



## **FOOD RESTRICTIONS AND ALLERGIES**

When planning meals, designing menus and coordinating functions it is important to enquire if the guests have any special food restrictions or allergies to consider. The reasons why people choose special diets range from religious practices, ideological beliefs to allergies, special diets and food sensitivities.

Below is a basic outline to provide some knowledge into the most common restrictions and allergies. As most of the religions and food restrictions are so vast and complex, this information is only a brief guide.

### **Religious Dietary Practices**

#### **Christian**

For most Christians, eating habits are not affected- though some will be vegetarians, usually for moral reason, and some will refrain from eating meat on Fridays. Some sects, for instance Mormons, have many rules and restrictions regarding eating and drinking, for sample complete abstinence from tea, coffee and alcohol and an emphasis on wholesome eating.

#### **Judaism (kosher)**

Jewish dietary laws are known as Kashrut, and are among the most complex of all religious food practices. The term Kosher means fit and describes all foods that are permitted for consumption.

A Kosher kitchen is divided into separate sections one for dairy, meat and pareve. Different sets of utensils, pots, pans, plates, knives, chopping boards are used in each section of a Kosher kitchen. If your kitchen is not normally used for kosher food, it would be well advised to source a local Kosher caterer to provide a certified kosher meal for the guest. They would provide Kosher utensils, cups, plates for the occasion. The meal can easily be re heated in an oven or microwave but must be keep covered so the guest can see the rabbinic certifications seal is intact.

Many Jewish people practice some or all of these restrictions in various degrees. It would be best to inquire as to what if any restrictions they have.

- No pork, and shellfish.
- Fish is acceptable as long as it has fins and scales.
- All animals with split hooves and which chew the cud (including sheep and cows)
- Refrain from eating meat and dairy products at the same meal
- No wine, unless its kosher wine
- All meat has to be prepared by a qualified kosher butcher (SHOCHET)
- If meat was eaten in the same day, one must wait six hours before consuming any dairy products

#### **Muslims**

This religion has various food restrictions according to their own dietary laws, which are Halaal. During the holy month of Ramadan, Muslims are not allowed to eat from dawn to sunset. However young

children, pregnant women and the sick are often exempted. As similar to other religions, it would be advisable to enquire as to what restrictions the guest has.

- Carnivorous animals are not permitted.
- All pork and pork products are totally forbidden.
- Sea animals which do not have fins or scales are considered undesirable by some Muslims.
- Alcohol in any form is not permitted.
- Permissible meat other than pork can be eaten only if it is prepared in the correct way (Halaal).
- These products should be avoided by all Muslims, Lard, gelatine, Rennet, Whey, Vanilla extract.
- Utensils should be separate for Muslims. There should be no contamination of Halaal and non Halaal.

### **Hindu**

Most Hindus do not eat meat ( strict Hindus are vegetarians) and none eat beef since the cow is sacred to them.

### **Buddhist**

Strict Buddhists are vegetarians and their dishes vary since many live in India and China, where available foods will be different.

### **Vegetarian**

Lacto-ovo Vegetarians eat dairy foods and eggs as well as plant foods. They do not eat the following;

- Meat
- Poultry
- Fish

Ovo-Vegetarians eat only eggs and plant foods. They do not eat the following;

- Dairy foods,
- Meat
- Poultry
- Fish

Lacto-vegetarian eats dairy foods and plant foods. They do not eat;

- Eggs
- Meat
- Poultry
- Fish

Vegans eat only plant foods and products. They do not eat any;

- Animal foods
- Eggs
- Dairy products

### **Medical and food allergies**

True food allergies come in various forms. It can be a slight case such as a headache or a rash to a certain product to some causing severe reactions, including death. The most common individual food allergies include those to peanuts, tree nuts (walnuts, pecans etc), fish, shellfish, eggs, milk, soy, corn and wheat. If you are given information a guest has a food allergies to a product make sure you consider all the ingredients used in the meal being served. Read the ingredients on the packet of any products used in the guest's meal. Do not ever think that "little bit should not matter". Allergies can kill!

### **Milk Allergies and Lactose intolerant (dairy free)**

Lactose intolerance is the inability to properly digest milk sugar, also known as lactose. Symptoms of lactose intolerance include abdominal bloating, gaseousness, flatulence, cramping, and diarrhea following the consumption of food containing dairy products or by-products.

Milk protein allergy is an allergic reaction to proteins commonly found in cows milk. It is caused by your immune system reacting because it believes the protein in the milk is a threat to your body. Your immune system will do it's best to get rid of the invader, just as it would a foreign virus or poison. During the allergic reaction your body releases histamine, a chemical which causes blood vessels to dilate and leak, mucous membranes to start producing skin rashes, vomiting and other effects.

Rice milk and Soy milk and tofu are excellent substitutes. Avoid any dairy products such as butter, cheese, some margarines, cream and milk powders.

### **Diabetics**

There are several types of diabetes. The most common are type 1 and type 2. In type 1, the pancreas makes little or no insulin. Individuals with type 1 need insulin shots in order to stay alive. Type 1 can occur at any age, but is usually seen in children and young adults.

With type 2 diabetes, the pancreas produces some insulin. type 2 diabetes need insulin to regulate their blood glucose, while others respond well to diet therapy and exercise alone, or a combination of diet, exercise and oral medication.

Starches (pastas, rice, bread, cake, potatoes, corn, etc.), fruit and milk are high in carbohydrates. Once in your body, they break down into your cells' preferred form of energy-glucose. Insulin is needed to help your cells take in the glucose. With diabetes, your insulin cannot do this task properly. A diabetic diet helps you schedule your carbohydrate intake so that your cells can get the glucose that they need.

Consuming too many carbohydrate-containing foods can raise your blood glucose way above normal; eating too few, can hurt your body by denying it the high quality energy that it needs. The timing of your meals is also important. The more that you eat at one meal, the more insulin you will need to utilize the energy from the breakdown of those foods. If you eat smaller portions throughout your day, you will not need as much insulin to bring down your blood sugar.

There are many types of diabetic diets. Some require a lot of measuring, some don't require any measuring at all. All are planned to provide you with the proper balance of carbohydrates, protein and fat, along with vitamins, minerals, fiber and other nutrients needed to keep you healthy. It would pay to have the guest give you some guide lines to what would be a suitable meal.

### **Gluten free (Celiac)**

Gluten is a protein found in all forms of wheat (including durum, semolina, and spelt), rye, oats, barley. When people with celiac disease consume gluten, the absorptive villi in the small intestine are damaged, preventing the absorption of many important nutrients. The long-term effect of untreated celiac disease can be life threatening. However, with a completely gluten-free diet, the intestinal lining will heal completely allowing most patients to live a normal, healthy life as long as they remain free of gluten in their diet. Even a small amount of gluten can cause symptoms to reoccur.

Gluten is hidden in many unsuspecting foods such as licorice, soy sauce, vinegar, some flavorings, most processed foods, self-basting turkeys, some cold cuts, and many prepared stocks and soups. It's also used as a binder in some pharmaceutical products and can be the starch in unidentified food starch, modified food starch, caramel coloring, and vegetable protein. Avoid products where the ingredients are of questionable origin or are listed as simply "natural flavorings, flavor extracts, or spice extracts."

**Products to be avoided in any form are;**

- Wheat
- Barley
- Rye
- Oats
- Spelt, semolina, millet, buckwheat
- Couscous, kamut
- Commercial salad dressing
- Instant coffee, malted milk,
- Canned stock, soup
- Avoid white vinegar, beer, ale and anything made from grain alcohol
- Curry powders, dry seasoning, some gravy mixes
- Oil that was previously used for frying breaded foods
- Canned tuna (except tuna containing only water and salt)

It would pay to have the guest give you some guide lines to what would be a suitable meal.

## **What Is a Food Allergy?**

A food allergy is an immune system response. It occurs when the body mistakes an ingredient in food -- usually a protein -- as harmful and creates a defense system (antibodies) to fight it. Food allergy symptoms develop when the antibodies are battling the "invading" food. The most common food allergies are peanuts, tree nuts (such as walnuts, pecans and almonds), fish, and shellfish, milk, eggs, soy products, and wheat.

## **What Are the Symptoms of a Food Allergy?**

Symptoms of a food allergy can range from mild to severe, and the amount of food necessary to trigger a reaction varies from person to person. Symptoms of a food allergy may include:

- Rash or hives
- Nausea
- Stomach pain
- Diarrhea
- Itchy skin
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Swelling of the airways to the lungs
- Anaphylaxis

## **What Is Food Intolerance?**

Food intolerance is a digestive system response rather than an immune system response. It occurs when something in a food irritates a person's digestive system or when a person is unable to properly digest or breakdown the food. Intolerance to lactose, which is found in milk and other dairy products, is the most common food intolerance.

## **What Are the Symptoms of Food Intolerance?**

Symptoms of food intolerance include:

- Nausea
- Stomach pain
- Gas, cramps, or bloating
- Vomiting
- Heartburn
- Diarrhea
- Headaches
- Irritability or nervousness