



Using Third-Party Audits to Enhance
Special Diets Programs

The Importance of Special Dietary Needs Solutions

Collegiate dining operations are obligated to provide for the needs of their students, requiring campus dining programs to have an effective plan for serving students with special dietary needs due to food allergies, sensitivities, and religious requirements.

A young Black man with short hair and glasses is smiling broadly, showing his teeth. He is wearing a blue shirt. The background is a blurred dining area with wooden chairs and tables.

There's a range of approaches

- Letting them off the meal plan if the special dietary need is too difficult to handle.
- Have a special station in some units that is free of the major allergens. Students with a food allergy can eat there, but it eliminates many food options that they are not allergic to.
- Have a special dining unit dedicated to be free of the main allergens. It may be a bit out of the way, but it provides a level of service that meets their needs. But it also eliminates many food options that they are not allergic to.
- Plan menus with special dietary needs in mind at all locations and communicate complete and accurate ingredient lists and allergens at all the locations via website, digital menu boards, nutrition kiosks, mobile app, and product labels. This allows students to eat where their friends eat as they self-navigate using posted menu information.



Where are you in the process?

What does your approach to menu transparency say about your institution's commitment to student success and an inclusive campus environment?

Will your dining program foster student success – academically, socially, nutritionally?





Or will your approach leave students isolated and fending for themselves to eat?

Let Menu Analytics Audit Your Special Dietary Needs Program



If you are experiencing student and parent complaints regarding special diets, food allergy incidents, or frequent requests for meal plan exemptions based on dietary needs, a third-party audit can identify gaps in your program and build strategies to close those gaps.

[Menu Analytics](#) can support your campus dining program by conducting a thorough review of your special dietary needs program and the institutional goals, policies and operational procedures to help you achieve the outcomes you need.

The Rewards of an Effective Special Diets Program

- ✓ Students will feel more confident in your dining venues, rather than eating off campus.
- ✓ Improved socialization – students with special dietary needs or preferences can eat where their friends eat – not just in their room alone.
- ✓ Menus can be optimized to provide acceptable options for everyone
- ✓ Staff can answer questions about the menu with confidence
- ✓ Reduced risk and liability

How Is an Audit Valuable?

- ✓ Supports self-operated food services that have a plan for special diets but continue to have incidents or dissatisfaction.
- ✓ Creates accountability for contracted food service operations if the school questions whether the special dietary program is sufficient for student needs.
- ✓ Helps build an environment of inclusivity as students with special dietary needs become able to participate in the dining program with confidence.
- ✓ Provides reassurance to concerned parents.
- ✓ Can simplify solutions for smaller schools who don't have nutrition resources to develop and monitor special diets program.

Why Use a Third-Party Audit?



- ✓ Fresh eyes see things you might miss every day
- ✓ Allows the campus team to focus on primary duties
- ✓ Identify gaps between goals and reality
- ✓ Increases guest safety
- ✓ Objective assessment avoids or reduces bias and internal compliance conflicts

Components of a Third-Party Audit

Areas for audit include:

- ❑ Policies and procedures regarding food allergies to assess their applicability and effectiveness.
- ❑ On site food service operations, both in food production and in service areas, including receiving, storage, production, serving, equipment, customer request handling, and assess for gaps in coverage and the potential for cross contact of allergy containing foods with other foods.
- ❑ Assessment of the accuracy of menu and recipe information, recipe adherence, and information communicated to customers.
- ❑ Review food allergy training programs and materials, and assess whether these are complete and provide an adequate level of instruction to achieve stated goals for safe service of food.

Components of a Third-Party Audit

- ❑ Conduct interviews with team members involved with the dining program to identify key processes, policies, methods, and their effectiveness.
- ❑ Conduct interviews, if desired, with relevant administrators, staff, or students to assess the desired level of food allergy support desired by the operation, and compare that level with existing measures – identifying any gaps with recommendations for mitigation.
- ❑ A written report listing all findings and recommendations.

Lisa Eberhart, RD, LDN, CDE



Lisa Eberhart is a Registered Dietitian and Licensed Dietitian/Nutritionist. She has pioneered effective methods to analyze menus from virtually every type of food service operation and deliver accurate nutrition and allergen information to consumers via a variety of channels.

Lisa leads nutrition services for Menu Analytics. Lisa is a former Chair of the Licensing Board of the North Carolina Board of Dietetics & Nutrition. Lisa received the Outstanding Dietitian of the Year Award by the North Carolina Dietetic Association in 2014. Lisa was awarded the 2012 North Carolina Governor's Award for Excellence, the highest honor for a state employee.



Randy Lait, CASP



Randy is a Certified Auxiliary Services Professional, with training and experience in collegiate auxiliary operations.

He is the recipient of the 2019 IFMA Silver Plate as Operator of the Year in the college and university sector and 2015 College Innovator of the Year by Food Management Magazine.

Randy has been active in the National Association of College and University Food Services (NACUFS), serving in a variety of roles over his career, including Regional President, Regional Conference Chair, member of the NACUFS Board of Directors, and as National Conference Chair. He is the 2022 recipient of the [David R. Prentkowski Distinguished Lifetime Member](#) award in recognition for his service to the collegiate dining services industry.



Ready to Learn More??



Email us or call to discuss your needs.

Randy Lait	Randy@menuanalytics.com	919-819-8662
Lisa Eberhart	Lisa@menuanalytics.com	919-880-4562

We will provide you with an audit plan for your operation and a quote.