

SOP: Special Dietary Needs and Allergen Handling Procedures

Purpose

This SOP defines **special dietary needs and allergen handling procedures**, focusing on the identification, accommodation, and management of dietary restrictions and allergies within food service environments. The objective is to ensure the safety and well-being of individuals with special dietary requirements by maintaining rigorous standards throughout food preparation and service.

Scope

This SOP applies to all food service staff, supervisors, and management involved in the storage, preparation, cooking, serving, and labeling of food items.

Responsibility

- **Food Service Staff:** Follow allergen protocols and report any concerns immediately.
- **Supervisors and Managers:** Ensure staff are trained and compliant with SOP requirements.

Definitions

- **Allergen:** A substance capable of triggering an allergic response.
- **Special Dietary Needs:** Requirements based on allergies, intolerances, medical conditions, or personal/religious preferences.

Procedures

1. **Identification of Special Dietary Needs**
 - Collect and document dietary restrictions from consumers during ordering or registration.
 - Update records regularly and communicate changes to relevant staff.
2. **Ingredient Labeling**
 - Label all food items with a complete list of ingredients and highlight common allergens (e.g., nuts, dairy, eggs, gluten, soy, fish, shellfish, sesame).
 - Verify labels for accuracy prior to service.
3. **Cross-Contamination Prevention**
 - Store allergen-free and allergen-containing items separately.
 - Use color-coded utensils and equipment for allergen-free food preparation.
 - Sanitize work surfaces, utensils, and hands before preparing food for individuals with special dietary needs.
4. **Staff Training**
 - Provide initial and ongoing allergen awareness training to all staff.
 - Train staff on specific procedures for accommodating dietary restrictions and responding to allergy-related emergencies.
5. **Communication with Consumers**
 - Clearly display allergen and dietary information at the point-of-service and on menus.
 - Encourage consumers to communicate dietary needs to staff and provide contact information for questions.
6. **Emergency Response**
 - Maintain accessible first aid supplies and epinephrine auto-injectors (as authorized).
 - Train staff in recognizing and responding to allergic reactions, including when and how to summon emergency medical help.
 - Document and report all incidents involving allergic reactions according to policy.

Record Keeping

- Maintain updated logs of consumer dietary needs, allergen incidents, and staff training records.

Review and Revision

- Review this SOP at least annually or after any significant incident to ensure best practices and compliance.

References

- FDA Food Code
- Local Health Authority Regulations
- Allergen management guidelines from recognized organizations