

Guest Column: Foodcase International's Marc Warde on embracing safe and inclusive dining

This is a special feature from *PAX International's* [April 2024 Special Meals issue](#), on [page 19](#).



Marc Warde, Special Meals Program Director, Foodcase International

In the bustling world of travel, where every journey is a unique adventure, there's one aspect that's often overlooked: special meals dining. As someone who lives with a food allergy, I understand all too well the challenges and concerns that come with dining away from home. The worry about hidden allergens, the frustration of limited options and the fear of a potential allergic reaction can cast a shadow on what should be an exciting experience.

It is no small challenge to cater for special dietary and allergy needs. The [IATA](#) codes used by airlines have been around for 30 years and don't cater for modern dietary and allergy needs. It's encouraging to see airlines addressing beyond the compliance tick boxes; putting passenger needs first and introducing allergen-free meal choices; allowing passengers with allergies to pre-board to wipe down seating areas; assuring them before they fly their special meal is loaded; understanding that "may contain" and alibi statements aren't suitable for food allergy or intolerance passengers; introducing alternatives to nuts on board. Long may this last.

Most people seem to understand now that providing vegan meals that have a “may contain milk or egg” message on the label is not vegan at all. This goes for all other allergens as well. It’s not only wrong—it’s potentially life threatening. A friend of mine who works in the allergy space gives a talk on this topic and has a slide that goes up showing a meal, saying “‘May contain glass.’ ‘Would anyone eat that?’” Risky I would say, but a startling revelation, nonetheless. Accurate labels are everything.

Hope amidst challenges

One of the most significant strides in this journey is the introduction of [Foodcase International](#)’s comprehensive special meals program. This program includes LIBERO J class meals which not only caters to common allergens but also offers top 14 allergen-free meals suitable for passengers in all cabins. Gone are the days of worrying about “may contain” or alibi labelling—with Foodcase International, passengers can dine with confidence, knowing dietary needs are being met safely and deliciously.

Statistics tell us there has been a 200 percent worldwide increase in food allergies and intolerances over the past few decades; in children it’s a 300 percent rise. While fatal allergic reactions are rare in travel, they do happen, serving as a poignant reminder of the importance of prioritizing passenger safety and well-being.



Foodcase International says the future of inflight dining holds exciting commercial possibilities

The future of inflight dining around special dietary or lifestyle meals holds exciting commercial possibilities. Lifestyle meals (low-carb, low FODMAP, gut-friendly choices) are poised to become popular among passengers seeking healthier, more personalized dining experiences. By embracing these trends, airlines can cater to a broader range of dietary preferences and ensure that passenger needs are met. Those with food allergies like me are used to paying more for meals in supermarkets and are prepared to pay more knowing the meal is safe and won’t make us sick.

Beyond the statistics and trends

Beyond the statistics and trends lies a deeper truth: the importance of inclusivity and empathy in our approach to dining for special meal passengers. I believe that every passenger, regardless of their dietary restrictions or allergies, deserves to feel safe, respected, and included.

To all airlines, trains and cruise lines out there, I urge you to heed the call for change. Let's work together to create a future where dining experiences are not just safe and delicious but also inclusive and welcoming to all. Let's prioritize transparency, innovation and empathy in our approach to inflight dining, ensuring that every journey is a truly unforgettable experience—for all the right reasons.

In the end, it's not just about the meals we serve or the labels we read—it's about the passengers, the stories they tell and the memories they create. With companies like Foodcase leading the way, I'm confident that the future of travel dining is brighter, safer and more inclusive than ever before.