

A Brief Overview

Special Diet Possibilities



**“It's not about what you can't eat....
it's about ALL the things in the world you CAN.”**

- Sunshine
Special Diet Chef,
International Foods Culinary Consultant

BASIC FOOD ALLERGEN / ALLERGY AWARENESS

Practice prevention

* Always know what you are eating and drinking, especially when going out to dinner or experimenting with foreign foods. If your questions are not answered to your liking, abstain. Example: Couscous is a pasta that is made differently in different countries, even though it shares a name. In the Morocco and Middle East, it is made from wheat or semolina. In some west African countries Couscous is made with millet and in others it is made with cassava.

Know about hidden food allergens

* Some food allergens may be well hidden when used as ingredients in certain dishes. Example: In some foods, dried crushed shellfish can be used as breading on fried foods or items like fish cakes.

Be proactive when dining out

* It should be more than just avoiding food choices based on a restaurant's menu description. You'll need to ask specific questions about how the item is prepared as well as it's ingredients.

Example: Call ahead and try to speak to the Chef, Sous Chef, Kitchen manager, Restaurant Manager during non-busy times to discuss suitable menu options for you. It'll be worth it. You can educate the restaurant's staff on how to prepare themselves and think about your needs and the needs of others. Another perspective - it will save you the trip and disappointment should they not be able to accommodate your needs.

Read and reread again

* Even though a food product may have been safe the last time you purchased or consumed it, it's possible that the ingredients have changed or the label has been updated.

Identify your allergy (for the benefit of yourself and for others)

* Wear a medical alert bracelet that describes your allergy and carry an alert card in your wallet or purse.

These items are available over-the-counter at most drugstores, many pharmacies and can be purchased online.

Example: www.MedicAlert.org * www.creativemedicalid.com * www.americanmedical-id.com

Prepare to counteract a reaction

* Talk with your doctor about whether you should carry an emergency medication in case of an allergic reaction.

Example: Make a detailed step-by-step list of what to do, including medications, in the event of a reaction.

Provide this list to babysitters, teachers, care-takers, parents of friends, etc.

The BIG 8 (in the US)

Chicken eggs

Contribution(s) in cooking and baking:

- binding agent (holds together)
- fat source (from yolk)
- protein source (from whites)
- structure, body, texture, flexibility
- moisture
- colour
- shine (on surface of breads, etc.)

Common substitutes:

- tofu
- mashed fruit
- starch or starch mixtures (like Tapioca starch/flour, Arrowroot flour or Egg Replacer)

Cow dairy

Contribution(s) in cooking and baking:

- moisture
- fat source (depending on milk type)

Common substitutes:

- Rice Milk
- Coconut Milk
- Hemp Milk
- Nut Milks
- Soy Milk
- Water

Peanuts

Contribution(s) in cooking and baking:

- Fat content (oil)
- Body, texture, structure, flavour

Common substitutes:

- Nut butters (for example - almond, cashew, etc.)
- Sunflower seed butter (my favourite substitute)
- corn nuts
- dehydrated
- peas
- seeds

Tree Nuts

Contribution(s) in cooking and baking:

- fat source (depending on type)
- texture, body
- fiber, protein
- flavour

Common substitutes:

- corn nuts
- dehydrated peas
- seeds

Fish and Shellfish

Contribution(s) in cooking and baking:

- protein source
- flavour
- texture

Common substitutes:

- there are several 'mock' tuna recipes online. Try a couple to find which is best for you.
- use seaweed for oceanic flavour in recipes (ie. Kombu, Wakame, Arame, Sushi Nori, etc.)
- crumbs from breads or crushed chips (when used as batter)

Wheat

Contribution(s) in cooking and baking:

- protein source
- flavour
- texture, structure
- colour
- satiety

Common substitutes:

- Flours, batters, etc. use:
 - bean flours - Garbanzo bean (a.k.a. Besan)
 - grain flours - Teff flour, Quinoa, Amaranth, Millet
 - starches - Potato, Arrowroot, Tapioca, Kuzu
 - ground nuts - Hazelnut, Almond, Walnut
 - seeds - Mesquite flour

- Hot Cereals use:

Wholegrain millet, Wholegrain amaranth, Wholegrain teff, Wholegrain cornmeal, Buckwheat, Brown rice

Other common allergens

* Nightshades

Potatoes, tomatoes, sweet and hot peppers, eggplant, tomatillos, pepinos, pimentos, paprika, cayenne, and Tabasco sauce are classified as nightshade foods.

There are literally 1000s of plants that are considered to be a part of this family. To give you an idea of the diversity associated with this group of plants, consider the fact that tobacco, morning glory, potato, and tomato are all classified as nightshades.

* Corn and corn products (Grits, HFCS, Cornstarch, etc.)

See this site for more information on corn allergies: <http://www.cornallergens.com/list/corn-allergen-list.php>

* Seeds

See this site for more information on seed allergies (for example: Sesame Seed)
<http://www.faiusa.org/?page=seeds>

The following ingredients and foods indicate the presence of sesame seed protein:

Gomasio (sesame salt)

Halvah

Hummus

Tahini

Seeds

Sesame oil (also known as gingelly or til oil)

Vegetable oil

* Baked goods (breads, buns, rolls, crackers, cookies, pastries, bagels, etc.) and certain cereals (e.g., muesli) often contain sesame and other seeds (e.g., poppy, sunflower).

* Many snack foods (e.g., trail mix, granola bars, protein bars, candy, rice cakes, pretzels, bagel chips or pita chips) contain sesame seeds.

* Sesame seeds may be found in a wide variety of other foods, including margarine, sauces, dips, soups, salad dressing, processed meats, and vegetarian burgers.

* Bakeries and ethnic restaurants (such as Middle Eastern and Asian) are considered high-risk for people with sesame allergy due to the common use of sesame and the risk of cross-contamination, even if a sesame-free item is ordered.

Non-food sources of sesame seeds include health and beauty aids (cosmetics, soaps, hair care products, etc.), certain drugs and ointments, pet food, and livestock feed.

ONLINE RESOURCES:

World's Healthiest Foods

A great online source to learn more about foods and their relationships to the human diet:
<http://www.whfoods.com/>

The Calgary Allergy Network

This site has provided a 'Botanical Food Family List' to help you classify the groupings of potentially allergic foods
<http://www.calgaryallergy.ca/Articles/English/botanical.htm>

Food Allergy Initiative

<http://www.faiusa.org>

SHAMELESS SELF-PROMOTION:

Sunshine is:

- * Chef
- * Bake-tress
- * Culinary Consultant and Educator for Special Diets
- * Special Diet Food Expert, International Cuisine
- * Sustainable Urban Grower
- * Ethnobotanic Researcher
- * Student of Nutritional Anthropology

web:

SunshinesBest.com
YourSafeKitchen.net

email:

itismyrealname@gmail.com

blog:

itismyrealname.INFO
DreadlockNomad.INFO (Follow me on my research adventure around the world)