American Latex Allergy Association

Restaurant Letter: Version 2007

YOUR ADDRESS
Consumer Relations
CORPORATION OR RESTAURANT NAME & ADDRESS

Dear Consumer Relations Representative,

I am writing to inquire about your (corporation's; restaurant's) policy regarding the type(s) of gloves used for food preparation in your restaurant(s). We have a family member who has been diagnosed with an allergy to natural rubber latex and has been advised not to eat in restaurants where latex gloves are used to handle food.

(For restaurant chains or franchises: It is easier to patronize restaurants where we know a no-latex glove policy is mandated, rather than to have to call each restaurant individually - or to worry that individual management has changed glove selection since our last visit or inquiry. Knowing which corporations closely regulate their glove choices is especially helpful when we travel and are not familiar with local restaurants. Please advise.)

Should you be unfamiliar with this issue, anyone can become allergic to latex through repeated exposures to natural rubber latex (NRL), through either skin or mucosal contact or inhalation. Powdered NRL gloves have been repeatedly cited in the literature as a primary source of exposure, as the latex proteins in these gloves bind to the glove powder. As gloves are donned and removed, the powder becomes airborne and can settle on food, equipment, carpet and clothing. It can also be easily inhaled. Many sources say that this powder can remain airborne for up to 5 hours (Mayo Clinic), with others reporting for up to 12 hours (Academy of Dental Therapeutics and Stomatology). This increases employees' exposure to latex proteins, and is of concern to customers who are already latex-allergic or sensitive. As it has been estimated that up to 6.5% of the general population is allergic to latex, I would hope that this would be a concern to restaurants as well. Allergic symptoms can range from mild reactions (red, itching skin rash; runny nose) to very serious (hives, respiratory difficulties, intestinal cramps, anaphylactic shock).

Legislation was passed in Rhode Island in 2001, prohibiting latex gloves in food service. In Arizona and Oregon, the Departments of Health Services/Human Services have banned latex gloves in food service establishments. Wisconsin's Department of Health and Family Services has issued a memo updating th Food Code to "strongly discourage the use of latex gloves in food preparation". The Massachusetts Department of Public Health "recommends that latex gloves NOT be used in food establishments". OSHA, NIOSH and the FDA have all issued bulletins discouraging the use of powdered NRL gloves in the food service industry. A number of national corporations – Subway, Red Robin, and Outback Steak House, to name a few – do not allow the use of latex gloves to handle food in their restaurants. If latex gloves are used in your restaurant(s), please pass on this letter and the enclosed information to the appropriate executive who is involved in decisions regarding food handling. I

encourage your (restaurant/company) to become familiar with information regarding latex glove use and latex allergy, in order to make informed decisions about their effect on your customers and employees. Enclosed are several articles relating to this issue, which cite resources for additional information. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Documents

RESTAURANT_LETTER.pdf[1]
RESTAURANT_Letter_2007.doc[2]

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