

Food Allergies and Celiac Disease

Azzip gets more feedback on how we handle guests with food allergies than almost any other area of our business.

Here is a positive example of feedback from a guest who has celiac disease:

“Tonight, my daughter was in there with our youth group. She ordered a gluten free pizza. The young lady that took her order took great care to thoroughly clean the counter before making her pizza. My daughter said she felt special. I don’t know her name but I wanted to give a shout out to your wonderful employee. Great job!”

Here is a negative example of feedback from a guest who has a life-threatening dairy allergy:

“We were given the wrong pizza (ordered a dairy free cheese pizza). The gentleman at the register said, “Here are your pizzas.” I went to the table, dropped off the stuff in my hands, realized I forgot my cup and as I walked back up to the counter realized his dairy free pizza was sitting next to the register. It was not there when I took the other two pizzas initially. I immediately went back to my table and my son had already taken a bite of the pizza. I took him outside, administered an epi pen and came back inside to get my things. I then took him to the ER to have him checked out where we spent approximately 2.5 hours.”

I share these examples to illustrate how important it is that we handle food allergies and diseases seriously. In some situations, it can quite literally be a life or death scenario. **If a customer trusts us enough to come and eat at Azzip with an allergy, we need to deliver every single time.** In the rest of this section we will lay out the framework for providing that safe and positive experience.

Set Up - Here are a few things that your store will need to ensure are in place in order to serve a safe allergen free pizza! These should all be kept together in a spot that is not on the line, but is close to the line and easily accessible to the employee on the cut station:

- Rolling cutters with a red handle or yellow tape.
- Extra spatulas
- Allergy black mats with a border
- Clean parchment paper kept in a labeled pizza box.



Disclaimer - **If a guest has very serious celiac disease, we cannot guarantee a fully gluten free pizza.** Flour particles are very small and can linger in the air with as much flour as we use at Azzip. So please notify guest that we cannot guarantee a fully gluten free pizza if they make you aware of their highly severe Celiac Disease or allergy to gluten.

The Start - If someone asks for a Gluten Free, we need to verify they are ordering it because it is a preference or because they have an allergy (even though we call it an allergy, Celiac Disease is just that, a disease not an allergy). If it is a preference, put it on a black mat like normal. If it is celiac disease or a severe sensitivity, follow these guidelines. These guidelines are also applicable to other allergies.

The Wipe Down - Use a clean towel and sanitizer water and wipe the whole make station down. Another good practice is to ask what sauce they want and wipe the bottle down as well. When finished remove gloves. Change sanitizer water frequently.

The Hands – After the wipe down is complete ensure your hands are clean and put on new gloves. Gloves should be changed anytime dairy free cheese, or zero sausage is ordered as well. This ensures only clean, uncontaminated gloves are going into those pans.

The Carrier - Gluten Free crusts need to be left in the pan if the allergy is serious. If it is a Cauliflower Crust for a guest with Celiac Disease or a normal crust for another allergy such as a dairy allergy, we use the designated black mats with the bold outline. These are fresh mats that need to be cleaned in the three-compartment sink after each use.

Prepare the Pizza - Make the pizza with some extra attention to potential flour or other allergens, be prepared for additional precautions the guest may ask you to make. The most common additional precaution is getting fresh ingredients from underneath the make station or other refrigeration. Recommend this if the guest lets you know the allergy is extremely severe.

The Oven and Handoff - Place the pizza in the top oven (if placed in the bottom oven, crumbs could fall on it) with sufficient space between it and any other pizza. Let the person on the cut station know a pizza is coming through for a guest with an allergy. Let them know what the allergy is and where the pizza is located on the belt.

The Cut Station - When the pizza is coming out of the oven do a complete wipe down of the station using a clean towel and sanitizer water. Get a clean rolling cutter and clean spatula and get the station ready. Get a clean parchment paper from the stack of parchment paper in the pizza box off the line. Change sanitizer water frequently.

Prepare for Cutting - Once the station is ready, wash your hands. Remove the pizza from the oven with your clean hands by the corners of the pan whenever it has cooled. For pizzas on the bordered mat just pull the pizza off with the clean spatula. Do not set the pan on the parchment paper for the pizza as this will contaminate the parchment paper.

The Cut - Use the spatula to remove the pizza from the pan (if in pan). Cut the pizza with the new clean cutter. Tray or box the pizza before you move on to another task.

Serving - Now serve the pizza to the guest! Do not just set the pizza on the counter or put the box in a stack. Create an extra layer of accountability by directly handing the guest their carefully crafted pizza to ensure it is going to the right guest.