



ChainWide EMAILS

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Update: Peanut Oil and Allergen Risk

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Since CFA made the switch to cooking waffle fries in peanut oil, you may have seen an increase in customer's questions. Below is information to educate you and help answer customer questions.

The peanut oil used by CFA is a heat processed fully refined peanut oil (refined, bleached, and deodorized). This means the proteins in the oil are stripped out during the processing. When someone has an allergy to a specific food such as nuts, the protein in the food is what causes the allergic reaction. Once that protein is removed, the risk of ever having a reaction to that food (no protein = no allergic reaction) drops significantly.

The Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act was recently signed into law by President Bush and becomes effective January 1, 2006. The bill requires that labels clearly state the presence of any of the eight major food allergies (milk, egg, peanut, tree nut, fish, shellfish, wheat, and soy). For instance, if a product contains whey as an ingredient, it must be labeled that it contains milk. Within this legislation there are a few exceptions to the rule. One is that highly refined oils, such as peanut oil (type used by CFA), are not considered a "major food allergen," and therefore do not have to be labeled as such.

According to the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska Food Allergy Research & Resource Program, highly refined oils "do not demonstrate a hazard to allergic individuals." There have been many well-designed studies to test the effect of highly refined oils on allergic individuals, and the majority of these "support the position that refined oils are safe for the food allergic-allergic population to consume¹." Also, according to the International Food Information Council Foundation, highly refined (heat solvent extracted) oils are "non allergenic²."

Education is the best tool for allergenic customers. Never tell the allergenic customer that it is okay for them to eat CFA products. The customer should have the correct information so they can make an informed decision. No one can ever guarantee that all peanut oil is completely free of proteins. CFA suppliers have very rigorous standards for producing the peanut oil and we can state with 99.9% confidence that the oil used by CFA is safe. However, if Operators are buying oil from a secondary supplier other than Cargill and ADM, we can not make the same statement. We urge you to only buy peanut oil through MBM and make sure it is from one of CFA's two suppliers. Even buying peanut oil from a warehouse club has some added risk. Gourmet (cold pressed) peanut oil has protein remaining, so it will cause an allergic reaction to anyone with a peanut allergy. All team members need to be aware that CFA now uses exclusively peanut oil so they can better inform the customer.

Additional information can be found on @CFA (Indexes- Marketing- Nutrition and Allergens) including educational materials to help educate team members. This information is important to review with your team so they can help customers make an informed choice. It is best to have team members refer an allergic customer to the Operator or team leader for more information. The information listed contained in this email is also available on @CFA so you can print and review with customers.

References:

1. Hefle, SL, Taylor SL. Allergenicity of Edible Oils, Prepared for: Institute of Shortening and Edible Oils Inc. September 1, 1998.
2. Used with permission from International Food Information Council Foundation Publication- Questions and Answers About Food Allergy. Available at: <http://www.ific.org/publications/qa/allergyqa.cfm>. Accessed August 4, 2004.