

# Getting going with gluten-free

**NATALIE TIMPERIO**  
SENIOR INSIDEOUT EDITOR

Fat free, trans-fat-free, low in saturated fat, reduced sodium, 50 per cent fewer calories – gluten-free? These first few phrases may strike us as very familiar. In fact, each and every day we are bombarded with bold and bright letters, sometimes numbers, appearing on packaged foods, and even candy wrappers.

Nowadays, even McDonald's has resorted to listing all nutrition facts on their boxed burgers, albeit "nutrition" is a questionable use of wording here. We at least have a general idea of what this all means: it's "better for your health."

Well, what if you no longer had the option of eating half, or more, of these foods that say things like "fat-free" and instead, looked to foods that were gluten-free? "Gluten-free?" you say? That's right, nowadays, a growing number of people limit their intake of foods not fitting the gluten-free description.

First of all, the term "gluten allergy" does not distinguish between gluten intolerance and Celiac disease — which are two very different types of disorders. The symptoms for both Celiac disease and gluten intolerance are similar; however Celiac disease tends to be much more severe and damaging for the human body.

Basically, Celiac disease occurs when gluten triggers your immune system to overact causing antibodies to wear down the lining of your intestinal walls. Over time, your body is increasingly less able to absorb nutrients, causing serious health defects. Gluten intolerance, however, makes consuming gluten foods at least somewhat tolerable, with less discomfort.

Chloe Lenarduzzi, a

second-year economics student, identifies as having Celiac disease. However she had no idea that she was Celiac until she was tested: "I didn't have any symptoms, I only got tested because my mom, grandma, aunt and uncle were diagnosed."

Gluten intolerance and Celiac disease most often are a result of genetics. Chances are, if you are intolerant to gluten in some way, up to ten per cent of your immediate family will also have this same intolerance.

In fact, gluten intolerance and Celiac disease are relatively common. Distinguishing what is gluten is the first step. Gluten is a highly complex protein that is generally found in wheat, rye, barley and even oats.

This makes gluten highly present in many different types of foods such as breads, pastas, pizza, and even those stale bagels we all love from the Union Market — basically, the staple foods of a student diet. Now, can you imagine not being able to enjoy these everyday foods, and more?

Lenarduzzi emphasized that being Celiac "is very inconvenient. I can't eat any fast food or anything at school really, other than maybe a salad. So, it's difficult because I have to be careful of what I eat and I have to make a lot of stuff myself now. And, if I have anything I buy at a store or go out to eat I have to check and make sure that I can eat it. So, it's more annoying than anything else."

Although gluten intolerance and Celiac disease may go unnoticed, they can sometimes be identified by a variety of symptoms. The most common of these symptoms are gastrointestinal, such as diarrhoea and bloating.

However, other symptoms

may occur such as headaches, and even skin problems like eczema. Yet, the problem with identifying gluten intolerance or Celiac disease solely from such symptoms is no guarantee that gluten is the cause of your problems.

These symptoms can of course be an indicator of many other issues. The only sure-fire way to identify if you really do have a gluten allergy is through an elimination diet or, more commonly a visit to the doctor's.

An elimination diet means cutting all gluten containing foods from your diet for four to six weeks. The point of doing this is to empty your body of all potentially harmful foods, in this case those containing gluten.

Afterwards, reintroducing gluten foods back into your diet and determining how you feel based on your body's reaction to this reintroduction should determine whether or not you do in fact have gluten intolerance or Celiac disease.

However, an elimination diet of gluten is extremely restrictive, so more often than not people will turn to their medical professionals to seek out a diagnosis. Generally, this is conducted through a series of blood tests and an intestinal biopsy.

However, the issue here is that often these tests only pick up Celiac disease, rather than gluten intolerance. Since a small portion of the population has Celiac disease, a lot of the time gluten intolerance will not be detected, thus leaving many people with untreated symptoms.

In addition to those faulty genes, there is no cure to gluten intolerance or Celiac disease. The only way to cope is through a gluten-free diet. Although this may initially seem like an impossible lifestyle, nowadays an increasing number of food products are sold



CHRISTOPHER CHANG/SENIOR PHOTO EDITOR

Bagels are just one of many gluten containing foods.

gluten-free. Even some restaurants cater food that is gluten free.

Lenarduzzi noted that, although being prevented from eating some of her favourite foods, "most restaurants have something I can eat so it doesn't really change anything that I can do."

"I can obviously do the same things but what I eat when I

do has changed." Many health food stores such as Goodness Me! offer gluten-free foods, so, as Lenarduzzi further explained "I don't have to worry."

So, even with the highly socialized student life, going gluten-free is not necessarily the supposed "downer" that may initially be thought.

## Cooking with...

**Kaitlin Peters**

### Squash and Chickpea Moroccan Stew

#### Ingredients:

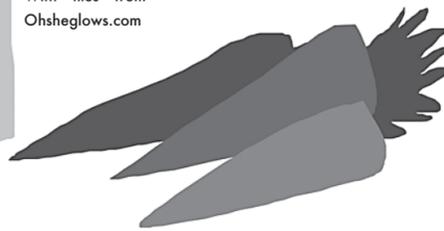
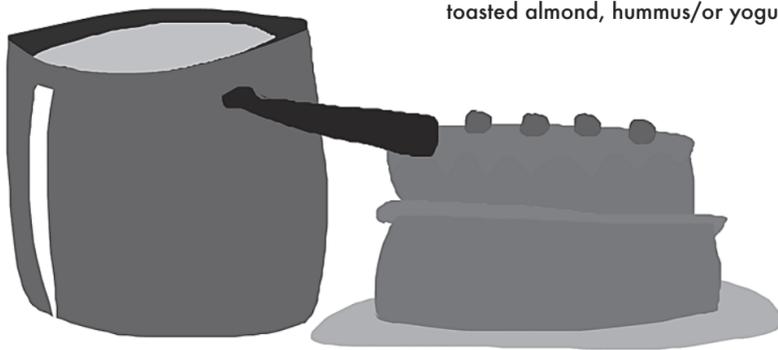
1 tbsp. olive oil  
1 medium yellow onion, small dice  
4 medium garlic cloves, small dice  
1/2 tsp. cinnamon  
Freshly ground black pepper (to taste)  
1/2 pound butternut squash  
1 large red potato  
2 cups low-sodium vegetable broth  
2 cups cooked chickpeas, drained and rinsed  
1 (14-ounce) can diced tomatoes, with juices

#### Directions:

1. Heat olive oil in a heavy-bottomed saucepan with a tight fitting lid over medium heat.
2. When oil simmers, add onion, garlic, and cinnamon, and season with freshly ground pepper to taste. Cook, stirring occasionally, until spices are aromatic and onions are soft and translucent, about 5 mins.
3. Add squash and potatoes, season with freshly ground pepper, stir to coat, and cook until just tender, about 10-15 mins.
4. Add broth, chickpeas, tomatoes, and their juices, and saffron. Bring mixture to a boil then reduce heat to low. Cover and simmer until squash is fork tender, about 10 mins.
5. Remove from heat and serve over couscous garnished with toasted almond, hummus/or yogurt.



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