

## Dining Out—At the Restaurant

We want you to feel confident discussing your food allergies when you arrive at a restaurant. Taking the steps below can help you successfully place your order and communicate your needs, leading to an enjoyable and safe dining experience.

### Communicating with Restaurant Employees

Communication between restaurants and customers with food allergies is essential to a safe dining experience.

- Talk to everyone. The restaurant manager and wait staff should know about your food allergy. Remind a manager or the head waiter about your allergies before you are seated. Present your chef card and ask that it be shown to the chef.
- Ask what is in your dish and how it's prepared. Make sure your server understands what you are allergic to, and explain that cross-contact must be avoided. You may want to speak to the manager and the chef, just to be sure. Know what procedures a restaurant should follow to keep your food safe.
- Never be embarrassed if you feel you're not communicating effectively. If the wait staff doesn't seem to understand your situation, always trust your gut and seek out another staff member or manager. Sometimes, the safest choice is to avoid eating, enjoy the company of your friends, and find a safe meal somewhere else afterwards.
- If you have a good experience at a restaurant, tell the staff about it and go back. Reward excellent service and build a relationship.

### Meal Selection

- Keep it simple. If you have to ask a lot of complicated questions about the items on a menu, ordering more simple fare—like a baked potato, broiled chicken or steamed vegetables—may be the safest way to go.
- Avoid fried foods. Both the grill and the frying oil are ripe for cross-contact; it's best to avoid fried foods unless you know for sure that they are prepared safely.
- Be especially careful when ordering desserts, which are often a source of hidden allergens. Since many restaurants order their desserts from specialty shops, the staff may not be able to provide a complete list of ingredients. If in doubt, wait and have a safe dessert at home.