefully

- Finer dining establishments often have more time to meet your dietary needs.
- Restaurants where there may be a language barrier might not be your best choice. Workers may not understand your needs.
- Fast food or quick service type restaurants do not always have time to check their ingredients.
- Call restaurant day before or early the same day to discuss your meal options with the chef.
- Chefs in finer dining establishments are generally aware of the more common allergens and can be helpful.

### 2. Dine early or late

Avoid the busiest meal times. Chef and servers may not have enough time to help you during the rush hour.

### 3. Explain your need BRIEFLY

Explain your needs to the food server and make sure he/she understands the importance. Enlist their help with your selection and, in some cases, speak with the chef directly regarding your dietary needs.

### 4. Ask detailed questions

The only person who really knows what went into a dish is the chef and/or person who made it. Be very specific in your questions about each item you are going to be ordering.

Where are some food and the potential problems involved with them:

- ◆ Salads – Possibility of contamination of the boards used to chop ingredients. Also addition of croutons or other bread products if gluten intolerance. Ask for dressing on the side.
- ◆ Salad dressings or marinades – May contain thickeners or other unsafe ingredients. Suggestion: try ordering lemon wedge & oil on the side, wine or balsamic vinegar and oil, or bring your own dressing.
- ◆ Soups & sauces – Soup “bases” are often used as a foundation for soups and sauces. Bases contain ingredients comparable to bouillon or broth, i.e. hydrolyzed vegetal protein, natural flavors, etc., and should be carefully checked. Roux is the thickening for most sauces and is a combination of butter and flour. It is safest to avoid sauces.
- ◆ Prime rib or other meats – Seasoning is often used in preparing meats; their ingredients should be verified. If prime rib is too rare for the customer’s taste, the

cook may cook it in a pot of au jus until it reaches the desired doneness. Au jus may come from a can or mix and contain unidentified hydrolyzed vegetable protein.

- ◆ Fried foods – Oil may be used for deep frying both breaded and non-breaded items.
- ◆ Rice, starches and hash browns – Ask what other ingredients have been added while cooking them. Many hash browns are frozen with starch added and many rice pilafs may have seasoning or added ingredients that you may need to avoid. Plain steamed or baked rice cooked in water is your best bet.
- ◆ Dairy – Verify if the ingredients in the non-dairy substitute are okay.

**5. Have your food prepared on a clean cooking surface with clean utensils**

Check if breaded or gluten containing foods have been cooked or prepared on the surface previously. Covering surface with foil should help with them problem.

**6. Confirm your order before eating**

Make sure your order is correct and your instructions were followed.

**7. Thank your food server and chef**

Make sure you leave a generous tip for good service and have your server pass on your thanks to the chef. Patronize the establishment again.