
Navigating Food Allergies + Special Diets on Campus



Dining

2023
2024

Welcome to The George Washington University!

The health and safety of our guests is our highest priority at The George Washington University and for GW Dining. To support our guests with food allergies and other dietary restrictions, we have created this guide for your reference.

Be aware that we handle and prepare egg, milk, wheat, shellfish, fish, soy, peanut and tree nut products, sesame, and other potential allergens in the food production areas of our facility. We work hard to provide nutrition and ingredient information that is as complete as possible. Vendors may substitute ingredients without our knowledge, and menu items prepared in close proximity to other ingredients may result in cross-contact with allergens.

Guests with food allergies or specific dietary concerns should always speak to an Ingredient Expert, who is the Dietitian, Executive Chef, Director, or Manager on staff.

Also remember: Don't be Shy! Self-Identify.

Natalie Coppola, RD
Campus Dietitian
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our philosophy

GW Dining believes that good nutrition is essential to good health. That's why we are committed to nourishing each and every student by providing them with healthy, nutritious foods every day.

GW Dining supports students who have food allergies by providing information and knowledge that is necessary to make informed food choices in all of our dining locations.

We work together to provide reasonable arrangements so that students may participate in the college dining experience as much as possible. We recognize that students with food allergies already experience a more limited diet than those who do not have allergies. They are required to exert more time and effort in managing their diet than others. We account for each individual student's personal dietary needs and make every effort to provide helpful information to those with food allergies.

Our goal is to provide students with the tools they need to be active in the management of their food allergies or food-related medical conditions within the dining locations. We want to provide a safe and supportive transition into college life.



food allergies

Background

According to recent large-scale studies on food allergy (FA) prevalence, more than 32 million Americans have food allergies, including more than 26 million (10.8%) adults and about 5.6 million (7.6%) children.

A food allergy can develop at any time, with nearly 50 percent of food allergies occurring for the first time as an adult. In addition, nearly 19 percent of adults believe they have a food allergy. These findings suggest that adults with suspected food allergies receive appropriate confirmatory testing and counseling to ensure food is only avoided when necessary and that quality of life is not needlessly compromised. Reactions from food allergies can affect one's breathing, intestinal tract, heart, and skin. Allergen exposure can be serious and potentially life-threatening. Every three minutes, a food allergic reaction sends someone to the emergency room.



What is a Food Allergy?

A food allergy (FA) is an abnormal immune response to a food ingredient, typically a protein. Food allergic reactions can vary from mild symptoms (hives, lip swelling) to severe and life-threatening symptoms, often called anaphylaxis (difficulty breathing, shock). There is no safe amount of an allergen for those with life-threatening food allergies.

Common Food Allergens

Congress passed the Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act in 2004 (FALCPA). This law identified eight foods as major food allergens: milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, and soybeans.

On April 23, 2021, the Food Allergy Safety, Treatment, Education, and Research (FASTER) Act was signed into law, declaring sesame as the ninth major food allergen recognized by the United States. This change became effective on January 1, 2023, when the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) labeling requirement added sesame as the ninth major food allergen on food packaging labels.

While these nine allergens cause more than 90 percent of food allergic reactions, any food ingredient can potentially be an allergen, and more than 170 foods have been documented as responsible for an allergic reaction.

References:

1. Gupta, R. S., Warren, C. M., Smith, B. M., Jiang, J., Blumenstock, J. A., Davis, M. M., Schleimer, R. P., & Nadeau, K. C. (2019). Prevalence and Severity of Food Allergies Among US Adults. *JAMA Network Open*, 2(1), e185630. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2018.5630>
2. Gupta, R. S., Warren, C. M., Smith, B. M., Blumenstock, J. A., Jiang, J., Davis, M. M., & Nadeau, K. C. (2018). The Public Health Impact of Parent-Reported Childhood Food Allergies in the United States. *Pediatrics*, 142(6). <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-1235>

Celiac Disease

What is Celiac Disease?

Celiac disease is a serious autoimmune disease in which gluten ingestion damages the lining of the small intestine.

While not life-threatening, celiac disease can have the following side effects if gluten is consumed: vomiting, bloating, weight loss, anemia, chronic fatigue, bone pain, and muscle cramps. Damage occurs to the intestine and can make it difficult for someone with celiac disease to absorb nutrients from the foods they eat.

As many as one in 141 Americans have celiac disease, although most don't know it. The only way to manage this disease is by avoiding gluten.

What is Gluten?

Gluten is a protein commonly found in certain grains like wheat, rye, and barley. These grains are found in breads, pasta, and snacks and may also "hide" in foods and ingredients such as soy sauce, salad dressings, soups, and flavor enhancers.



don't be shy, self-identify

Student responsibilities when managing a food allergy in dining locations:

1 / Notify GW Dining team of your allergy(ies). Schedule a meeting with our Dietitian, Food Service Director, and Executive Chef to develop a plan so you can navigate the dining halls. Do this by emailing Natalie.Coppola@compass-usa.com

2 / Be proficient in the self-management of your food allergy(ies):

- Avoid foods you're allergic to.
- Recognize symptoms of allergic reactions.
- Know how and when to tell someone you might be having an allergy-related problem.
- Know how to properly use medications to treat an allergic reaction.
- Carry prescribed medicine (e.g., epinephrine auto-injector) and emergency contact information with you at all times.
- Review policies/procedures with GW Dining and your physician should a reaction occur.
- Register by making an account on Dineoncampus.com/gw

3 / Read the station signage, menus, and ingredient information made available upon request and online at dineoncampus.com/gw to be better informed.

4 / When in doubt regarding ingredients in a particular food or dish, direct your questions to our Ingredient Expert, who is also our Food Service Director, Assistant Director, or Executive Chef. If you do not know who these individuals are, please ask a cashier or another employee on duty to contact them.

5 / Due to the nature of the residential dining halls and retail locations, if you have been prescribed an EpiPen, carry it with you.

6 / If you notice something that is problematic for your allergy, please notify our Ingredient Expert, who is also our Food Service Director, Assistant Director, or Executive Chef on duty so that they can look into your concern.

7 / If you have a question at any point, please ask our Ingredient Expert. If we do not hear from you, we believe that you are successfully navigating the dining locations.



your responsibilities

It's our goal to provide students who identify as having food allergies or intolerances with the necessary information to make confident food choices. It's important for these students to manage their food allergies or intolerances by doing the following to avoid cross-contamination:

- You may ask a dining employee to change his/her gloves.
- You may ask a dining employee to use a new utensil or a fresh pan at made-to-order stations.
- Take caution with deep-fried foods. Frying oil is reused before being changed. This can lead to cross-contact because food fried in oil releases some proteins, which are then absorbed by other foods fried in the same oil. (Examples include fried chicken, fried fish, mozzarella sticks, nuggets, onion rings, and French fries.) Always ask to see the ingredient label of products not made in-house, such as tater tots and veggie burgers, to scan for hidden ingredients.
- Take caution with bakery items. Any items prepared onsite have the potential to have been in contact with other ingredients in the kitchen.
- Students may request ingredients that are stored separately from items displayed at the station.



allergen disclaimer

GW Dining uses manufacturer-provided ingredient information, and we do not confirm the presence or lack of an allergen.

We periodically review ingredients to verify that ingredient labeling is consistent with what is provided by the manufacturer. However, please be advised that the ingredients listed may be subject to change without notification and that products prepared in our kitchen may have come into contact with common food allergens.

Please direct any questions regarding an allergy or food ingredients to any of the Ingredient Experts on duty. For questions, you may also contact our Campus Dietitian by emailing Natalie.Coppola@compass-usa.com

avoid cross contact

Cross contact occurs when one food comes in contact with another food and their proteins mix, creating the potential for an allergic reaction.

We train and educate employees involved in the production process to change gloves and clean utensils between recipes to reduce cross-contact concerns.

Always inform the Ingredient Expert of your allergy or dietary restriction to assess the risk or possible cross contact in the meal. Each cook/frontline associate is also instructed to follow standardized recipes as written so as not to introduce any item to the recipe that is not on the recipe card.

Frequent production audits are performed to assess recipe adherence and production processes and to stay informed of new products being purchased.



your resources

The following services from GW Dining are available to help you manage your food allergy or allergies:

1 / An individual meeting with the GW Dining Dietitian, Director, and Executive Chef to develop an individualized plan for navigating the residential dining facilities.

2 / The Ingredient Experts on duty are available in residential dining halls to address questions/concerns and serve as important resources. When in a particular unit, please ask for a food service manager or email the Dietitian at: Natalie.Coppola@compass-usa.com

3 / Access to our Ingredient Expert for ingredient consultation.

4 / Introduction to the dining management team to give you direct access to individuals responsible for food preparation.

5 / **Download the Dine on Campus app or go online at dineoncampus.com/gw and review daily menus and ingredient lists ahead of time.**

6 / Manufacturer-provided entrée ingredient lists, provided upon request.



your resources

7 / Signage located at each food station in our residential dining locations outlines nutrition information. Please visit dineoncampus.com/gw to access full nutrition labels.

8 / Nutritional information for internally produced retail food and nationally branded retail items is available online at dineoncampus.com/gw. Nutritional information for purchased or pre-packaged retail items is available upon request. If ingredients for pre-packaged items are not listed on dineoncampus.com/gw, please email Natalie.Coppola@compass-usa.com for ingredient information. Be cautious, as ingredients listed on dineoncampus.com/gw are subject to change. Always consult with an Ingredient Expert.

9 / Access to the GW Dining culinary team to provide package labels for all dry and cold food storage items. This ensures you can review ingredients personally to make the best decisions for your dietary needs. Please schedule advance notice to establish the foods you wish to review and on what date/time. Schedule a session by emailing Natalie.Coppola@compass-usa.com.

10 / Access to individually packaged foods to replace bulk items that have a high likelihood of cross contact (i.e., packets of cream cheese, jelly, and peanut butter). GW Dining wants you to feel at home in our dining spaces. During your individual meeting with dining services, please provide a wish list of items that are your favorites so that we can try and ensure the availability of individually packaged items for you.

11 / Dining staff are trained to change gloves at least every 30 minutes to minimize cross-contact concerns.



specific allergy information

Refer to the menus and ingredient information made available to you. We use manufacturer-provided information, and we do not confirm the presence or lack of an allergen. GW Dining periodically reviews ingredients to verify ingredient labeling is consistent with what is provided by the manufacturer. Ingredients listed may be subject to change without notification.



WHEAT ALLERGIES / AVOIDING GLUTEN

Gluten-free cereals and gluten-free breads are available daily. Other gluten-free bakery items may be available upon request. Be sure to check the ingredients of all food items you wish to consume. Look for the Avoiding Gluten icons on dishes that are prepared in-house. We use the term "Avoiding Gluten" to identify items made without gluten-containing ingredients. Since gluten can be airborne for up to 24 hours, we cannot use the term gluten-free for items made in-house. If you have any questions, just ask the campus dietitian, a manager or chef.



MILK ALLERGIES

A non-dairy milk option is available every day in residential dining. However, milk and milk-based products are ingredients used in many of the menu items served. Items prepared with butter or margarine should also be avoided. Please check with a manager or Ingredient Expert if you have questions.

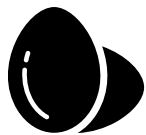


SOY ALLERGIES

Soybean is present in a large variety of products. Cooking and frying oils may be made from soy. While studies have shown that highly refined soy oil is safe to consume for most with a soy allergy, if a medical professional has noted that you have a severe allergy, you should consider alternate options. Please ask a manager if you would like to review the ingredient label. Avoid products containing soy, such as tofu, miso, tempeh, edamame, soy sauce, and tamari. If you have any questions, please ask an Ingredient Expert.

*Even foods commonly prepared without gluten-containing ingredients may not be 'gluten-free.' Our recipes are prepared in open kitchens, where cross-contact is possible and where ingredient substitutions are sometimes made. If you have celiac disease or a gluten sensitivity, please notify your on-site manager to request an individually prepared avoiding gluten meal.

specific allergy information



EGG ALLERGIES

Many of our baked goods and desserts contain eggs. Students are asked to take caution with all baked goods and are encouraged to check the ingredient labels of items they wish to eat.



SHELLFISH ALLERGIES

Avoid entrées and mixed dishes that contain shellfish (such as crab, shrimp, lobster, clams, mussels, oysters, and octopus) as a main component. Use caution when selecting Asian dishes, where shellfish may be included in sauces. Additionally, shellfish is sometimes found in bouillabaisse, fish stocks, sushi, or seafood flavoring. Students with shellfish allergies are asked to check the menus and full ingredient list.



FISH ALLERGIES

Beyond entrées and mixed dishes that contain finfish as a main component, please use caution when selecting Asian dishes, where fish may be included in sauces. Additionally, fish is sometimes found in some gravies, barbecue sauces, Worcestershire sauces, Caesar salads, sushi, and some dressings. Students with fish allergies are asked to check the menus and full ingredient list.



PEANUT ALLERGIES

Students with a peanut allergy are advised to take caution with bakery items. Peanuts are not brought into our kitchen, however, some of our bakery products are manufactured in facilities that use peanuts. Our dining commons offers sunflower butter as a replacement for peanut butter.



TREE NUT ALLERGIES

Students with a tree nut allergy are advised to take caution with bakery items. Tree Nuts are not brought into our kitchen, however, some of our bakery products are manufactured in facilities that use tree nuts.



SESAME

Sesame is present in items like hummus, baba ganoush, breads, bagels, sushi, falafel, tempeh, veggie burgers, and dressings, to name a few. Students with a sesame allergy should always verify ingredients with Ingredient Experts.

EAT WELL

get to know your icons

These icons are your guide to finding foods that are right for you.



contains no meat, poultry, fish or seafood but may contain eggs or dairy products.



contains no animal-based ingredients or animal by-products including egg, dairy, and honey.



menu items made without gluten containing ingredients.

dineoncampus.com/campus

General Allergen Disclaimer: Be aware that we handle and prepare egg, wheat, milk, shellfish, fish, soy, peanut, tree nuts, sesame, and other potential allergens in the food production areas of our facility. We attempt to provide nutrition and ingredient information that is as complete as possible. Products may change without our knowledge and menu items are prepared in close proximity to other ingredients that may result in cross-contact with ingredients not listed, including allergens. Guests with food allergies or specific dietary concerns should speak with a manager for individualized assistance.

allergen reaction

If you are at risk of anaphylaxis, please keep in mind the info below.

If you have been prescribed an epinephrine auto-injector, keep it with you at all times!

Wear medical alert identification at all times.

Have an emergency care plan in place. Review these [FARE Resources](#) to create your own individual response plan.

If having a reaction get help immediately!

- Administer your medication (e.g., epinephrine auto-injector)
- Call 911 or ask someone to call for you. Let them know you are having a food allergic reaction.
- Do not go back to your room alone.



how can we help you?

Here at GW Dining, we've developed a plan for students with special dietary needs to contact GW Dining.

1 / The student meets with our Campus Dietitian, who works with them to review specific allergies, gather information on how they have managed the allergy up until now, and learn initial information about how to navigate the GW Dining locations.

2 / After the initial meeting, the GW Dining Dietitian and the on-site Ingredient Experts (Executive Chef, Director, and Assistant Director) work together to customize a plan to accommodate the student's dietary needs. Individual menu development and specially prepared foods can be provided when the daily offerings do not meet a student's dietary needs.

3 / Students are encouraged to touch base with the Ingredient Expert daily to ensure the safety of meals and minimize the risk of cross-contact.

4 / Ongoing evaluation occurs after these initial meetings. Our Campus Dietitian and on-site Ingredient Experts will touch base with you throughout the term or year. If questions arise or a student has concerns about the daily offerings, they are encouraged to reach out to the Campus Dietitian by emailing Natalie.Coppola@compass-usa.com to resolve the issue.



frequently asked questions

1 / Can I assume the ingredients will always be the same in a common menu item?

Never assume. Although there might be a common item on the line, don't assume you know the ingredients. We have different products based on our vendors' availability, so an ingredient we use today can potentially be a different brand from time to time. The safest and most reliable practice is to get to know the chefs and Ingredient Experts and always ask questions.

2 / Who should I ask or talk to about a question on the menu?

Always ask the manager or chef. Our trained Ingredient Experts will be able to ensure you are provided with accurate ingredient information. You can locate an Ingredient Expert at each unit by asking one of the frontline associates to speak to a management professional to help you navigate our dining facilities.

3 / What's the difference between "Gluten-Free" and "Avoiding Gluten"?

Avoiding Gluten means our products do not include any fresh or manufactured food that contains gluten. Gluten-Free means the food item contains less than 20 ppm of gluten, which can only be determined through laboratory testing. Since we prepare products in common kitchens with shared equipment, it is not possible that our products can maintain gluten-free status as established by the manufacturer.





Dining

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dedicated station

Pure Eats stations feature food that is simply prepared, seasoned, and served by a trained associate. The station is dedicated to foods prepared without the nine major food allergens (milk, wheat, egg, soy, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish, and sesame) and gluten.

our teams are trained to assist and look forward to serving you.



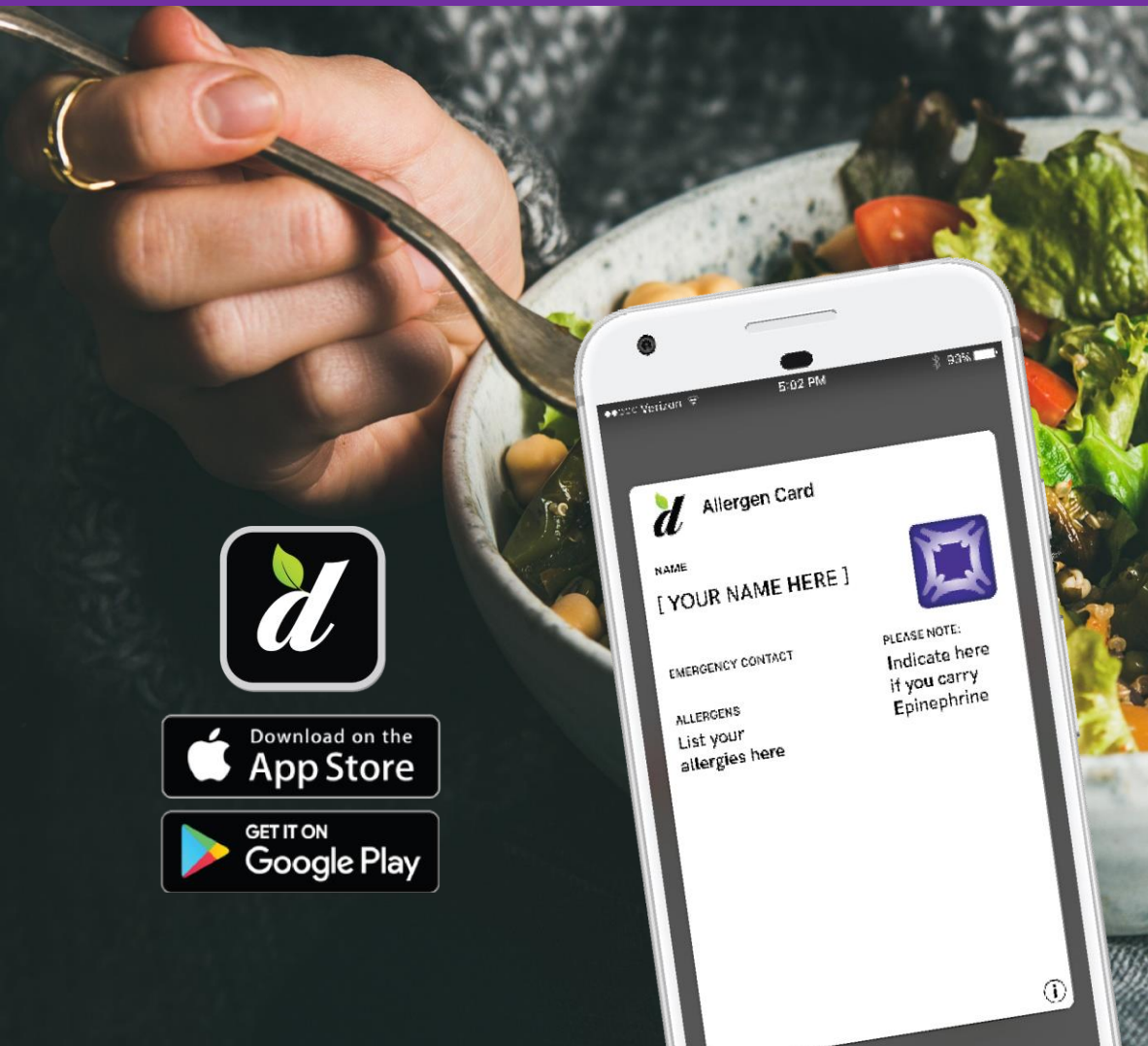
Find this location at all three Residential Dining Halls



Don't Be Shy, Self-Identify!

We are here to help.

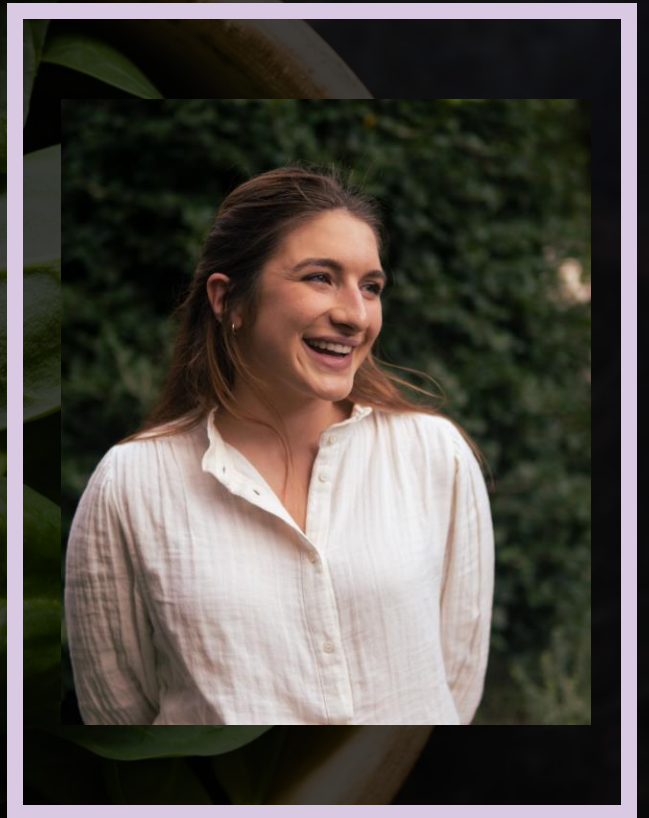
Create an Allergen ID on our site or app. This is a digital ID card that can be printed or uploaded to your smartphone wallet. Use this to privately inform our staff at any dining location of your dietary needs.



meet your DIETITIAN

Food allergies or
special diets?

We are here
to help.



Natalie Coppola
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dineoncampus.com/gw

meet your CHEFS

Food allergies
or special
diets?

We are here
to help.

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NUTRITION.
TASTE.
EXPERTISE.

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