

## Gluten Free Foods

These days, there's lots of talk as well as confusion about "Gluten free foods". What foods contain gluten? Why do some people need to avoid eating them? Many foods labeled as gluten free are naturally gluten free anyway. Here is "Gluten 101" to help shed more light on this topic.

### The Scoop on Gluten

#### Which foods contain gluten?

Gluten is a protein found in wheat AND in certain other grains, such as rye, barley, spelt, triticale, semolina, oats, bulgur, and kamut. Foods containing these grains need to be avoided, such as: breads, pasta, biscuits, muffins, crackers, pizza, croutons, cakes, pies, doughnuts, cereals, cookies, flour tortillas, pretzels, wafers, and breaded items such as chicken nuggets, UNLESS the label indicates that they are *gluten free*. A few companies such as Bob's Red Mill make certified gluten-free oats, which are processed to not be cross-contaminated with other grains. Some gravies and sauces, malt flavorings, as well as soy sauce contain gluten. Although beer contains gluten, there are a few gluten free beers available on the market.

#### Which grains ARE gluten free?

Rice, corn, quinoa, millet, amaranth, buckwheat, teff, and wild rice do not contain gluten. There are gluten-free flour mixes, pastas, breads, mixes for pizza dough, crackers, cereal/granola bars, and pastry baking mixes available labeled as gluten free.

#### Why do some people need to avoid gluten?

Some individuals have been diagnosed by a blood test with gluten intolerance (or celiac disease), a digestive condition triggered by eating foods containing gluten. For these people, eating gluten can create serious gastrointestinal symptoms such as pain, diarrhea and bloating, as well as other discomforts. Other people simply prefer to avoid gluten because they find they just "feel better" and have less bloating, better digestion, and more energy avoiding these foods.

#### What can people eat if they are following a gluten free diet?

Some safe foods include: fruits, vegetables, fish, poultry, beef, pork, eggs, nuts, seeds, beans, rice, potatoes, and most dairy products, as well as any grain-based foods made with gluten-free flours. Try the delicious gluten free recipe below.

### Portobella Mushroom Pizza

Six (2 mushroom) servings *Source: 2009 Western MA Jewish Ledger*

- 5 oz frozen (or canned) chopped spinach\*
- 1 tsp dried basil, crushed or 1T fresh chopped
- 12 Portobella mushrooms (3-4 inch diameter)
- 2 Tbsp butter or margarine, melted
- ¼ tsp salt
- 1½ cups shredded part skim mozzarella cheese

- ¼ tsp ground black pepper or to taste

- 2 medium tomatoes, diced

*Extra mozzarella and shredded parmesan cheeses for topping*

***Nutrition Facts:*** *Calories 180, Fat 8 gm, Saturated Fat 5 gm, Sodium 350, Carbohydrate 13 gm, Fiber 3 gm, Protein 13 gm*

*\*Tip: Frozen spinach boxes are usually 10 oz. If you place it in the refrigerator the night before, the next day you can break off half. This way the spinach can be easily mixed in with the cheese.*

**Directions:** Preheat oven to 350°F. Thaw spinach and press out liquid. In a bowl combine the spinach, cheese, basil, and pepper. Clean the mushrooms and remove the stems. Place them top side down on a lightly greased cookie sheet. Brush them with butter or margarine. Spoon about 2 Tbsp of the spinach mixture into each cap. Sprinkle with the diced tomatoes. Sprinkle the top with mozzarella and/or parmesan cheese to taste. Bake for 12 minutes or until heated through, or broil for 3 to 4 minutes and serve. (Alternate ideas for toppings: goat cheese with roasted red peppers or sundried tomatoes, or ground beef or turkey with minced garlic and cheddar cheese.)