

Wisconsin Food Code Fact Sheet



Food Allergen Requirements for Retailers

A food allergy is a serious medical condition affecting 32 million people in the U.S., including 1 in 13 children. To prevent allergic reactions, individuals with food allergies rely on accurate ingredient information and safe food handling procedures. Retail food establishments must follow state and federal laws to help protect the health of individuals with food allergies.

Who is required to train employees about allergens?

The person in charge is responsible for training food employees about the serious nature of food allergies including allergic reactions, anaphylaxis, and death. Employees must understand the following:

- The eight major food allergens.
- Food allergen ingredient identities and labeling.
- How to avoid cross contamination during food preparation and service.
- Food allergy awareness as it relates to their assigned duties.

What are the major food allergens?

- **Peanuts**
- **Fish:** You must specify the species, such as bass, flounder, cod, etc.
- **Milk:** Such as butter, buttermilk, cheese, whey, and yogurt.
- **Eggs:** Such as albumin.
- **Tree nuts:** You must specify the type of nut, such as almonds, pecans, walnuts, etc.
- **Wheat** – Barley, oats, rye, and malt may indicate the presence of gluten, but you do not need to label it as wheat.

- **Crustacean shellfish:** You must specify the species, such as crab, lobster, shrimp, etc. Molluscan shellfish (such as oysters, clams, mussels, or scallops) are not considered a major allergen.
- **Soybeans** – Expeller pressed, extruded, or cold pressed soy oil does contain soy protein and must be listed on the label as an allergen. Highly refined oils derived from a major food allergen (soy or soybean oil) may be exempted from the allergen requirements since it may be highly processed to reduce the level of the allergen.

How must allergens be listed on a food label?

If a food product contains one of the major food allergens, even in the colors, flavors, or spice blends, the label must list the allergen in the ingredient section in plain language. For example, butter must include milk listed after the ingredient or as a statement such as “contains milk” at the end of the ingredient section. If more than one major allergen is present in the food item, the statement must list all major allergen ingredients contained in that food item.

What is cross contamination and how do I prevent it?

Cross contamination is when food prep equipment comes into contact with an allergen. You cannot remove allergens through cooking, deep frying, or sanitizing. This is why separate equipment, and sometimes even a separate facility, must be used to prepare food that includes a food allergen.

What kitchen items should I check to prevent cross-contamination?

- Cutting boards
- Mixing bowls
- Electronic equipment
- Fryers
- Oven mitts and aprons
- Pots and pans
- Storage containers
- Utensils

What are the symptoms of an allergic reaction?

Symptoms of an allergic reaction may appear minutes or hours after the person has eaten the food and can include the following:

- Tingling sensation in the mouth
- Swelling of the tongue and throat
- Difficulty breathing
- Hives
- Vomiting
- Abdominal cramps
- Diarrhea
- Drop in blood pressure
- Loss of consciousness
- Death

Where can I learn more about the Wisconsin Food Code?

More information is available at:

- Food allergens infographic:
<https://datcp.wi.gov/Documents/FoodAllergiesInfographic.pdf>
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
 - Guidance for Industry Questions and Answers Regarding Food Allergens (Edition 4): <https://www.fda.gov/regulatory-information/search-fda-guidance-documents/guidance-industry-questions-and-answers-regarding-food-allergens-edition-4>
 - Food Allergens/Gluten-Free Guidance Documents and Regulatory Information: <https://www.fda.gov/food/guidance-documents-regulatory-information-topic-food-and-dietary-supplements/food-allergensgluten-free-guidance-documents-regulatory-information>
- Other food code fact sheets:
https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/FoodCode.aspx
- Wisconsin State Legislature:
<https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admincode/atcp/055/75>

