Chain restaurants are playing 'Russian roulette' with the lives of millions of British customers by not immediately telling them of any recipe changes, top chefs warn

- Giorgio Locatelli owns a Michelin-starred restaurant in the heart of London
- The Italian-born chef says many do not know what their meals really contain
- Tiny changes in recipes or suppliers may cause dishes to contain new allergens

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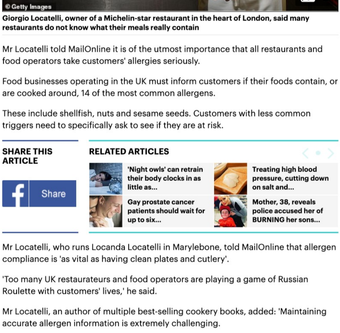
Chain restaurants are playing 'Russian roulette' with the lives of millions of British customers, top chefs have warned.

Giorgio Locatelli, owner of a Michelin-starred restaurant in the heart of **London**, said many do not know what their meals really contain.

The Italian-born cook said tiny changes in recipes or suppliers may introduce new allergens into popular meals.

Mr Locatelli warned these are not always immediately relayed to customers and another Michelin-starred chef warned 'lives are at stake'.

Allergy sufferers can go into anaphylactic shock, which can be life-threatening and is a medical emergency, if they consume their trigger food.



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Giorgio Locatelli, owner of a Michelin-star restaurant in the heart of London, said many restaurants do not know what their meals really contain

Mr Locatelli told MailOnline it is of the utmost importance that all restaurants and food operators take customers' allergies seriously.

Food businesses operating in the UK must inform customers if their foods contain, or are cooked around, 14 of the most common allergens.

These include shellfish, nuts and sesame seeds. Customers with less common triggers need to specifically ask to see if they are at risk.

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Mr Locatelli, who runs Locanda Locatelli in Marylebone, told MailOnline that allergen compliance is 'as vital as having clean plates and cutlery'.

'Too many UK restaurateurs and food operators are playing a game of Russian Roulette with customers' lives,' he said.

Mr Locatelli, an author of multiple best-selling cookery books, added: 'Maintaining accurate allergen information is extremely challenging.

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John Wood, a fellow Michelin-starred chef and creator of KitchenCUT, echoed the thoughts of Mr Locatelli. He claimed not having an automated system to take charge of allergens was like 'driving without a seatbelt'

'Even a small change in a recipe... or a change in supplier can have an impact on whether or not dishes contain a new allergen.'

Mr Locatelli was in 2016 awarded the Italian equivalent to a knighthood by the Italian Ambassador for services to gastronomy.

He has appeared on the BBC Two shows Italy Unpacked and The Big Family Cooking Showdown, and is a judge on MasterChef Italia.

He is calling for restaurants to use a new kitchen management software that tracks allergens direct from suppliers.

The technology, by KitchenCUT, claims to automatically push every change to the menu, recipes and ingredients on websites.

The firm, based in Henley-on-Thames in Oxfordshire, claims the software leaves 'zero chance' for human error.

It told MailOnline it makes sure restaurants are compliant with allergens, 'without having to compromise the creative flair of the chef'.

John Wood, a fellow Michelin-starred chef and creator of KitchenCUT, echoed the thoughts of Mr Locatelli.

He said most high street chains have a more standardised menu that changes less frequently.

However, many hotels, restaurants and pubs offer daily specials which often have different ingredients.

Mr Wood warned that 'it's not just about new dishes', adding it's also about managing ingredients from suppliers.

If a product changes but the recipe doesn't, the dish may contain new allergens – but this isn't always relayed to the customer.

Mr Wood claimed not having an automated system to take charge of allergens was like 'driving without a seatbelt'.

'It's nigh on impossible for chefs to do their job without having the total reassurance of a kitchen management system,' Wood told MailOnline.

'Customers need to have 100 per cent confidence... that the information they're given about allergens is accurate and consistent.

'It's foolish, irresponsible and can be fatal to leave anything to chance. People's lives are at stake.'

Mr Wood added: 'Using a robust kitchen management system is the only way to be fully confident and compliant when it comes to allergens.'

Emma Hammett, founder of First Aid For Life, supports any new measures that can make life 'easier and safer' for people with food allergies.

She told MailOnline: 'It can be extremely difficult for any restaurant to be 100 per cent confident that their food does not contain any allergens.

'Even a trace of allergen could make some extremely ill, or prove fatal if someone is extremely sensitive to it.'

Around 20 per cent of the British population are affected by one or more allergic disorder, according to Allergy UK.

WHAT IS ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK?

Anaphylaxis, also known as anaphylactic shock, can kill within minutes.

It is a severe and potentially life-threatening reaction to a trigger, such as an allergy.

The reaction can often be triggered by certain foods, including peanuts and shellfish.

However, some medicines, bee stings, and even latex used in condoms can also cause the life-threatening reaction.

According to the NHS, it occurs when the immune system overreacts to a trigger.

Symptoms include: feeling lightheaded or faint; breathing difficulties – such as fast, shallow breathing – wheezing; a fast heartbeat; clammy skin; confusion and anxiety and collapsing or losing consciousness.

It is considered a medical emergency and requires immediate treatment.

Insect stings are not dangerous for most victims but a person does not necessarily have to have a pre-existing condition to be in danger.

An incremental build-up of stings can cause a person to develop an allergy, with a subsequent sting triggering the anaphylactic reaction.

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Lady Gaga dons several eccentric looks as she debuts at Harlem's historic Apollo Theater with intimate concert for her celebrity fans

Catherine Zeta-Jones is fabulous in floral frock as she and Michael Douglas lead the stars at Lady Gaga's concert at the historic Apollo Theater

Lady Gaga rocks t-shirt and knee-high boots to greet fans after her Apollo Theater performance in NYC
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