

Managing Dietary Requirements at Events: Checklist for Venues/Caterers

Managing dietary requirements is no longer optional – it’s a core part of delivering a professional event. This checklist is designed specifically for venues and caterers, helping you work more closely with PCOs and event planners to ensure expectations are clear, information is accurate, and delegates receive a seamless, inclusive experience.

At the Enquiry Level:		
Has this event been run before? (Y/N)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If yes, what diets needed catering? What was the ratio? • If not, is there any data from a previous event that can be shared? 	
Are any of the diets life-threatening?	<p>If so, how will this be managed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devise an emergency plan with the organiser <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Consider having a KittMedical subscription – Ask to be connected with those with life-threatening allergies to amend/create a bespoke menu. – Ask again about their emergency plan - is the adrenaline pen in date? • How will airborne allergies be managed? 	<p>The 14 main allergens must be declared under UK Law. These are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Celery: Found in salads, stocks, and soups. 2. Cereals containing gluten: Present in products like bread, pasta, and baked goods. 3. Crustaceans: Includes shrimp, prawns, and scampi. 4. Eggs: Commonly found in cakes, mayonnaise, and some pasta dishes. 5. Fish: Can be present in sauces and some meat products. 6. Lupin: Used to make flour found in some bread, pastries, and pasta. 7. Milk: Found in cheese, butter, and other dairy products. 8. Molluscs: Examples are mussels, oysters, snails, and squid. 9. Mustard: Found in mustard seeds, powders, and sauces. 10. Tree nuts: Includes almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, and cashews.

		<p>11. Peanuts*: A common ingredient in peanut butter and some sweets.</p> <p>12. Sesame seeds: Found in bread, tahini, and hummus.</p> <p>13. Soya beans: Present in products like tofu, soy milk, and some sauces.</p> <p>14. Sulphur dioxide and sulphites: A preservative used in dried fruits, wines, and processed meats.</p> <p>*Please note peanuts are not a nut, but a legume, and pine nuts are a seed.</p> <p>Note: these ingredients may appear 'hidden' in some foodstuffs hidden, e.g. celery in stock powders; sulphites in wine; tree nuts in cereals; mustard in Asian pastes/sauces, etc.</p> <p>If unable to state clearly food is 'free from' consider using the words 'No intentionally added xxx products or xxx derived products, but there is the potential it may contain...'</p>
Is a separate preparation area with separate utensils required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If yes, where will this be? • Is a specialist caterer required? • What systems are in place to prevent cross-contact contamination? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase from approved suppliers only <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Advise the organiser of cost implications (e.g. kosher meals)
What and how will the labelling be displayed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A QR code may be an easy way to display a lot of information • Consider adding carbohydrate content info for diabetics 	See our list of icons in our Further Resources, Point 2 here.
When offering a site visit, consider including a tasting option	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This will be an excellent opportunity to showcase your catering in addition to your knowledge of dietaries, labelling, communications and impact 	
In the kitchen / conference office		
Has your supplier provided all the information needed?	Make sure they supply you with updates, especially on any regular orders.	

<p>Are all staff trained, including casuals?</p>	<p>Training every member of staff, including casual employees, is essential to managing dietary requirements effectively. It is at this point that things can often go. Make sure all staff can answer attendees' questions accurately and with confidence, and that everyone is updated on any changes</p> <p>A designated senior catering manager should remain on-site for the duration of the event to oversee service and support staff and serve as the point of escalation for any issues.</p>	<p>Could someone be appointed as the dietary requirements champion? If so, could they wear or carry something visible so guests can easily identify them?</p>
<p>Are recipes being created & followed appropriately?</p>	<p>As noted above, ensuring staff have the right skills, knowledge and understanding is critical to managing dietary requirements. Do the catering staff understand the implications of cross-contamination?</p>	
<p>What process is in place to ensure the right person receives the right dish?</p>	<p>Table plans are the most effective, but people may swap seats, change their minds, etc. Possible solutions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having servers serve just one dish that they are fully knowledgeable about and know exactly what ingredients and preparation methods have been used. • Servers clarify the dietary requirements back to the customer if/when serving the meal – 'this is vegan/gluten free option'. • QR codes that list the ingredients in each dish – they don't necessarily have to all be at the buffet station, but could be added to a conference app. • Using different coloured plates or changing the shape of the main element, e.g., a fish cake in a round shape versus a vegan option which is square in shape. • Adding a 'flag' with the dietary requirement clearly labelled on it. 	
<p>What processes are in place to avoid/minimise:</p>	<p>Last-minute changes/substitutions with deliveries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volumes of food, range of menus and spread of locations • Allergies outside of the 14 • Ambiguous information • Surprises 	

What is the process to collect and record accurate and detailed dietary requirements?	'No fish/nuts, gluten, etc. is too little detail as it does not outline the severity.	
Ensure all communication is clear & documented	This is beyond labelling – this includes communications with the event organiser, the attendees, staff, suppliers, other users in the venue, e.g. other event attendees	
If using Chef's choice, could you give an idea of which dishes these could be?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which menus have been created in the past that were well received? • How well can the dishes be adapted to accommodate dietary requirements? 	
Managing non-alcoholic/alcoholic food and drink	Have separate stations, and potentially have large signposts indicating which is which	
Encourage sustainable menu options	Could one day or one element of the event, e.g., the welcome reception, be dedicated to vegan or vegetarian catering?	
Offer packed lunches or other takeaway options for attendees who are observing Ramadan		
Consider having the chef attend the event to share the menu, including where sourced and dietaries	This is a great way for attendees to meet one of the faces behind the scenes and gain a little more insight into your venue/organisation.	

Further resources:

1. [Glossary of dietary requirement terms](#)
2. [Registration Form to Collect Allergen Data](#): Credit to Levy
3. [Low / no alcohol drinks at events](#) - White paper by Club Soda and Desert Island Events
4. [The impact of weight loss injections on the hospitality industry](#)
5. [Neurodiversity in Events Checklist](#)
6. [EDI at Events](#)