

## Shopping and Dining Out Affordably On a Gluten Free Diet

With the diagnostic rate of celiac disease rising from 1 per 100,000 people in the 1980's to around 20 people per 100,000 in 2003, it is surprising to realize how few restaurants offer dining options for people who have the condition. The condition causes the immune system to attack the intestine whenever products containing gluten are ingested. These foods include wheat, rye, barley, and oats- all common ingredients in most restaurant foods. While there are some restaurant chains that offer gluten free alternatives, they are far too rare. Even for people who choose to dine at home, gluten free foods can be expensive and hard to find.

Finding affordable options when shopping for gluten free foods can seem overwhelming, especially for people who have been recently diagnosed. For many people, the key is to take the time to learn about different substitutes for ingredients that contain gluten. Rice flour and gluten free flour mix are quite helpful, and when bought in bulk can offer surprisingly low prices. One of the most expensive decisions you can make when on a gluten free diet is to purchase prepared foods.

A trip to your local grocery store will offer a selection of prepared gluten free foods, and the one thing that they all have in common is that they are shockingly expensive. By taking the opportunity to learn how to make these foods from scratch, however, you will be able to save a significant amount of money. Substituting wheat based products for those made from corn can be a great way to retain taste while eliminating gluten and the cost comparison is actually not too different. When you learn to prepare your gluten free foods from scratch, you will find that you are able to save a great deal of money.

Essentially, if there is a gluten free product available at the store, you can learn to make it at home. A simple Internet search can turn up gluten free recipes for everything from cookies and pancakes to bread, tortillas, and more. You will also find that these recipes offer room for experimenting, enabling you and your family to come up with ideas that

taste great while fitting into your budget more easily. Working to create a diverse menu of homemade foods can be surprisingly fun when you get the entire family involved.

While it would certainly be nice if more restaurants offered gluten free alternatives, the simple truth is that it isn't going to happen overnight. Gluten free meals do cost more to make and the restaurant industry, especially fast food restaurants, are looking for the cheapest foods that can be sold at higher prices. Taking a look at local restaurants will likely offer a few gluten free menu choices where you live, but you will almost certainly find it easier and less expensive to create your own meals. Gluten free shopping doesn't have to break the bank, however, and finding the right ingredients to make the foods that you love the most can be affordable as well as fun.