

AllergyEats Applauds Allergy-Friendly Restaurants, Spotlights What Accommodating Restaurants Have In Common

AllergyEats, the Biggest & Fastest Growing Source for Finding Allergy-Friendly Restaurants, Helps Diners Find Accommodating Restaurants

BOSTON, MA (October 24, 2011) – What do restaurants like Legal Sea Foods, P.F. Chang's, Not Your Average Joe's and Blue Ginger have in common? These chain and independent restaurants take great pride in accommodating diners with food allergies and intolerances by carefully implementing food allergy protocols and procedures. As a result, they've all gotten high allergy-friendliness ratings on AllergyEats (www.allergyeats.com), the biggest and fastest growing online source for finding allergy-friendly restaurants.

"Dining out with food allergies can be frustrating and scary, but a growing number of restaurants are doing a terrific job of accommodating food-allergic guests, making the experience of dining out more comfortable and enjoyable," said Paul Antico, Founder of AllergyEats and father of three food-allergic children. "Restaurants like Legal Sea Foods and Clyde's have high AllergyEats allergy-friendliness ratings because they've implemented a variety of safety procedures and policies around serving food-allergic guests. I applaud them for being so accommodating and progressive about this issue."

While actual policies vary among restaurants, there are certain steps that the most allergy-friendly restaurants take to ensure they're accommodating guests with dietary restrictions, including:

- **Communicating** – Restaurants that truly understand food allergies know that the most important first step is communication. Some guests have multiple allergies, and some food allergies can be life-threatening. Staff at accommodating restaurants engage guests in dialogue, asking questions about their dietary restrictions and carefully communicating these needs to the chef and anyone else that will be handling their food.
- **Training and educating staff** – Allergy-friendly restaurants make sure that every employee – including servers, kitchen staff and managers – is well-trained about food allergies and the restaurant's specific cautionary procedures. It's important for the staff to be properly educated so they'll ask guests the right questions about their food restrictions, understand how the food is prepared, and know how to avoid cross-contamination, ensuring there's no contact between a guest's meal and their allergy "trigger foods." When employees are properly educated and trained, they're able to prepare and serve meals that food-allergic guests can comfortably enjoy.
- **Knowing the ingredients** – Employees of accommodating restaurants have detailed ingredient lists for every item on the menu, allowing them to carefully and accurately answer guests' questions. These restaurants only work with vendors that list all ingredients in their products (such as sauces), knowing that they can't sell or serve a product unless they know exactly what's in it.
- **Avoiding cross-contamination** – Allergy-friendly restaurants always use clean, sanitized utensils, cutting boards, pans, dishes and surfaces when preparing a meal for a food-allergic guest. That way, they can be sure that their shellfish-allergic guest's chicken was not cooked

in a pan that had previously sautéed shrimp, knowing that this could cause a severe allergic reaction. Some restaurants also maintain separate fryers, ensuring that they're not cooking French fries in oil that was contaminated by an allergen.

- **Customizing meals** – Restaurants should be willing to prepare customized meals for their food-allergic guests. If a guest is allergic to dairy and can't have pasta Alfredo, the chef may suggest a primavera or red sauce without cream, butter or cheese. And accommodating restaurants will go off-menu to create appetizing meals for children, as well. If the chicken tenders are fried in peanut oil, perhaps they could grill chicken instead for a peanut-allergic child. Not Your Average Joe's restaurants cook their meals from scratch and are very careful about – and aware of – every ingredient that they use, happily substituting ingredients for food-allergic customers.
- **Offering gluten-free options** – Millions of people have celiac disease or gluten intolerance and are unable to digest gluten, meaning they must avoid “traditional” bread, pasta and other foods. The list of restaurants providing gluten-free options is (thankfully) on the rise, as an increasing number of restaurants, like Uno's, are offering gluten-free pastas, pizzas and other meals. Legal Sea Foods even offers gluten-free rolls and croutons.
- **Double-checking orders** – Some restaurants have color-coded systems, with certain dishes and pans designated for food-allergic guests. Others insist that the chef or manager personally deliver the food-allergic guests' meals to their table, to avoid mix-ups. Accommodating restaurants have a variety of “safety checkpoints” to reduce errors and create safer meals.
- **Creating a “guest friendly” culture** – Restaurants that get high AllergyEats allergy-friendliness ratings tend to be more accommodating in general, willing to create special meals – and experiences – for their guests, regardless of whether they have food allergies. These restaurateurs realize that happy customers will come back, provide positive word-of-mouth referrals and rate them highly on AllergyEats. Being allergy-friendly is also good for a restaurant's bottom line. Millions of Americans – or roughly 5% of the general population – have known food allergies or gluten intolerance, and restaurateurs should recognize the tremendous spending power of this community and their circle of family and friends.

“In my professional life, running AllergyEats, and in my personal life, dining out with my food-allergic children, I've seen firsthand that some restaurants are genuinely concerned about the health and safety of their guests and are very willing to accommodate food-allergic diners,” Antico explained. “And those are the restaurants we visit and recommend to others.”

“Whenever people dine out, whether their experience was positive, negative or somewhere in between, we hope they'll take just a minute to rate the restaurant on AllergyEats, using the core website (www.allergyeats.com) or the new, free app (available at iTunes and the Android store). This valuable feedback helps the entire food allergy and intolerance community make more informed decisions about where to dine out – and which restaurants to avoid,” Antico continued.

AllergyEats is a free, user-friendly resource that provides valuable peer-based feedback about how well (or poorly) restaurants accommodate the needs of food-allergic customers. 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 and where they've encountered challenges.

AllergyEats – and the new AllergyEats app – lists well over 600,000 restaurants nationwide, which users can rate. The peer ratings and feedback allow food-allergic and gluten intolerant diners to quickly and easily find restaurants that will more likely cater to their special dietary requirements – and avoid the ones that won't. Users can easily access information for many restaurants such as menus (including gluten-free menus), allergen lists, nutrition information, certifications, web links, directions and more.

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 and more. For more information, please go to www.AllergyEats.com.

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