

## Gluten-free fare eases worries for celiacs on vacation

Written by Christie Rotondo  
Friday, 05 August 2011 12:56 -

---

When hitting the Jersey shore, many vacationers look forward to tucking into funnel cakes, ice cream cones and giant pizza slices. But for someone with celiac disease, finding a good meal on vacation isn't a cakewalk.

According to the Celiac Disease Foundation, celiac disease is an inherited autoimmune condition in which the body cannot tolerate gluten, a protein found in all forms of wheat (including durum, semolina, spelt, kamut, einkorn and faro) and grains such as rye, barley and triticale. For those with the condition, ingesting foods containing gluten can cause a toxic reaction in the body and damage the small intestine.

Michael Savett, a Philadelphia lawyer who lives in Cherry Hill, was prompted to start a blog called Gluten Free Philly when his oldest son was diagnosed with celiac disease. The blog profiles gluten-free restaurants and bakeries in the Delaware Valley and contains information about gluten-free products and events.

Savett said he often takes trips to the shore, many of them to Ocean City, and his readers send him information about gluten-free restaurants and bakeries in Ocean City, Cape May, the Wildwoods and surrounding areas.

He said that finding a good place to eat at the shore where he doesn't have to worry about his son getting sick is one of the most difficult aspects of dealing with gluten intolerance. Planning is the key to having successful meals out for a family with dietary allergies such as celiac, he said.

"It's a lot of research," said Savett. "You can't just hop in a car and try any place you feel like."

He said that awareness has increased since his son was diagnosed with celiac about eight years ago, which has led to more restaurants offering gluten-free options.

"We would have to call ahead to where we were traveling and talk to a restaurant's manager or chef," said Savett.

## Gluten-free fare eases worries for celiacs on vacation

Written by Christie Rotondo  
Friday, 05 August 2011 12:56 -

---

Now, many restaurants that offer gluten-free dishes are listed online or in dining guides.

“We used to have to call food manufacturers and ask if their products had gluten in them,” he added. “Now that’s become a lot easier.”

Grains and the flours made from them that are tolerable to celiacs include

rice, corn, soy, potato, tapioca, beans, sorghum, quinoa, millet, buckwheat, arrowroot, amaranth and flax, as well as nut flours. Research indicates that uncontaminated oats consumed in moderation are tolerated by most celiacs.

Savett carries dining cards with him that provide information about celiac disease and the dangers of cross contamination with wheat products, and he hands them out to restaurant chefs and managers when he dines out.

“For example, gluten-free pizza can be made in the same oven that regular pizza is made in, as long as it’s cooked in a separate pan or on top of a piece of tin foil,” he said.

“If a cutting board has been used to cut bread, and that same cutting board is used for a gluten-free meal, it will become contaminated.”

Savett said another issue with accommodating a gluten allergy is how it affects the wallet. He said gluten-free entrees are typically more expensive in restaurants because the ingredients that go into them usually cost more than regular restaurant food ingredients.

“Wheat is relatively cheap in comparison to things like tapioca flour and xanthum gum,” Savett said, both of which are wheat substitutions sometimes used in gluten-free dishes.

## Gluten-free fare eases worries for celiacs on vacation

Written by Christie Rotondo  
Friday, 05 August 2011 12:56 -

---

He said that when visiting Ocean City, his family normally takes a trip to Pure Tacos, where the owner, Ted Schroeder, also has celiac disease. There, one can buy two gluten-free tacos for \$6.50.

Schroeder claims that the restaurant is 100 percent gluten-free, making contamination almost impossible.

“There was little to no decent gluten-free food on the boardwalk, and we saw an opportunity to provide that service,” Schroeder said. “We get probably more than 10 celiacs a day that come in and tell us how excited they are to have food they can eat safely at the beach.”

As a celiac himself, Schroeder said he understood the difficulty of trying to find a good place to eat at the shore without having to worry about the food making him ill.

“Speaking from experience trying to find gluten-free food, I would say it is extremely difficult,” he said. “In some cases, you may find one or two things a celiac could have, but one of the primary features of our brand was to make sure that all of our menu items and ingredients are gluten-free.”

Schroeder said he has developed a loyal customer base, and many patrons refer friends and family there when they are visiting Ocean City.

“I think smart businesses are beginning to learn that gluten-free offerings can lead to increased customer loyalty,” he said.

Other shore restaurants are also beginning to offer gluten-free fare as well.

Bella Vida Garden Café with locations in West Cape May and Wildwood specializes in healthy,

## Gluten-free fare eases worries for celiacs on vacation

Written by Christie Rotondo  
Friday, 05 August 2011 12:56 -

---

wholesome options and offers a gluten-free menu. Breakfast is served all day. According to the website, owners Chris and Jeannie Monge “felt the need for a place in Cape May that offered healthy choices for their favorite meal of the day.”

Green Street Market in Rio Grande is a grocery store that carries natural whole foods and gluten-free foods. According to the website, the staff is trained to assist customers in selecting the best choices for their health.

Savett’s one concern about the popularity of gluten-free dining and cooking is a lack of understanding about the importance of contamination for someone with celiac disease.

“Gluten-free is a bit trendy right now,” he said. “Celebrities claim they feel better when they eat gluten-free foods. To people who listen to celebrities, they think, ‘If it works for a celebrity, it might be good for the public.’”

He is concerned about restaurants “jumping on the bandwagon” to offer gluten-free products without fully understanding the importance of avoiding cross contamination when offering those products to someone who could be seriously harmed by ingesting gluten.

“It’s important to stress that despite its fad-ness, it is something that there will always be a need for,” he said.