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QSAI & The ACA Announce the Release of the Updated Special Meal Codes, Definitions & Interpretation Guidelines

Montreal, Quebec November 15, 2023 – The Quality & Safety Alliance for Inflight Services (QSAI) and the Airline Catering Association (ACA) are pleased to announce the release of the updated QSAI Special Meal (SPML) Codes, Definitions, and Interpretation Guidelines (version 2.0). These comprehensive guidelines strengthen onboard catering industry standards so that airlines, rail carriers and onboard food suppliers can cater to the diverse dietary needs and preferences of all travelers without confusion.

Download the Updated Special Meal requirements here at: qsaiinternational.com

The Updated Guidelines will be effective starting January 01, 2024; however a 12-month grace period has been granted for QSAI partners and catering organizations to adhere to the new requirements. All future menu development should be based on the Updated QSAI Special Meal Codes, Definitions, and Interpretation Guidelines (version 2.0).

Addressing the Growing Need for Special Meals

Special Meals have become an essential part of airline and railway food service. In recent years, Special Meal Codes and Definitions have lagged behind changing international requirements, causing confusion within the industry when creating Special Meal menus. As part of its objectives, QSAI enables its members to collaborate with onboard food suppliers to set industry standards based on up to date scientific, regulatory and industry knowledge. These standards provide harmonized international requirements to ensure there is no confusion in the onboard catering industry on how to provide travelers with food that meets their needs and expectations.

Faced with lagging SPML requirements and industry confusion, the QSAI alliance of airlines and railways was charged with administering Special Meal requirements for the onboard food industry. In its capacity as QSAI's scientific and regulatory advisor, Medina Quality (MQ), an IATA Strategic Partner, conducted a global review of current regulatory, dietary, and religious requirements. This was the basis for the updated Special Meal Codes and Definitions.

Over 40 onboard caterers and QSAI Airline Alliance members, including Air Canada, Air France, Air Tahiti Nui, All Nippon Airways, Eurostar International, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, Singapore Airlines, and Virgin Atlantic, were surveyed during the process.

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To ensure collaboration with all industry stakeholders, QSAI finalized the updated Special Meal Codes and Definitions in collaboration with an ACA task force, that was also working on initiatives to update these requirements for caterers. Together, MQ and the ACA task force further reviewed the Special Meal requirements based on extensive task force surveys of ACA member organizations and additional input from the QSAI alliance. The result: Special Meal Codes and Definitions further aligned with the current state of the industry.

"Given the growing demand from travelers for Special Meals, updating these Codes and Definitions is a crucial step towards enhancing the onboard catering experience for all passengers, regardless of their dietary or religious needs and preferences," said David Medina, COO of Medina Quality. "This collaborative effort reflects our commitment to ensuring that travelers receive food that meets the highest standards of quality and safety."

About ACA

The Airline Catering Association (ACA) represents, promotes, and defends the common interests of the airline catering industry. Its aim is to provide a forum for cooperation among its members and the operators of the sector. In 2021, the combined workforce of inflight caterers reached around 150,000 worldwide, producing approximately 2.5 billion onboard meals.

About QSAI

Launched in 2011, QSAI brings together the world's top airlines and railway carriers in an alliance that drives excellence in onboard food service. QSAI believes that each passenger should have confidence in the quality and safety of their onboard food at every point of their journey. QSAI alliance members are committed to serving an enjoyable and safe food experience that meets each traveler's needs and expectations. Developed in consultation with and managed by Medina Quality, QSAI members collaborate with all onboard food stakeholders to set, promote, and continuously monitor compliance with industry standards that are based on up to date scientific, regulatory and industry knowledge. All stakeholders have a voice. QSAI brings together industry leaders, food safety experts, passenger carriers, on-board catering organizations, food and logistic brokers, manufacturing professionals to encourage dialogue, industry progress, continuous improvement and with the goal of providing passengers with a safe and satisfying food experience.

The QSAI Programme is the world's first and only program that allows QSAI alliance members to share the cost of monitoring and improving the safety and quality of their onboard suppliers according to risk and against industry benchmarked standards. QSAI raises the bar so that passengers can be confident in every bite, today and tomorrow.

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