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THE RIGHT CRUNCH.
alternative flour batters

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Monica Glass
SWEETENS UP
the wheatless life

— * —
Breads, pastas and pizza
GO GLUTEN-FREE

Nothing excites a pastry chef more than all things crust and cake, but gluten allergies make dessert a recipe for disaster. Sometimes it's a diagnosis of celiac disease, or one given to a family member, but the epidemic has only driven pastry chefs to apply varied strategies to come up with desserts so sweet, their diners don't miss the wheat.

SWEET SANS WHEAT

Let the gluten intolerant
have their dessert
and eat it too

by **Andrea K. Hammer**

GIVING UP GLUTEN

Monica Glass, the pastry chef at Clio in Boston, remembers when flights of stairs winded her. For years, doctors couldn't diagnose her ailments.

"Life was exhausting me. After lots of testing, I found out that I have to be gluten-free," she says. "The news was heartbreaking, but I could also finally feel some relief in knowing that I could finally reclaim my life with just a change of diet."

Gluten-free for more than three years, Glass now has a tremendous amount of energy. But as someone who loves bread, cake and pizza, she faces boundless temptations.

"But knowing how I felt before keeps me from ever wanting to eat gluten again," she says. "I'm incredibly grateful to be able to live my life and hopefully make a difference in someone else's."

Glass suggests avoiding the intimidation factor of big names and different flours. She also recommends starting with naturally gluten-free ingredients, learning about flours and their properties and studying their baking reactions. Then, experiment—and write down the recipes for tweaking.

"Whenever rhubarb season rolls around, memories of my grandma's garden and making rhubarb

pies excite me to find new ways to incorporate rhubarb into a dessert," she says, referring to her rhubarb creamsicle (recipe, plateonline.com). "I remember spending afternoons slurping orange creamsicle pops while picking the wild honeysuckles around my house, so, to me, everything flowed, and I was inspired to incorporate that feeling of excitement into an

elegant dessert."

Pastry Chef Samantha Sherman at Root Down and Linger in Denver, Colo., doesn't suffer from gluten intolerance, but recognizes a need for gluten-free sweets.

"I love the creativity of dessert, but I love to feed people more," she says. "Making gluten-free desserts is a lot easier than you think; you just have to think outside the box. People—myself included—try and create something gluten free and want it to be a replica of a gluten-full item. Focus more on the flavors and go from there."

Sherman's chicory milk chocolate mousse (recipe, plateonline.com) is a gluten-free version of another dessert at Linger. "But instead of Ovaltine, I use chicory. You can use it in so many applications," she says.

At Chicago's Naha, Pastry Chef Craig Harzewski learned about celiac disease after a server was diagnosed. "Her story motivated me to—when possible—manipulate the menu to include options for those who share her situation," he says.

Like Sherman, he says the most important thing is to focus first on


VIDEO EXCLUSIVE
Check out our
interview with
Craig Harzewski
at plateonline.com.

Nouveau German chocolate cake, Pastry Chef Stella Parks, Table 310, Lexington, Ky. RECIPE, p. 85.

Let gluten-free desserts be what they should be:

DESSERTS WITHOUT FLOUR, NOT DESSERTS WITH AN AGENDA. *Stella Parks*







Rhubarb cream-sicle, \$9, Pastry Chef Monica Glass, Clio, Boston. RECIPE, plateonline.com.

Craig Harzewski creates gluten-free desserts at Chicago's Naha, but notes that his bread making occurs in the same environment as all of the other production, so his is not an entirely gluten-free kitchen, and makes sure guests are aware of that fact.

"Although there may not be gluten in the item, and I work with the utmost cleanliness, it is airborne in my kitchen. I cannot judge one's sensitivity; I can only ensure that I have

GUEST ADVISORY

not added gluten products to a recipe," he says.

At Table 310 in Lexington, Ky., the pizza dough shares a lowboy

with the dessert prep area, so "the risk of cross-contamination has gone from negligible to inevitable," says Pastry Chef Stella Parks.

She still puts gluten-free desserts on the menu, but they don't carry that label. Servers can describe them; if asked, they let patrons know about the cross-contamination risk.

gluten-free ingredients. Although many alternative flours, gels and chemicals may mimic desserts made with flour, Harzewski thinks that they'll never be the same; for example, trying to force a gluten-free bread pudding is challenging. Instead, he works with custards, mousses and fruits—carrying the heaviest "weight" on the plate—and then plays with textures and temperatures.

His summer almond dacquois with macerated strawberries, anise hysop and balsamic caramel (\$12, recipe,

plateonline.com) "lends itself well to adaptations," he says. "By folding whipped cream into the chilled custard, it [creates] a smooth mousse. When making the dacquois, be sure to carefully fold the dry ingredients into the meringue. This will yield an airy sponge."

ALT FLOUR POWER

At Table 310 in Lexington, Ky., Pastry Chef Stella Parks recommends thinking about what you want to make and using gluten-free flours to make it better.

"There are so many gluten-free flours, it doesn't make sense to marry a one-size-fits-all gluten-free blend. For example, in my German chocolate cake (recipe, p. 85), I use toasted and ground coconut and pecans to replace much of the flour as well as roasted soy flour, which has a nutty flavor," she says. "It tastes even better than a traditional German chocolate cake," she says.

Denise Cumming, owner/creator of Pip's Place: The Gluten Free Cakery in New York City, first started baking gluten-free desserts after her daughter was diagnosed with celiac disease.

"I knew something was wrong, but couldn't get a proper diagnosis," Cumming says, recalling that a gastroenterologist ultimately identified the problem.

"At first, Olivia's brothers thought they weren't going to eat gluten-free but they couldn't tell," she says. "Baking was harder. I [had many] failed recipes."

Cumming recommends taking a favorite recipe, and substituting an all-purpose gluten-free blend for the wheat flour. Check the texture and experiment.

"Someday, I hope to market the blends I use. Each gives a different texture," she notes, as in her carrot and date muffins (\$3.25, recipe, plateonline.com). Cumming mixes several flours together to create the perfect consistency.

According to Parks, the mistake is conflating gluten-free baking with healthy baking. "Some people think, 'so long as I'm cutting out white flour, I might as well replace it with brown rice flour, swap sugar for agave nectar and use olive oil instead of butter. Those recipes give gluten-free desserts a bad name because they're not gluten free so much as they're diet. Let gluten-free desserts be what they should be: desserts without flour, not desserts with an agenda," she says.

Andrea K. Hammer is a Philadelphia-based food writer.

by **Andrea K. Hammer**

Monica Glass, the pastry chef at Clio in Boston, doesn't back down from a challenge. After years of health problems and a diagnosis of celiac disease, she was constantly being told she should open a gluten-free bakery. But because Glass loves working in restaurants, she was determined to figure out the necessary adjustments in the kitchen—without making radical changes.

How did you find out you had celiac disease?

Work was exhausting me. For years, doctors couldn't diagnose my ailments. I had just started seeing a new doctor, and he immediately put me on an intravenous iron therapy program. After lots of testing, we found out that I have to be gluten-free.

Has it been hard to stick with the diet?

I have a tremendous amount of energy, and feel healthier and more alive. As someone who loves bread, cakes, donuts and pizza, I face boundless temptations, especially in the pastry kitchen. But knowing exactly how I felt before keeps me from ever wanting to eat gluten again. I never want to feel as drained and lifeless as I previously had.

What is your perception of and approach to making gluten-free desserts?

Too often, gluten-free foods have a stigma of being dense, gummy, bland and gross. I definitely didn't want to do that. I also feel it's important not to segregate diners for having dietary restrictions. So I sought to find creative ways to incorporate more naturally gluten-free things in my desserts, therefore making restaurant-style desserts that would make anyone happy, whether you can eat gluten or not. My goal is to create desserts that you'll never realize are gluten-free because they're just so darned delicious.

How do guests react to your gluten-free desserts?

GLASS



Christopher Gaudio

HALF FULL

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PASTRY CHEF MONICA GLASS
LETS FELLOW CELIAC
SUFFERERS HAVE THEIR
JUST DESSERTS

Celiacs who dine in the restaurant are always happy and surprised to discover that half of my menu is gluten-free, especially because so often they cannot eat dessert out. I really pay attention to that because I want them to truly be able to

enjoy the experience just as anyone else would. There was a diner who had taken one of my classes at Sur La Table, and he was so excited when he saw my name on the dessert menu that he ordered all three of the gluten-free desserts available at the time. Seeing him so excited and really enjoying himself made me so happy and reminded me why I love doing this.

What are the lessons learned from the restaurants where you've worked?

I've learned so many instrumental things and I keep learning more every day.

At Gotham, I learned to focus on flavor. So I take every effort to make sure what I'm putting out is so delicious guests will always be craving more. At Le Bernardin, I learned the importance of paying attention to the little details, textures, shapes and temperatures—and being precise, doing things right and never taking shortcuts. At 10 Arts, I learned how to develop my creativity and management style. I learned how to delegate. At Fish, I learned I can't do it all.

How have these positions allowed you to develop a niche as a gluten-free expert?

People come to me with questions, advice and tips for delicious desserts. I've never considered myself an expert, but rather I feel maybe they trust that I've made enough mistakes and can help them avoid those same mistakes. And from those mistakes, I've built up a special knowledge of gluten-free living.

How does your work as a pastry chef allow you to express your creativity?

As a pastry chef, I get to play around with so many amazing ingredients. It allows me to express my creativity because I'm constantly dreaming up different ingredient and flavor combos. It also allows me to satisfy my artistic side because I do want my desserts to be pretty and eye-catching. You do eat with your eyes first.

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What was the hardest thing about being diagnosed with celiac disease?

When I was given orders to go gluten-free, it wasn't so much a shock, as I had suffered all the classic symptoms, and had started to experiment with homeopathic remedies since I was desperate to feel better. It was more that I felt lost. The world I knew was full of sugar, butter and flour, and it scared me that I might not be able to do what I love to do—bake. But now I'm continuously exploring new ways to make food everyone can enjoy, and you don't have to feel sorry for me. While I do miss things like pizza, a warm slice of "real" bread and gooey cinnamon rolls, there's so much I've learned and experienced by becoming gluten-free. Plus, you can't beat the feeling of waking daily with the energy of a fireball

Monica Glass, Clio, Boston



I was born with multiple food allergies. But even so, learning I needed to avoid gluten was tough. The biggest challenge for me was eating out and attending industry events. There's still a need for awareness when it comes to how to prepare and handle food for folks with food allergies and intolerances. Thankfully, things are getting better. —Elizabeth Barbone, *glutenfreebaking.com, Troy, N.Y.*

Growing up as a pasta, pizza and bread eater, I was told never to eat them again, and that was the most devastating news to receive. The hardest part was that my papa, Franco, chef/owner of La Riviera Trattoria, and my brother, Antonio, sous chef, were worried as to what they were going to cook for me. I researched and found all the great Italian products that would make gluten-free foods taste just as good as the foods I grew up with.

Maria Carlino, La Riviera Trattoria, Clifton, N.J.



The hardest part about having celiac disease is not being able to eat so many of the beautiful foods I grew up with in Italy. I still make the pastas and breads for my clients, so it's hard to not want to try things. Unfortunately, my daughter also has celiac disease, so it's sad not to be able to share some of my culture with her

Mauro Mafri, Chicago

