

# Identifying Allergens: Crustacean Shellfish

## Retail Food Establishments – Food Safety



Millions of people have food allergies, and those numbers appear to be rising. Reaction time and symptoms vary from person to person. Symptoms may occur quickly or slowly after eating a food that is an allergen or eating a food that contains an allergen.

**Symptoms range from mild** (e.g., hives, itching, flushing) **to life-threatening** (e.g., loss of consciousness, difficulty breathing, dizziness due to drop in blood pressure, extensive swelling). It is possible for a person to have a mild reaction from a food allergen one time, and the next time have a life-threatening reaction.

R.61-25, Chapter 3, Section 3-602.11 requires labeling of grab-and-go foods and bulk customer self-service foods in a retail food establishment. Along with listing all ingredients in these foods, the label must clearly identify all major food allergens in the product.

Labeling does not apply to table service or foods packaged for a to-go order. Customers with allergy concerns may ask questions about ingredients, or how a product is prepared. As a person-in-charge, a server, or other food staff, you play an important role in helping the customer make informed decisions about their food choices.

The Conference of Food Protection, [CFP -Major Food Allergen Framework](#) provides tools on voluntary signage or menu notations that may be used in a food establishment. If used it is important that the written information is complete and correct. Although helpful, these **tools do not take the place of food staff being able to answer questions on menu items that may pose an allergen risk.**

Crustacean shellfish is listed as one of the major food allergens.

### CRUSTACEAN SHELLFISH

Examples of crustacean shellfish **species** are:

- **Shrimp**
- **Lobster**
- **Crabs**
- **Crawfish**



Labeling for prepared and packaged grab-and-go foods that contain crustacean shellfish, must list the type of **species**.

Along with being aware of which menu item(s) contain crustacean shellfish, food staff should also be aware that:

- Cross-contamination may occur if utensils or equipment that have been in contact with crustacean shellfish are used for non-shellfish menu items. For example, cooking fries in a fry vat that was used to cook shrimp.
- On a menu that includes crustacean and molluscan (e.g., clams, oysters, scallops, squid [calamari], octopus) shellfish, there is potential for cross-contamination between types of shellfish when the same in-use equipment and utensils are used in preparation or service of these products.



**Imitation crab and lobster meats** are often used in menu items such as salads, sushi rolls, pastas, soups (including stews and chowder), and appetizers. Basic ingredients in these imitation products include various white-fleshed fish that are made into a paste called surimi, and flavoring. The final products are shaped and colored to look like the real thing.

Imitation products **may contain a small amount of real crab or lobster** for flavor. Flavoring **may also include crab or lobster extract**. **Even in small amounts any of these ingredients could cause an allergic reaction.**



Additional information on **Major Food Allergens** may be found in [Regulation 61-25, Retail Food Establishments](#), Chapter 1, Section 1-201.10(B)(64).

