

Guide

Gluten-free Diets for

Coeliac disease



What the food service provider needs to know



This brief has been compiled in cooperation with Coeliac UK

INTRODUCTION

There is an increasing awareness, both among caterers and in the population as a whole, that food allergies and intolerances are widespread, and what may have been regarded a decade ago as a fad can in fact have serious and far-reaching consequences. This guide aims to help food service providers to produce meals for customers with coeliac disease.

- Dealing with this problem will involve communication with the customer and staff training
- Coeliacs who need a special diet need to be encouraged to communicate their requirements

COELIAC DISEASE (pronounced ceeliac)

- Coeliac disease is a life-long inflammatory condition that causes the surface of the small intestine to be damaged by gluten
- Coeliac disease prevents proper absorption of nutrients leading to severe illness, resembling malnutrition
- The only treatment for coeliacs is a strict gluten-free diet
- Coeliac disease exists across all ages, from infants to the elderly
- A gluten-free diet is a lifelong necessity for coeliacs
- Dermatitis Herpetiformis (DH) is an associated condition, also requiring a gluten-free diet
- It is thought to affect about 1 in 80 people in the UK
- It is often diagnosed after weaning, when cereals are introduced into the diet, but can also be diagnosed at a later stage in life
- If coeliac disease is not treated it can lead to anaemia and bone disease

GLUTEN

- Gluten is the mixture of proteins found in wheat, rye and barley
- Processed foods can often contain hidden gluten

- A large number of gluten-free products such as bread, cakes and pasta are now available
- Gluten is contained in many manufactured or processed foods where wheat flour is commonly used as a processing aid, a binder, filler or as a carrier for flavourings and spices
- Foods to be avoided include:

❖ beer and lagers	❖ foods cooked in batter	❖ sausages
❖ biscuits	❖ made up dishes containing flour	❖ semolina
❖ bread rolls	❖ minced and tinned meats containing flour	❖ some breakfast cereals
❖ breadcrumbs	❖ pasta	❖ soup
❖ buns	❖ pastry	❖ soy sauce
❖ cakes		❖ sauces and gravies containing flour
❖ crispbread		

- If catering regularly for coeliacs in, for example, a staff restaurant or a residential establishment, Coeliac UK publish a Gluten-Free Food and Drink Directory. This is updated as new products are developed or reformulated. It also gives advice on sourcing gluten-free products such as sausages, baked goods and pasta.
- Often bulk supplies coming into catering premises such as sausages, soup or sauce mixes are removed from their original packaging prior to use by food handlers, and labels listing contents can become detached from the ingredient. When dealing with coeliacs, caterers must be certain of the provenance of the ingredients used and ensure that no confusion takes place

It is better to err on the side of caution. If complete assurances about content cannot be given then the ingredient in question should not be served to the coeliac.

COELIACS

It is the responsibility of the coeliac disease patient to make themselves and their requirements known. Food service providers can make this easier by dealing with coeliacs in a proactive, tactful and sensitive manner. Customers are usually the best source of information about suitable foods. Consulting on the meal content can help eliminate any misunderstandings. A happy customer is one who will return and bring more customers with them.

THE ROLE OF THE FOOD SERVICE PROVIDER

- Produce a specific operational procedure

For example, create a list of dishes that can be prepared without using gluten based ingredients

- Train staff to raise awareness and ensure the correct response when dealing with coeliacs

Serving staff, particularly, should not attempt to guess the content of dishes and give possibly false assurances about the absence of gluten if they do not know

- Coeliacs may feel embarrassed about revealing their condition and prefer to see if they can find a meal suitable to their requirements by searching the menu

Disseminating written information and providing the customer with the opportunity to inform you about special dietary requirements, remembering that any request for information should be received sympathetically and discretely, will help to reduce any discomfort experienced

- Most operations offering meals prepared from fresh ingredients will have no difficulty in finding alternative ingredients for coeliacs

All fresh unprocessed meat, fish, eggs, dairy products, vegetables, nuts, oils and fruits are gluten-free. Permitted carbohydrate foods can include potatoes, rice, cornmeal, polenta, pulses, pulse flours, cornflour, potato flour, arrowroot, sago, tapioca and sweet corn

CROSS CONTAMINATION

Cross contamination is possible in the kitchen and food service areas.

Items of preparation equipment that have been used with any of the ingredients on the prohibited list must be carefully washed and dried before preparing a gluten-free meal. Some examples of good practice include:

- Chips should be cooked in clean frying oil, not oil that has been used previously to cook breaded or battered products
- If a coeliac brings their gluten-free bread with them, separate butter or spread pots should be provided to prevent contamination with bread crumbs
- Bread boards that have been used for ordinary bread should not be used for gluten-free bread

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DISCLAIMER

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