

Tips for Beginning the Gluten Free Diet

July 2010

Did you know the difference between a food that is labeled gluten free and one that is certified gluten free?

Here it is:

Labeled gluten free means that the food has 20 parts per million or less gluten contamination. This follows the Federal guideline.

Certified gluten free means that the food has 5 parts per million or less gluten contamination. The certification will be from the Celiac Sprue Association of GIG.

So when you see these designations on the food packaging – you will know just what that means. Something good to know!

February 2010

Our discussion at the meeting was about relationships. It is important to view things in a positive light and that includes the diagnosis of celiac or gluten-intolerance. This is life changing, not only to us but also for our families, friends. It affects those around us, in our lives. There are some suggestions for us as we begin to adjust:

Join a local support group.

Take a trip to the grocery store & jot down foods you will miss & then brainstorm as to what can be a good substitute.

Take a moment to reflect that this will affect you for your entire life and make some positive decisions to resolve your feelings. Talk with your spouse, family, about it.

First shopping trips: Shop for all items that are naturally gluten free (vegetables, fruits, etc.) Then pick ONE type of food item, like pasta or like snacks/chips, and investigate and shop for only that at first. Go into this slowly.

You'll need to "divide and conquer" your kitchen. You'll need things like a new toaster, new cutting board, utensils, etc. You can pick a color, any color you choose - - red for all gluten-free spatulas, measuring cups, cutting boards, etc. and another color for items that will be used with food containing gluten. Label everything that is gluten-free. This will help you AND your family to know what items are gluten free. Especially things like peanut butter, mayonnaise, the types of items that knives are "double dipped" into and can spread crumbs, etc. Separate your gluten-free foods from any foods containing gluten in separate cupboards. Lay out ground rules for your family as to what can and cannot be done in food preparation and so on to avoid contamination.

A great idea is to make a gluten-free notebook or recipe book. List favorite products, alterations you make to recipes, and so on. And even challenge your spouse, family member to go gluten-free with you for a month! There will always be those moments of frustration – our own little "pity-party", but they pass and just try to remain positive. That can happen in situations where those around us want to meet out at a restaurant for example. Don't be hesitant – speak up and offer some good choices, such as "how about going to...(here is where you name YOUR favorite restaurant or two). And it will always help to keep a snack bar or two with you to munch on– just in case!

October 2009

For those of you new to gluten-free, there are some things to consider to keep your kitchen safe. You'll want to be using separate pans, cooking utensils, toaster. If possible, use a separate food preparation area for your gluten-free foods. Think also of a separate storage area for gluten free foods – to avoid any cross contamination.

Also for people that are new to the gluten-free diet, you may want to use one of the prepared, packaged flour mixes available, such as Bob's Red Mill flour mix, or Pamela's Pancake and Baking Mix. (just be aware that baked goods generally require the addition of xanthan gum – some flour mixes already have some of that in the mix, and some don't - - so just read the ingredients). Then when you get more comfortable cooking and baking gluten free you may want to mix your own gluten-free flour mixture. Oriental food markets are a good source for inexpensive flours, such as tapioca flour, rice flour, corn flour. Some stores may also offer you a discount, usually 10%, when you order a case of an item.

If you are new, you may not be aware of our website.... Check out www.glutenfreegr.com. That is the website for our adult group, there is a section there for the kids support group, and also another section for the annual Gluten Free Food Fair. Lots of info there for you!

Also be sure to talk with the manager at your favorite grocery store regarding gluten-free products you would like to see the store carry, or just to let them know you appreciate the items they do stock!

Some of the Family Fare stores have a small kiosk that you can select gluten-free menus and print out the recipe and product shopping list for that recipe.

July 2009

We discussed some of the basics of living gluten-free: You want to have your own, new toaster; use a separate butter dish; separate peanut butter jar, mayonnaise jar, etc. Also avoid sharing cast-iron and Teflon cooking pans with gluten foods. Store your gluten-free foods in a separate area away from foods containing gluten. If you have or can obtain toaster bags, they are a great item to keep handy. Toaster bags are just that: a small bag that you put your piece of bread into (or bagel, etc.) and place in a toaster when you don't have your own gluten-free toaster. They can be found online at www.kingarthurfLOUR.com. Great when traveling at hotels, etc.

When shopping, the Pamela's mixes were mentioned as being very good – Namaste mixes also. Coco Charlotte Bakery (on 32nd Street, near Breton Road) has hamburger buns and you can also request hotdog buns from her. Trader Joe's and Whole Foods are terrific stores to shop for gluten-free foods. Neither has a location here in Grand Rapids, but if you are traveling near one, be sure to stop. Locally, the Health Hut on Monroe in downtown Grand Rapids was mentioned as a good store to shop for gluten-free foods.

May 2009

The first suggestion was to have a permanent lunch bag or lunch sack that you can take with you easily. You can quickly pack this with some of your favorite snack and food items in the small plastic containers and then you will always have something to eat when you are out. Grocery stores are carrying more gluten free items, and some of the items that were mentioned were:

Weight Watchers Smart Ones, especially the Chicken Santa Fe. (In fact, if you go to the Weight Watchers website, they do list some meals that are gluten free).

Gluten Free and Fabulous, "Bon Appetit" frozen pizza with pepperoni

Trader Joe's frozen meals

Simply Organic mixes, such as Banana Bread and Carrot Cake

Glutino wafer cookies

Pamela's cookies

Celiac Specialities powdered sugar donuts (those sound so good just writing about them!)

Gluten Free Pantry pie crust mix

Schwann's Turkey Meatball and Pasta dinner (this was ordered from their website)

Meijer has a good soup in their refrigerated deli section. It is called "Market of Meijer" soup and it is in a plastic container which can be put into the microwave (check the ingredients for the gluten-free ones).

Another idea was to start a notebook and include information on foods you have tried....take the label and paste into the notebook, mark down the foods you liked (and didn't like!), ~ have a cooking/baking section in this notebook and make notes on your recipes as to what you have tried that works, how you have altered the recipe and so on. This would be a great reference source for you.

If you have found a flour mix, or any other mix you like and prefer to use, make up a large batch and put it into a storage container and label it. Then you have it handy to use without getting out all the separate ingredients every time you want to bake.

It was mentioned to use an ice cream scoop (large, small, in-between size) to scoop out the gluten free batter. Gluten free batter can be very sticky and this is a good idea to use for cookies, muffins, etc.

There was a suggestion for some great bread using the Pamela's Bread Mix and adding in 1 tablespoon of fennel seed and 1 tablespoon of molasses. Sounds good!

Mark "GF" on the top or on the label of the gluten free foods in your refrigerator. This would be great when you have family members that do not eat gluten free.