

November 17, 2011

Release Date: November 23, 2011

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RESOURCES FOR PLANNING GLUTEN FREE MENUS

The holidays are here and it's time to start thinking about what's on the menu. For the host who plans to entertain guests with Celiac Disease the menu becomes a daunting task.

Celiac disease is an inherited auto immune digestive disease triggered by the ingestion of gluten containing grains which are wheat, barley, and rye. According to the Celiac Disease Foundation, Gluten Intolerance Group (GIG), celiac disease is a genetic disorder affecting 1 out of 133 persons in the US, potentially 2 million people. For every person diagnosed there are 80 people who are undiagnosed.

Untreated Celiac Disease can be life threatening. Celiacs are more likely to be afflicted with problems relating to malabsorption, including osteoporosis, tooth enamel defects, central and peripheral nervous system disease, pancreatic disease, internal hemorrhaging, organ disorders and gynecological disorders. It has also been linked to an increased risk of certain types of cancer, especially intestinal lymphoma, according to the University of Maryland Center for Celiac Research.

The only treatment for celiac disease is to avoid gluten containing foods which includes barley, barley malt, bulgur, couscous, emmer, malt, rye, semolina, spelt, wheat, wheat bran, and wheat starch. A multitude of foods and ingredients have these items making grocery shopping an exhaustive exercise. Eating out becomes a hazardous activity.

For help in planning gluten free menus I interviewed Lisa Coleman, MS, RD, LDN, the in-store Nutritionist at Martin's Food Market in Eldersburg, Maryland. Ms. Coleman, a licensed registered dietitian, conducts monthly nutrition classes at Martin's on a variety of topics. The most popular class is *Gluten Free Living*, which covers the basic essentials of a gluten free diet and gives participants the chance to taste and see all of the specialty gluten free foods available at their store. Ms. Coleman took me on a store tour and I was truly amazed at all the products offered. Everything from baking mixes, cold and hot cereals, breads, casserole mixes, frozen dinners, and even doughnuts.

Along with the class, individuals can schedule a consultation with her. Fees are \$20 an hour or \$50 for three hours and upon completion of the consultation, this fee is refunded in the form of a Martin's gift card. The consultation allows you to ask specific questions and learn to read food labels, essential for following a gluten free diet. Ms. Coleman emphasizes to patients that 95% of the gluten free diet is regular foods like fruits, vegetables, meats, and dairy products. With education and label reading skills you do not always need to rely on specialty gluten free foods. For example you can substitute rice, white or brown, as a binder for meatballs or meatloaf (see recipe).

As part of the class, participants get to observe and taste gluten free recipes prepared by Chef Janet Moranto, who teaches gluten free cooking classes for Carroll County Parks and Recreation in Westminster, MD. She has kindly provided the recipes featured in this article. Participants also bring their own recipes to share with the group which serves as a support network for individuals challenged with the disease. As I interviewed Ms. Coleman it was clear she is passionate about her position at Martin's, a non-traditional job in the field of dietetics. She explained, "This is my dream job and the perfect place to provide education to people since this is where they make their food decisions. The grocery store offers thousands of products which I can immediately access to teach consumers how to make healthier food decisions."

Since gluten free has no official definition as specified by the Food and Drug Administration, individuals must become comfortable reading food labels for gluten-containing ingredients. Because of this, individuals really need education and personal assistance. Martin's is meeting this need and consumers are responding enthusiastically.

GLUTEN FREE RECIPES – Chef Janet Moranto

MEATBALLS IN BBQ SAUCE

1 pound ground meat (chicken, turkey, beef, or sausage)
Salt, pepper, or spice to taste
1 cup cooked rice, white or brown
2 eggs, beaten
Grated cheese

Mix together all ingredients with cheese being the last. Form into golf-ball sized pieces and place on a parchment paper lined baking sheet. Bake at 375° until golden brown and firm to the touch. Add homemade BBQ sauce.

BBQ Sauce

24 ounces tomato sauce
1/4 cup dark brown sugar
2 tablespoons deli mustard
1 1/2 cups water

Heat all ingredients together stirring well to combine and prevent from burning. Cook on low temperature to thicken and add to meatballs.

RICE STUFFING

1 cup rice, cooked
1 small onion, chopped
4 stalks of celery, chopped
2 tablespoons butter
1 tablespoon thyme
1 tablespoon tarragon
Salt and pepper to taste

Chop onions and celery into equal sized pieces. In a pan, sauté onions and celery with 2 tablespoons butter for 5-6 minutes or until onions are translucent. Add cooked rice (your preference). Add thyme, tarragon, salt and pepper. If you plan on stuffing a fowl, allow the stuffing to cool before stuffing. If you are using as a side dish, bake it in a casserole dish at 350° for 10-15 minutes or until heated through.

PIE CRUST

1/4 cup potato starch
1 cup rice flour
1 cup tapioca flour
Pinch of salt
1 stick butter, cut into pieces
Cold water

In a bowl, combine the flours, salt, and cut butter until small pieces form. Add a little cold water and mix. Keep adding water until the mixture clumps together in a ball. Roll out immediately. Do not refrigerate or the crust will not roll out properly. Roll it out as thin as possible; if it is too thick it will have the consistency of cardboard. Use for your pie recipe as soon as possible.

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