

Celiac disease and *gluten sensitivity*

Almost every week I get calls from people who are diagnosed with celiac disease, non-celiac gluten sensitivity, or some other condition, and are advised not to eat gluten. Celiac is rare, and only one percent of people worldwide have celiac disease. While it is not certain what exactly causes celiac, it is a genetic disorder. Non-gluten sensitivity, however, is increasing. I will explain the differences further on.

While many still think eating gluten-free is a fad, it is becoming commonplace, not because it's a fad but for medical reasons. For some it is literally life-saving, and for others, it is the difference between feeling sick all the time and feeling well.

So what is gluten? Gluten is a protein primarily found in wheat, barley, and rye. In those affected by it, the body cannot break it down and it wreaks havoc on their digestive system. Gluten also causes inflammation in the body, so for those with autoimmune diseases the body sees gluten as an invader and creates antibodies to fight this invader.

Individuals formally diagnosed with celiac disease cannot have any gluten. Oddly, they have different levels of sensitivity to gluten. While some will just have minor gastrointestinal issues if they eat gluten, others can have a serious or life-threatening reaction from coming in contact with gluten. In either celiac or non-gluten sensitivity, gluten causes a reaction in the body.

At the present time, there is no formal diagnosis for non-celiac gluten sensitivity. However, people can have a host of symptoms from gluten such as rashes, psoriasis, migraines, headaches, joint pain, fatigue, depression/anxiety, brain fog, trouble concentrating, weight loss/gain, gas, cramping/bloating, dental issues, and more. A sensitivity is not an


allergy, but the body can still react to the trigger. The only way to detect if gluten is the culprit is to do an elimination diet where one eliminates gluten from his/her diet for a time and then reintroduces it to see if the symptoms come back.

Many people who have chosen to eat gluten-free for health reasons have seen many benefits, particularly weight loss, more energy, fewer sinus issues, and allergies.



However, there are many gluten-free products that are high in sugar and calories so replacing gluten-containing products with these gluten-free products regularly will not necessarily result in weight loss and these products are not necessarily healthier.

Gluten has been around for centuries, yet our food supply is different from our parents' and grandparents' generations. Interestingly, years ago bread was made by hand, kneaded, and let sit overnight before it was baked. Today, everything is processed by machines, which do all the work.

There is much more to being gluten-free. For the most severe cases, you need to know how to set up a gluten-free kitchen. Also, learning the difference between certified gluten-free and gluten-free in packaging labels, and packing gluten-free school lunches is important. For information, visit celiac.org. 

Shelley Nachum is a personal chef, specializing in customized healthy and gluten-free cooking. Chef Shelley completed the GREAT Kitchens Training provided by the National Foundation for Celiac Awareness.

by *Chef Shelley Nachum*



Gluten-Free Sesame Soba Noodles

Salt

- 1/2 pound soba noodles (read label for gluten-buckwheat is gluten-free)
- 1/4 cup honey
- 1/4 cup gluten-free soy sauce (gluten-free Tamari or Bragg Liquid Aminos)
- 2 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 2 teaspoons toasted sesame oil
- One 2-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and grated
- 1 large clove garlic, grated or finely chopped
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 1 cup frozen shelled edamame, thawed
- 2 large carrots, coarsely grated
- 1 small bunch scallions, very thinly sliced on an angle
- 3 tablespoons mixed black sesame seeds and toasted white sesame seeds

Bring a pot of salted water to a boil. Add the soba noodles and cook until al dente. Drain. Meanwhile, combine the honey, gluten-free soy sauce, vinegar, sesame oil, ginger, and garlic in a large bowl. Whisk in the olive oil. Add edamame, carrots, scallions, and soba to the bowl and toss. Garnish with sesame seeds.



Curry-Coconut Chicken with Honey Mustard

- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 egg, beaten
- 2 cups shredded coconut
- 2 tsp. curry powder
- 2 lbs. chicken breast tenders (Check with grocer to ensure that chicken is not in a solution containing gluten or injected with anything containing gluten)
- 1/2 cup honey
- 1/2 cup Dijon mustard

Heat oven to 375°. Grease jelly roll pan or large cookie sheet. Mix milk and eggs in bowl. Mix coconut and curry powder in shallow dish. Dip chicken into milk mixture, then coat with coconut curry mixture. Place in pan. Bake uncovered 10 minutes, turn chicken. Bake uncovered 5 to 8 minutes longer or until no longer pink in the center. Mix honey and mustard; serve with chicken.