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**AllergyEats Conference: Experts Provide Actionable Tips for Restaurants,
Helping Food Service Pros Become More Allergy-Friendly**
Unique Food Allergy Conference Featured Best-in-Class Speakers, Protocols, Advice

Boston, MA, December 9, 2013 - [AllergyEats](#), the leading guide to allergy-friendly restaurants nationwide, recently held **The 2nd Annual AllergyEats Food Allergy Conference for Restaurateurs: What Every Restaurant Should Know About Food Allergies To Ensure Safety & Maximize Customer Engagement, Loyalty, and Revenue**. At the event, best-in-class experts provided valuable, actionable tips to make restaurants more allergy-friendly. Attendees, including restaurant owners, managers, and chefs, as well as other food service operators, received indispensable advice about implementing food allergy protocols to better accommodate guests with food allergies.

The conference featured notable speakers from the National Restaurant Association, P.F. Chang's China Bistro, Blue Ginger, Burton's Grill, MenuTrinfo, Kids With Food Allergies Foundation and AllergyEats, as well as prominent allergists from Massachusetts General Hospital and Boston Children's Hospital, who provided valuable information about accommodating food-allergic guests, reducing the fear around food allergies, building customer loyalty and profits, and other related food allergy issues.

"The AllergyEats team was thrilled to once again offer prestigious, knowledgeable speakers - including chefs, professional trainers, physicians and more - at our 2nd Annual Food Allergy Conference for Restaurateurs. Attendees benefitted from hearing our experts' advice about food allergy protocols, as well as ways to boost food allergy training, improve communication, and avoid cross-contamination," said Paul Antico, Founder and CEO of AllergyEats, father of three food-allergic children and passionate food allergy advocate. "Attendees were also inspired by the business case in support of accommodating food allergic diners that, ultimately, leads to increased loyalty, revenue, and profits."

The experts' tips included:

- **Commit.** If owners, managers, and chefs commit to being food allergy friendly, their staff will following suit, making it happen. A restaurant won't become allergy friendly without this commitment from the top.
- **Train staff about food allergies.** Everyone working in food service should be thoroughly trained about food allergies and understand their organization's food allergy procedures. This issue should be emphasized as being tremendously important and positioned as, literally, a matter of life and death.
- **Create a food allergy protocol.** Servers should immediately ask all guests if anyone in their party has a food allergy. If yes, they should know exactly what to do: flag the order, communicate to the chef and manager, avoid cross-

contamination, etc. Everyone within the restaurant should understand - and follow - the protocol for every food-allergic guest.

- **Communicate.** The experts all agreed that communication is essential to becoming more allergy-friendly. Communicate clearly with the food-allergic guests to determine their trigger foods, with the chef to ensure the meal is being prepared properly, and with every member of the team who will be touching the order. Then reiterate to the guest, when serving their meal, that it's the allergy-friendly meal they ordered.
- **Develop detailed lists of ingredients.** Even the most allergy-aware chefs admitted that it can be difficult to recall every ingredient in every dish - especially during busy Saturday night service. They advised creating an internal database (such as a detailed spreadsheet) outlining the ingredients - separated out by components - in every dish. That way, the staff can see at-a-glance whether the meal contains food-allergic guests' food triggers.
- **Avoid cross contamination.** Use clean utensils, cutting boards, pots, pans and plates for food-allergic guests. For example, don't use a knife to chop almonds and then use that same knife to chop vegetables for a guest with tree nut allergies. Designate a separate area of the grill, if possible, for allergy-friendly meals. Also be aware of other sources of possible cross contamination, such as high chairs, sponges, fryers and dish buckets.
- **Designate certain equipment as allergy-friendly.** While you'll be using clean utensils, cutting boards and other equipment for each food-allergic guest, some equipment - such as fryers and woks - is more difficult to sanitize during typical meal service. Therefore, designate specific allergy-friendly equipment for nut-free, seafood-free, etc. meals.
- **Recognize curveballs.** Many foods have alternative names. For instance, casein and whey are dairy, and ingredients like rye and barley contain gluten. Trigger foods can be "hidden" in unexpected places - such as a barbeque sauce containing nuts, and soy sauces containing gluten - so read every label, every time.
- **Recognize the business benefits of becoming allergy-friendly.** Restaurant owners can significantly boost profits and customer loyalty by becoming allergy-friendly. There's huge power in the "veto vote" - typically, the food-allergic diner makes the decision about where the entire party will eat. Accommodating restaurants will gain the business from the food-allergic diner and from the rest of that person's party, as well. If accommodated correctly, the food-allergic diner is more likely to return (with more guests) than a non-food-allergic diner.
- **Be honest.** If you can't confidently accommodate guests' food allergies, be upfront about it so they can choose to dine elsewhere. They'll appreciate the honesty and save you from a bad online review.

The conference, which was held recently in Boston, featured an impressive panel of experts, including:

- Ming Tsai, James Beard Award-Winning Chef, Owner of Blue Ginger and Blue Dragon, Television Host, Cookbook Author, Food Allergy Advocate

- Michael Moomjian, Director, Quality Assurance & Food Safety at P.F. Chang's China Bistro
- Kevin Harron, Founder, President and CEO, Burtons Grill
- William L. Weichelt, Director, ServSafe for the National Restaurant Association
- Betsy Craig, Founder/CEO, MenuTrinfo
- Lynda Mitchell, President, Kids With Food Allergies Foundation
- Dr. Wayne Shreffler, Head of the Food Allergy Center at Mass General Hospital
- Dr. Michael Pistiner, Pediatric Allergist for Harvard Vanguard Medical Associates and Voluntary Instructor of Pediatrics at Boston Children's Hospital
- Paul Antico, Founder/CEO of AllergyEats, food allergy advocate, father of three food-allergic children

"The Food Allergy Conference was filled with extremely valuable information for food service industry professionals. Our panelists covered a variety of important topics and conference attendees raved about the high caliber of speakers and the constructive, easy-to-implement tips they learned at the event," Antico continued. "Attendees also enjoyed the opportunity to mix and mingle with the speakers, other attendees, sponsors, and vendors."

This conference was sponsored by [Mylan Specialty L.P.](#), the [National Restaurant Association](#), the [Massachusetts Restaurant Association](#), [MenuTrinfo](#), and [the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America](#).

Plans are already in the works for another AllergyEats Food Allergy Conference for Restaurateurs to be held in 2014. Details will soon be available at www.allergyeats.com/conference.

About AllergyEats

[AllergyEats](#), a free, peer-based website and smartphone app, is dramatically improving the way food-allergic and gluten intolerant individuals find - and rate - allergy-friendly restaurants. The easy-to-use ratings and comment system allows food-allergic diners to instantly share feedback about their restaurant experiences. This peer-based ratings and review site lets people see at-a-glance which restaurants have been more willing and better able to accommodate special dietary requirements, allowing food-allergic diners to make more informed choices about where to dine.

AllergyEats lists more than 600,000 restaurants nationwide, which food allergic diners can rate. The site also offers information on restaurants' menus, certifications, web links, and more. The site, app and related social media forums help families with food allergies reduce the guesswork - and the anxiety - surrounding dining out with food allergies.

Most restaurant review sites include information about establishments' food, ambiance or service, but AllergyEats is singularly focused on food allergies, with peer reviews

spotlighting where people with food allergies or intolerances have more comfortably eaten.

AllergyEats has been endorsed by highly-respected food, health and allergy organizations and individuals, including the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, Gluten Intolerance Group, Massachusetts Restaurant Association, Chef Ming Tsai, Chef Joel Schaefer and more. AllergyEats was selected as the About.com 2012 Readers' Choice Award winner for best Food Allergy App. The AllergyEats smartphone app also won a Web Health Award and was honored as one of Healthline's Top Ten Food Allergy Apps. For more information, please visit www.AllergyEats.com.

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