



Author Gavin Buckett

Hidden Allergens

In Australia, the number of people with a food allergy has doubled in the past five years. I have previously written about food allergens a couple of times, but if you missed those articles, the main ingredients that account for 90% of all allergic reactions in Australia are:

- Eggs
- Milk
- Peanuts
- Tree nuts
- Sesame seeds
- Fish
- Crustaceans
- Wheat
- Soy
- Sulphites

Many businesses aren't aware that it's a legal requirement, as stated in the FSANZ Food Standards Code, that food businesses must be able to provide accurate information to their customers on the allergens that are contained in the food that they serve. In the case of pre-packaged food, ingredient and allergen information is printed on the label, and while you aren't required to provide that level of detail to your customers, you do still need to be able to tell customers what's in the food you're serving, no matter how small the amount. When I deliver food allergen training for our clients, I have lots of examples of hidden or unexpected allergens where we try and work out which of the main allergens listed above are contained in the product.

The examples that I use include coconut milk, Worcestershire sauce, satay sauce, soy sauce and bread crumbs. I use these examples to highlight how important it is to look at the ingredients in such items, as they are then being used to prepare customers' meals.

You must know what ingredients you've added to the food, as well as the ingredients that are in the ingredients you're adding. The FSANZ Food Standards Code calls these items compound ingredients.

There's a resource that's been put together by the Allergen Bureau, its stake holders and their subscribers that indicates the items that the collective food industry has found, similar to these food items. It lists the hidden allergens that are a consolidation of information supplied by our members and other food industry stakeholders about where they've found unexpected allergens. The *Unexpected Allergens in Food* document can be found at the www.allergenbureau.net website (click on *Resources* then *Links*). I hope you find it helpful.

Until next time...

Eat well. Eat safe!

Gavin Buckett

Founder and Managing Director
The Gourmet Guardian Pty Ltd

web www.australianfoodsafety.com.au
email admin@gourmetguardian.com.au
phone 1800 366 372

Resources

The Allergen Bureau has regular updates on allergens. If you are interested in them, you can subscribe to their newsletter. That is how I found out about this resource. Their website is www.allergenbureau.net

Training

We have been delivering allergen training (including The Victorian Department of Health, local councils, hospitals, Simplot Australia's staff and for private businesses) since 2004. If you want to see any of the resources I indicated above, in a course delivered for your company, please contact Sarah at admin@gourmetguardian.com.au or on 1800 FOOD SAFETY. We will give a free allergen training CD for all Food 4 Thought customers. Just tell Sarah.



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