

Allergens: Consumer expectations

How today's consumers engage with allergen information—and ways technology can help the out-of-home sector meet their expectations



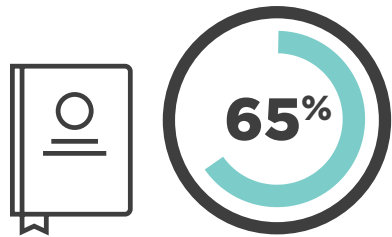
TECHNOLOGY

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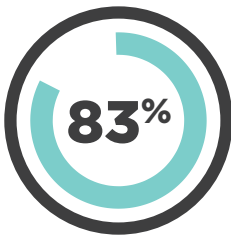
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Allergens: numbers to know



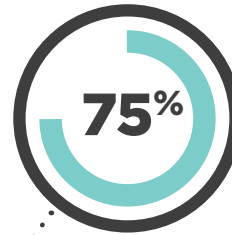
OF CONSUMERS **SEEK ADVANCE INFORMATION** ABOUT MENUS IN SOME FORM WHEN PLANNING TO EAT OUT



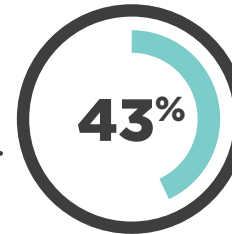
OF CONSUMERS EXPECT **ALLERGEN INFORMATION** TO BE AVAILABLE ONLINE



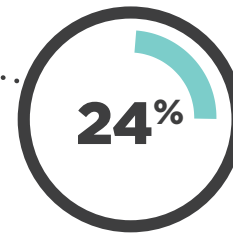
OF CONSUMERS SAY THEY ARE **SATISFIED WITH THE ACCURACY OF ONLINE MENU INFORMATION**



OF CONSUMERS EXPECT TO SEE **ALLERGEN SYMBOLS OR SIGNIFIERS ON MENUS**



OF CONSUMERS EXPECT ACCESS TO **TABLETS ON-SITE** TO HELP IDENTIFY FOOD THAT IS SAFE TO EAT



OF CONSUMERS SAY **PRINTED ON-SITE INFORMATION** GIVES THEM MOST CONFIDENCE IN THE ACCURACY OF ALLERGEN INFORMATION, MAKING IT THE MOST TRUSTED SOURCE



OF CONSUMERS EXPECT STAFF TO BE ABLE TO GIVE **VERBAL INFORMATION ABOUT ALLERGENS**

Consumers, allergens and menus: Five key insights

Public awareness of allergens is higher than ever, but what exactly do consumers expect from restaurants, pubs and bars now? GO Technology's exclusive research provides deep insights into their behaviour in the out-of-home sector.

1 Two thirds of consumers want menu information in advance

Advance information about menus, including specifics like allergens, has become an integral part of the planning process for diners. GO Technology's research shows that two thirds (**65%**) of consumers either always or sometimes seek out menu information ahead of a visit now.

2 Millennials are driving demand

Interest in advance information is significantly higher among young adults. Three quarters (**75%**) of those aged 18 to 34 say they look for it now—compared to just over half (**56%**) of those aged 55+. Women and Londoners are also more likely than average to seek out information.

3 Info is essential for those with dietary needs

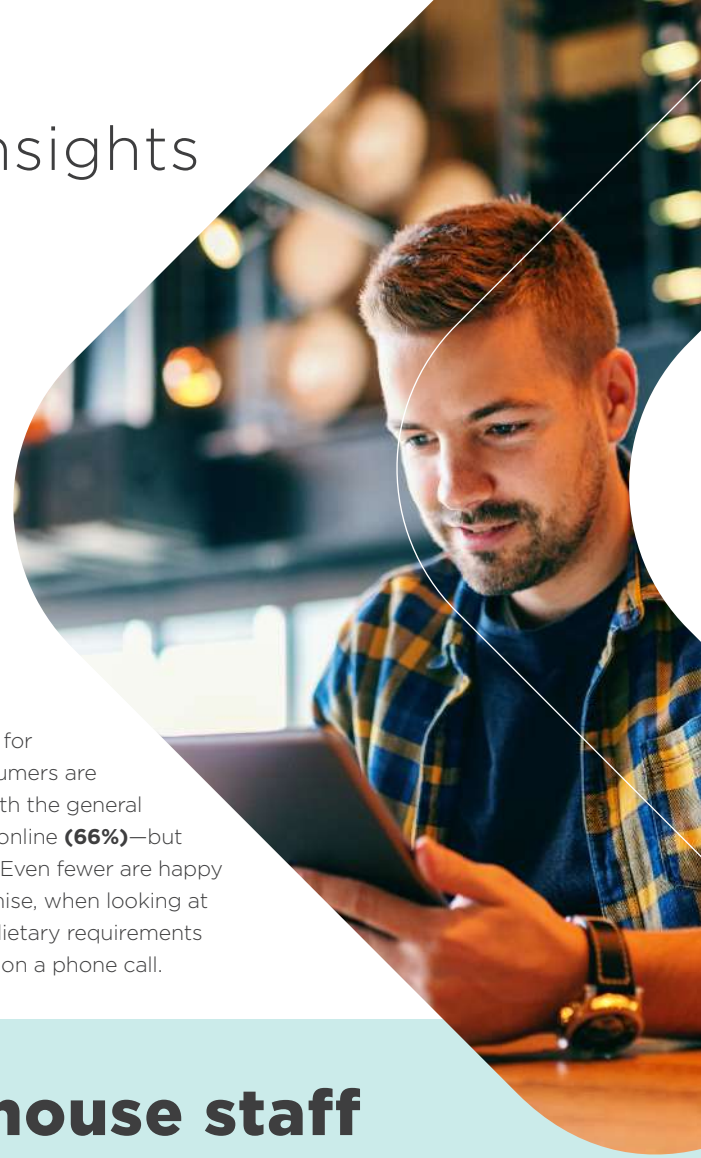
Consumers with dietary requirements—like vegan, vegetarian, dairy-free, gluten-free or nut-free—are naturally more inclined to seek menu information, and naturally more demanding about it. More than four in five (**83%**) consumers expect at least one resource with allergen information to be available online when they are researching where to eat.

4 Diners want at-table help too

While online information about menus is crucial, consumers still find it more convenient to access the facts they need when they are out and about. Three quarters (**74%**) say they are satisfied with the ease of availability of information while at a table or bar—more than those who say the same about online availability (**68%**).

5 More accuracy is needed

After several high-profile cases of allergic reactions in restaurants, all operators should be sensitive to the need for precise and comprehensive information. But not all consumers are happy with what they get. Many say they are satisfied with the general accuracy of menu information at a table or bar (**71%**) or online (**66%**)—but that leaves a significant number who don't feel satisfied. Even fewer are happy with the accuracy of information they get outside a premise, when looking at the menu (**59%**), or over the phone (**39%**). People with dietary requirements are especially sceptical about the accuracy of responses on a phone call.



Allergens and front-of-house staff


GO Technology's research shows that while diners require easy access to written information about allergens online and on menus, they also want help from the people who serve them.

Three quarters (**73%**) say they expect staff to be able to give verbal information about allergens—and nearly as many expect to see printed on-site material (**76%**). A smaller but still sizeable number (**44%**) expect managers or supervisors to know this information and come to a table to take orders if required.

This shows the need for businesses to equip front-of-house teams with accurate knowledge about allergens in the food they serve. It places an obligation on restaurants, bars and pubs to provide their staff with accurate, up-to-date information in a format that they can access quickly and easily. For operators who can provide that kind of detail on demand, it is a good opportunity to impress guests.



Seven ways to improve allergen strategies



How can restaurants, pubs and bars reassure their guests that they take food safety seriously?



1. Higher levels of engagement

GO Technology's research shows just how much consumers expect on allergen information now. Doing the legal minimum—like providing information about the 14 allergens—isn't always enough. These diners expect the brands they visit to be as concerned about allergens in the same way they are and want comprehensive information at all touchpoints of their journey with that brand.



2. Make the most of menus

Menu symbols and signifiers can be a quick and simple way to highlight allergen information—and three quarters (**75%**) of consumers expect to see them now. But they remain relatively under-used by many brands, suggesting there is an opportunity to deploy them to meet customer expectation and get a step ahead of the competition.



3. Staff knowledge

However much information is available in advance, it is clear that many consumers still rely on verbal messages about allergens. When asked about the methods that give them the most confidence about accuracy, more consumers choose verbal responses over menu signifiers. For operators, the big challenge here is to ensure that staff have access to information about allergens that can be easily communicated to guests—and that, it is, above all else 100% accurate.



4. One version of the truth

As this research makes clear, allergens present operators with a host of challenges. But technology can help to ease the headaches. Management systems can maintain details about ingredients and allergens, and push it out to different channels like EPoS, websites, apps and menus, and ensure that information is constantly updated and reliably accurate. Solid, tech-based systems can also support compliance, helping operators reduce the risk of failing to comply with current and future legislation around allergens.



5. Customer confidence

Tech can also play a big part in raising consumers' confidence levels. The GO Technology survey shows that at-table tablets and dynamic, filterable information on websites are just two of the ways to make it easier for staff and customers to identify dishes that are safe to eat. Those with dietary requirements are more likely to expect innovations like tablets than those who do not—but for now these are not commonplace.



6. Millennials focus

Allergen safety is important for all consumer groups but young adults are more likely to be engaged with this issue than older ones. Operators need to pay close attention to the way they communicate to millennials—and given that this generation is more tech savvy than any other, it demands engagement across many digital platforms.



7. Talk to suppliers

It's not just restaurant, pub and bar brands that need to take food safety seriously. Producers, manufacturers and suppliers all have a duty to pass allergen information along the supply chain—and if they are able to integrate it into operators' own systems, it makes it easier to relay the specific data that is required to keep track of allergens.

The view from CGA

'Food safety is a top concern for all businesses in the out-of-home food and drink sector, and the need for vigilance on allergens has never been greater. But as this GO Technology research shows, it's not just legal requirements that should be motivating operators to be concerned about this issue. Consumers want genuine engagement and comprehensive, accurate information about allergens—and they expect to be able to access it easily and on demand. From websites to menus to staff, brands need to be able to talk confidently about allergens and inspire confidence among their guests. If they can do so, there is an excellent opportunity to secure the respect and loyalty of the growing number of people with dietary requirements, and establish a competitive advantage.'

Karl Chessell, CGA Business Unit Director, Food and Retail

The view from Zonal

'This GO Technology report tells us how important it is for operators to invest in integrated technology. Recipe, menu and purchasing systems simply must be aligned in order to deliver the level of accurate and detailed information that today's consumers both need and expect. This approach will give the confidence needed by operators and customers alike in the accuracy of the information that often crucial decisions are being based upon. This is not only essential for building brand loyalty and earning confidence, respect and credibility with customers, but also for legislators and those seeking to enforce it.'

Helen McMillan, Director of Online Commerce, Zonal

About the data

This report is based on figures from Zonal and CGA's GO Technology survey, a sample of 5,000 nationally representative British consumers. All figures are taken from the Winter 2019 edition of the survey.



For further information on GO Technology, please contact info@zonal.co.uk