

Free-from advice Ask the experts

Do you need help with your free-from cooking, or do you have a nutritional query? Email your question to nick.gregory@anthem-publishing.com



Q I am lactose intolerant, should I be worried about casein?

Casein is a protein found mainly in dairy products, so if you are avoiding all dairy products then your chances of consuming casein are low, but be cautious as some other foods also contain casein. Be wary when a product says lactose-free, as it may not be casein-free. When you go out for a meal to a restaurant, make sure your food is not cooked in butter, which will have traces of casein in.

You don't have to worry about not having casein in your diet, as there are plenty of other foods available where you can get the necessary amount of protein from.

LISA ROUKIN

Q My boyfriend has just been diagnosed with coeliac disease. Where do I start!?

Don't panic! Coeliac disease is certainly more serious than a mild gluten intolerance, but there are now so many gluten-free products available that you should be able to adjust to his new diagnosis without too much upheaval.

Coeliac disease means that coming into contact with any gluten can cause damage to the delicate lining of the intestines, resulting in uncomfortable digestive symptoms like diarrhoea, wind, constipation, pain, cramping and bloating and, in some cases, nausea and vomiting. Due to the 'blunting' of the small finger-like projections that line the intestine called 'villi', the disease also limits the body's ability to absorb nutrients from food.

In terms of what you can eat, the main foods to avoid are obvious – wheat-based products like bread, pasta and cereal – but there are lots of other foods containing gluten that may not be so obvious; ingredients like 'dextrin', 'brown rice syrup', 'hydrolysed vegetable protein', so ensure food is certified if buying pre-packaged.

Sticking to real, unprocessed whole foods is a nutritional win-win, but if that's not always practical, make friends with the 'Free-From' aisle in the supermarket, where you'll find plenty of GF alternatives to your boyfriend's fave foods. These days restaurants are more aware of gluten too and most have GF options