**How emojis could help people with food allergies**

**By Danny Lewis***Smithsonian.com*

May 01, 2019

Someday soon an emoji might literally save lives.

Hiroyuki Komatsu, a Google engineer, submitted a proposal to add a range of new icons to the standard emoji library that could help those with food allergies understand what they are eating anywhere in the world.

“Emoji should cover characters representing major food allergens,” Komatsu wrote in his proposal. “It enables people to understand what [ingredients] are used in foods even in foreign countries and safely select meals.”

The reason that emojis are so universal is because they are chosen and developed by the Unicode Consortium, a non-profit corporation that oversees, develops and maintains how text is represented in all software products and standards, writes Alex Swerdloff for Vice Munchies. It’s thanks to the Unicode Standard that when you text a friend six pizza emojis, they’ll see those six pizza slices on their phone regardless of whether they use an iPhone or an Android.

Because emojis are everywhere and iconic, they could be helpful for restaurants and food packaging designers to communicate whether a product is made with common allergens. But as Komatsu’s proposal argues, many of the most common food allergens – such as peanuts, soy and milk – are missing or poorly represented by the current emoji library. There is an emoji for octopus, but nothing for squid; there is a loaf of bread that could symbolize gluten, but a bundle of wheat could be clearer and more direct when labeling foods.

It’s not uncommon for the Unicode Consortium to add new emojis to the library: several food-related emojis debuted last June, including a long-awaited taco emoji, and Apple included support for multiracial emojis in a recent iOS update. An artist even recreated Moby-Dick in emoji characters. Some might bemoan the continuing death of the written word if Komatsu’s proposal is accepted, but look on the bright side: if you ever see that happy poop on a carton, you’ll know to stay away.