



GIVING UP GLUTEN



Satisfying Schnitzel

- 4 chicken cutlets
- ½ cup potato starch
- 2 eggs
- spices of your choice
- oil for frying

You will need three separate bowls in the preparation of these cutlets. In bowls one and three, put potato starch mixed with the spices. Put the eggs in the second bowl.

Heat oil in frying pan. Take each cutlet and dip in first, second, and third bowl, in order, then place in hot oil. Fry each cutlet 3-4 minutes until golden brown and flip to other side for another 3-4 minutes.



Pesach was only seven weeks ago, but for most of us, the work of ridding the house of every speck of *chometz*, switching into a different mode of cooking, and giving up favorites like pizza and danishes, is a distant memory.

But imagine that you had to switch your kitchen over for Pesach ... and never switch back! That's basically the situation Adina Lederer found herself in almost two years ago, when not one, but two of her four children were diagnosed with celiac disease (CD).

"Celiac is an autoimmune disease in which a person cannot process gluten," Adina explains from her home in Bergenfield, New Jersey. "Gluten is present in wheat, barley, rye, and most oats. If a person with CD ingests foods with gluten, he damages the villi [small hair-like protuberances lining the small intestine that absorb nutrients] and won't be able to absorb his food."

Adina, who was a third-grade teacher for many years and is now a parenting coach, speaks in a self-assured, pragmatic manner. "CD is estimated to affect one out of every 133 people," she says. "There's no medication for it. It can only be controlled through diet."

She emphasizes that celiac disease is different from an allergy or sensitivity to gluten, because celiac disease actually damages the stomach, and the consequences range from stomach pain and cramps to arrested growth and weight gain. "The constant pains and lack of nutrition can even affect one's moods," Adina explains. "No child can cope very well under these conditions."

Fortunately, Adina's pediatrician was sharp enough to run the right tests when she reported her children's symptoms. Once one child tested positive, a second child's symptoms — which had been misinterpreted as a possible lactose allergy — suddenly made sense. In fact, the entire family had to be evaluated.

The news that half her children had celiac disease hit hard. "Adopting a gluten-free lifestyle was stressful," avers Adina. "You have to figure out what you need to do

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on the physical level, and then you have to emotionally absorb the idea that your whole life will change."

It's not an easy pill for kids to swallow either: imagine telling your pizza-and-cookie-loving children that they'll have to give up their favorite foods — forever. "Eating gluten-free isn't like going on a diet," Adina warns. "You can't cheat. Even the smallest amount of gluten can do damage. My older one will get stomach problems; the younger one won't feel it, but it will damage his intestines nevertheless."

While Adina had been accustomed to cooking fresh, healthy family suppers most days of the week, many of which were celiac-friendly, she says the real challenge lay in snack foods, convenience suppers, and eating out.

Gone were the days of grabbing a donut, a bagel, grilled cheese sandwiches, macaroni. While Adina threw herself into networking, and slowly discovered lists of permitted items and gluten-product substitutes, she realized that last-minute menus were a thing of the past.

"I learned that I always had to be one step ahead of the game," she says. "I had to have my kitchen stocked with the right ingredients. My older son was seventeen, the other one twelve, and they needed to eat, and eat well!"

The help that poured forth from family and friends was invaluable. "We have great friends. They dropped off recipes, gluten-free chalos, helped out in many ways. It's so important to connect to other people in the same situation, who can share information, recipes, and sources for products."

SOCIALIZING WITH CELIAC

What about socializing in other people's homes — visiting Bubby and Zeidy, going to friends for a Shabbos meal? "My family and friends learned that if they make cholent for us, first they have to clean the pot really well so there's no residue of gluten," Adina says. "Then the barley has to be replaced with something else — I use brown rice instead." In general meat meals are easier to prepare gluten-free than dairy meals.

For a teenage boy, navigating social situations while dealing with celiac presents many hurdles. "It's really hard to send your son to a bar mitzvah and know he won't be able to eat most of the food," Adina says. "Some kid-friendly foods, like French fries, aren't a problem if they're cooked alone. But if they're fried in the same oil as chicken nuggets, which have a coating, they become 'contaminated' and are no longer safe to eat."

Going to camp presents similar problems. Adina has since discovered that some places accommodate gluten-free diets. However, there are many situations where she has to send special food for her sons. Now that her oldest son is finishing high school, she's already thinking ahead to when he'll spend a year learning in Eretz Yisrael, and how she'll accommodate him. Still, she refuses to let diet dictate her family's choices. "You choose your goal first, then you work around it," she maintains.

She's also been diligent in teaching her kids to advocate for themselves. Unlike most of their friends, they've acquired the reflex to think about more than the right brachah before they put something into their mouths. And having to confront this challenge, avows Adina, helped her sons gain a certain maturity.

THE WORLD OF GLUTEN-FREE COOKING

If you can't use anything made out of wheat, barley, rye, and many oats, what's left to cook with? Flours can be made out of rice, quinoa, and beans; there's also cornmeal and our old Pesach friend, potato starch. "I make Pesach food all year



Crustless Sweet Potato Pie

Based on a *Kosher by Design* recipe, modified to be gluten-free.

- 3-4 large sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into cubes
- ½ cup sugar
- ½ cup soy milk
- 1 large egg, beaten
- 3 Tbsp margarine, cut into slices
- ½ tsp vanilla
- ½ cup brown sugar
- ⅓ cup all-purpose gluten-free flour
- 3 Tbsp margarine, melted
- ½ cup pecan pieces

Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).

Lightly spray a 2 quart/liter rectangular or round baking dish with nonstick cooking or oil spray; set aside.

In large pot, bring 2 inches of water to boil. Add sweet potatoes; cover and cook for 25-30 minutes (until tender). Drain and return to pot.

Add sugar, soy milk, egg, margarine, and vanilla to the sweet potatoes. Using the back of a wooden spoon, gently mix the ingredients, not mashing the sweet potatoes too much.

Transfer mixture to baking dish. In a small bowl, combine the brown sugar, flour, melted margarine, and pecan pieces. Sprinkle topping over the sweet potatoes. Bake uncovered for 25 minutes until set.

long,” Adina says wryly. (On Pesach, by the way, the boys eat two types of special gluten-free matzoh — one imported from England and the other made in Lakewood — that are made from uncontaminated oats.)

Adina learned to read food labels and keep up on celiac newsletters. She ferreted out sources of gluten substitutes the same way we look for substitutes for dairy in pareve baking. She learned to decipher the code words every celiac needs to know; for example, “malt” is made from barley, and is thus a no-no. Certain nosh foods that appear innocent enough, like licorice and sour belts, and even some chocolates, contain wheat, while ominous-sounding breakfast cereals like Chex and Cocoa/Fruity Pebbles are perfectly okay.

The trickiest part is avoiding “contamination,” which means that even tiny amounts of gluten products must not mix in with gluten-free food. Adina does keep one shelf of foods containing gluten for those in the family who can eat it. But she has to supervise to ensure that no mixing takes place, with the same kind of care the rest of us exercise when we make Shabbos in our Pesach kitchen while eating challah in the dining room.

The Lederers go through such gymnastics every Shabbos, when they make *hamotzi* on a small amount of challah and then whisk away the bread and crumbs. “I haven’t yet found a good gluten-free challah, and I never baked my own in the past,” Adina sighs. “But that’s one of my projects for this summer: I’m going to learn to bake a really good gluten-free challah.”

“Most gluten-free baked goods are pretty good,” she admits. “There are some delicious bread mixes and frozen breads — their brachah is *shehakol*. There are wonderful brownie mixes for those times the kids announce their friends are coming over Shabbos afternoon at the last minute. Pesach brownie recipes are also great!” (She does note that many of these gluten-free items, while often healthier than their junk-food equivalents, are also more expensive. “I can’t enjoy those two-for-one pasta sales anymore.”)

Adina has made a conscious decision to keep her attitude positive, focusing not on what her family can’t eat, but what they can. “Our Shabbos table looks like everyone else’s, minus the bread,” she says. “We don’t tell ourselves, ‘We’re eating gluten-free food’; we say, ‘We’re eating delicious food.’ I’ve found gluten-free frozen pizza crusts, and in the summer we barbecue a lot; I’ve even found gluten-free hamburger buns!

“Lots of things in life don’t go the way we expected, or the way we wanted them to,” she says. “But you can’t just run away! We do what we have to do for our kids.” And she was rewarded by a glowing doctor’s report: six months after making the switch, the children’s health scores were back to normal, and they had suffered no ill effects. This, for the Lederers, was proof positive that continuing with a gluten-free diet is the best remedy for assuring the continued health of their affected children.

“Look,” Adina concludes, “Everybody has something they have to deal with. But every problem has its solution.” ■



Peanut Butter Brownies

A Lederer family favorite

- ½ cup peanut butter
- ⅓ cup oil
- ¾ cup packed brown sugar
- ¾ cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 tsp vanilla
- 1 cup all-purpose gluten-free flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- ¼ tsp salt
- 12 oz (340g) chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).

Beat first four ingredients together until creamy, then add eggs and vanilla. Mix in flour, baking powder, and salt, and spread into greased 9x13-inch pan; sprinkle chocolate chips on top. Bake for 5 minutes. Remove from oven and swirl batter. Return to oven and bake for 30 minutes.

