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Is your restaurant staff properly trained on food allergens?

Australia leads the world in food allergies, yet most restaurants still aren’t trained to handle them safely.

By Maida Pineda July 7 2026 3 min read



Australia has been called the Food Allergy capital of the world, with its high rate of food allergies. According to Ingrid Roche, Senior Project Manager of National Allergy Council, “With 10% of infants, about 8% of 4- to 8-year-old children, and about 3% of adults having food allergies, restaurants will be dealing with them a lot. Restaurants need to keep their customers safe.”

A training gap in Australia’s kitchens

There is not enough training when it comes to food allergens in Australia. Roche explains: “All food handlers need to do some kind of food safety training. But the food allergen management content of the most of the current food handler courses is very, very minimal. Even the food allergen content for food safety supervisor training is very limited.”

To address this problem, the National Allergy Council consulted with people with food allergen management experience, food auditors, and industry experts to come up with a solution. “We’ve worked closely with industry to make this allergen training available because the regulatory bodies haven’t actually mandated allergen training as a specific food safety requirement in the courses seriously except for NSW. Food allergens is one of the four key areas registered training organisations must teach food safety supervisors in NSW.”

What the free course covers

This free hour-long online course on food allergen training covers the communication aspect of making sure everyone involved in serving the person with the food allergy know who the person is, what the food allergy is, how to ensure food is prepared properly without cross-contamination and the right meal is given to the right person. The training also includes what to do in an allergic reaction, a menu matrix that lists food allergens and whether it’s in your menu, reading labels accurately, how to label your menu, and practical management of preparing food.

Education and communication are key in food allergen management. Roche emphasises, “It is important for managers, supervisors, and owners of the restaurant to take the course, to give them the knowledge about food allergy management, as well as tools needed to set up procedures in their restaurant. We have a course for front-of-the-house staff and a course for cooks and chefs.”

A few big restaurant chains have purchased the course to put on their own learning management system. But smaller businesses can point their staff to the website. Once they complete the course, they can download a certificate to show management that they’ve done the course.

Building a culture of safety, not just compliance

Restaurants have a duty to serve safe food for their customers, and food allergies can be a hazard. But Roche assures us: “Having a welcoming way of dealing with people with allergies is good. If your staff is well-trained, you know what’s in your food, and you have food processes, it is possible to give people with food allergies a good dining experience.”

To access the free online training, head to <https://foodallergytraining.org.au/>

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