

# No wheat? No problem

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In Livermore, Calif., on Wednesday, August 22, 2007, Madeline... (Doug Duran/Contra Costa Times)



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It has been three years since Julie Morrison ate pizza.

"Oh, that's good! I like that," she exclaims as she takes a bite of the gluten-free Mediterranean pizza served at Cafe Mariposa & Bakeshop in Oakland's Temescal neighborhood. "I'm definitely going to get a couple of slices to go," she adds.

Diagnosed with celiac disease when she was 25, the 39-year-old Orinda resident has learned to cope with her condition by sticking to gluten-free foods she knows won't make her sick.

Celiac disease is a genetic autoimmune disorder, and the most severe form of gluten intolerance. Gluten is a protein found in wheat, barley and rye -- making life difficult for those who can no longer eat most breads, cookies and cakes, as well as many processed foods.

According to the Celiac Sprue Association, celiac disease affects approximately one in 133 people in the United States, or 2.1 million people; the great majority of this population experience symptoms, but have not been

diagnosed. The symptoms vary from weight loss and digestive upset to skin rashes, joint pain or persistent fatigue.

In "The Gluten Connection" (Rodale, \$16.95), Dr. Shari Lieberman says there is no cure for gluten insensitivity. "The only treatment," she writes, "is to eliminate all gluten (wheat, barley and rye) from your diet -- for life."

Nearly every day for breakfast, Morrison eats a quesadilla made with a corn tortilla and cheese. Many days, she enjoys Mexican food twice a day. She's learned

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to bring her own gluten-free soy sauce to Japanese restaurants. She hasn't been that impressed with the gluten-free breads and baked goods she's bought at grocery stores.

Fortunately for people like Morrison, passionate food lovers have been turning their gluten intolerance into new enterprises designed to make the gluten-free life sweeter.

Gluten-free cafe

For nearly 10 years, Patti Furey Crane, 36, thought she was allergic to tomatoes. Turns out it was actually the gluten in foods such as pizza and pasta that was the problem. After being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2002, Furey Crane learned she was gluten intolerant. "A lot of people with autoimmune diseases do better on a gluten-free diet," she says.

Banishing gluten from her diet, Furey Crane felt much better -- but she missed desserts. Many of the gluten-free baked goods she'd buy weren't very satisfying.

While she was pregnant with her first daughter, she decided it was time to take matters into her own hands. The Oakland resident began experimenting by baking gluten-free brownies and biscotti, using only the finest ingredients.

After her daughter was born, she joined forces with Kyoko Hiramatsu, a pastry chef. Their collaboration led to the birth of the Mariposa Baking Company in 2004, working out of a shared kitchen in West Berkeley. (Hiramatsu left the company 10 months later, when her husband's job took them to London.) The boutique baking company then built a dedicated gluten-free facility at Mariposa's current Oakland location, making the move in 2006.

The small cafe, where Morrison enjoyed the gluten-free pizza, as well as hand-crafted treats such as Triple Chocolate Brownies and Coconut Lemon Squares, opened in June.

Mariposa Baking Company now distributes six types of handmade biscotti and three kinds of brownies, with new products in the works. The company also shares their space with I Can Eat That, whose gluten-free pizza crust can be ordered in advance at Pizza Rustica in Rockridge.

#### Flour power

Like Furey Crane, San Francisco food writer Jacqueline Mallorca turned to her kitchen after learning she could no longer eat breads, cakes or cookies made with wheat.

"I was more annoyed than anything else," recalls the former editorial assistant to famed cookbook author and teacher James Beard. "I thought the diet sheet that I was handed by the physician was absurd. It was guaranteed to drive you into a deep depression.

"Having a food background, I immediately set about reinventing myself as a cook with different ingredients, and it's been rather like painting in color instead of black-and-white," she says in a charming Scottish accent.

Mallorca began experimenting with different types of flours in her baking. Through trial and error, she learned that brown rice flour has a softer texture than white rice flour because of the bran. White rice flour, she found, is wonderful for breading food before sauteing, because it doesn't get gummy. She discovered that quinoa flakes make a very good thickener for meatloaf, replacing the bread crumbs she once used.

Soon she had created enough recipes to fill a book, which became "The Wheat-Free Cook" (William Morrow, \$24.95). Mallorca is eager to spread the word that homemade gluten-free food can be absolutely as good, and often better than, many of the products on the market. Her recipes are simple and quick to prepare.

"I'm not a doctor, but I'm trying to help people who have been diagnosed to enjoy their lives," she says. "You don't have to be a culinary pariah, you can entertain and feed your family, not to mention yourself, just as well as ever and quite possibly, a lot better, because now you're taking a more healthful approach."

#### Celiac Camp

Thanks to Elaine Taylor, president of the Taylor Family Foundation, Mallorca's cookbook became the culinary bible for a new camp for children with gluten sensitivities held this past August at Camp Arroyo in Livermore.

Established in 2001 for children with life-threatening illnesses, Camp Arroyo offers various programs throughout the year. Everyone at the Celiac Camp, from the children to the support staff, lives gluten-free.

Taylor herself found out she was gluten intolerant seven years ago. "I was this whole-grain girl, and I thought, 'Oh my God, how was I ever going to eat well again?'"

Setting out to learn as much as she could about her condition, she went to a gluten-free school in New York, followed by an introduction to Jacqueline Mallorca. "Her book was just a godsend to me," she says.

In addition to using Mallorca's recipes at camp, Taylor made sure the campers could enjoy the best gluten-free foods she could find on the market. "I found such good stuff," she says. "And most of it is locally baked, but you have to really research, you have to be Inspector Clouseau to find good food."

Many of her favorite gluten-free baked goods served at the celiac camp are produced in Northern California: Oakland's Mariposa brownies and biscotti, Crave chocolate cupcakes, Azna Gluten Free's Belgian waffles from El Dorado County, Kapcakes' cookie dough from the Peninsula, Cheese Breads from the Vallejo-based Brazilian Cheese Bread Company, Pamela's Products' mini chocolate chip cookies in Ukiah, crackers from Mary's Gone Crackers in Orinda, and Sacramento's Dowd & Rogers cake mixes.

What does Taylor eat when she's home? "I'm the only one who is gluten-free, but my whole family eats gluten-free, because I only get the best stuff," she says. "That's my motto: 'If it's not great, I don't want it.'"

#### Gluten-Free Girl

Shauna James Ahern of Seattle has been blogging on <http://www.glutenfreegirl.com> since May 2005, right after she was diagnosed with celiac disease at the age of 38. She says the blog receives about 60,000 hits a month.

Like many celiacs, it took a long time to figure out what was making her so sick. She was often ill during her childhood in Los Angeles. "I always blamed the smog," she recalls, "but my mom always had a bottle of tapeworm medicine in the refrigerator. She was convinced I had something eating away at my guts. Turns out it was bread!"

Ahern says trauma can trigger celiac disease to go into a higher gear. In her case, surgery for fibroid tumors followed by a serious car accident led to her condition. Despite numerous medical tests, the cause at the time remained a mystery -- until a friend told her about an NPR story on "something called celiac disease."

The popularity of Ahern's blog has led to "Gluten-Free Girl" (Wiley, \$24.95), a food memoir with recipes, to be released Oct. 12 -- during Celiac Awareness Month.

"When I started the blog, I really just wanted to help people," she says. To bring people better health and better meals is just phenomenal."

Contact freelance food writer Jodie Chase at [jodie@chase-ink.com](mailto:jodie@chase-ink.com).

### **Goat Cheese Pizza with Rice Flour Crust**

Makes two 8-inch pizzas

1 recipe White Rice Flour Flatbread, unbaked (recipe follows)  
Additional white rice flour for forming pizza bases  
1/2 cup marinara sauce (from a jar or can)  
4 anchovy fillets canned in oil, drained and coarsely chopped  
2 or 3 Roma tomatoes, thinly sliced  
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano  
4 ounces soft white goat cheese  
1/2 cup black oil-cured olives, halved and pitted  
1/2 red onion, thinly sliced and separated into rings  
Rosemary or basil sprigs, optional

1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Using a rubber spatula, divide the flatbread dough into two equal mounds on the baking sheet, 5 inches apart. Dust with rice flour. Flatten each one gently into an 8-inch disk, and form a rim. Bake until firm and very pale gold, about 10 minutes.
3. Remove the pizza bases from the oven, and spread each one with half the marinara sauce. Top with the anchovies, tomatoes, oregano, dollops of goat cheese, olives and the onion rings. Return to the oven, and bake until the pizza edges are crisp and golden brown, a further 12-15 minutes. Garnish with rosemary or basil, if using.

-- Recipe courtesy of Jacqueline Mallorca from "The Wheat-Free Cook"

Per serving (based on 1/4 of 1 pizza): 260 calories, 7 g protein, 29 g carbohydrates, 13 g total fat, 3 g saturated fat, 35 mg cholesterol, 680 mg sodium, 2 g fiber. Calories from fat: 46 percent.

-- Staff analysis

### **Quick White Rice Flour Flatbread**

Makes two flatbreads or pizza bases

This low, round loaf has a hundred uses, not forgetting pizza bases, melba toast, croutons and -- most importantly -- bread crumbs. These are more valuable than gold in the wheat-free kitchen for breading, topping gratins and making stuffings. Delicious fresh, this bread is also good sliced and toasted under a broiler (don't share the family toaster if it's ever used for wheat products), or quickly browned with a little butter in a skillet. The biscotti-shaped-slices are perfect for dipping in soft-boiled eggs.

3/4 cup white rice flour, plus additional for forming loaves  
1/2 cup blanched, slivered almonds  
3/4 cup tapioca flour  
3/4 teaspoon fine sea salt  
1 teaspoon baking powder

1 teaspoon baking soda  
1 teaspoon xanthan gum  
1 tablespoon canola oil  
1/2 cup plain whole milk yogurt  
1 large egg

1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Combine the rice flour and almonds in a food processor, and grind to a fine meal. Add the tapioca starch, salt, baking powder, baking soda and xanthan gum, and process to mix.
3. Combine the canola oil, yogurt, egg and 1/2 cup water. Add the liquid ingredients to the dry ingredients all at once and process to form a fluffy-looking sticky batter, about 20 seconds. Scooping out the batter with a rubber spatula, form two equal mounds on the baking sheet, 5 inches apart. Sprinkle lightly with rice flour and pat each one gently into a 6-inch disk. Form a rounded edge by dipping your fingers in rice flour and nudging the sides of the dough. Slash the top of each flatbread from side to side, forming a cross. Bake until golden brown and crusty, about 25 minutes. Transfer the loaves to a wire rack and let cool.

Per serving (based on 1/4 of one flatbread): 180 calories, 4 g protein, 25 g carbohydrates, 7 g total fat, 1 g saturated fat, 30 mg cholesterol, 450 mg sodium, 1 g fiber. Calories from fat: 39 percent.

-- Staff analysis

### **Almond-Plum Rice Flour Coffee Cake**

Serves 10

10 soft pitted prunes, cut in quarters  
Zest of 1/2 lemon, julienned  
3/4 cup sugar  
4 large eggs  
1 cup almond meal (or 2/3 cup whole almonds)  
1/2 cup brown rice flour  
1/2 teaspoon baking powder  
Confectioners' sugar

1. Heat the oven to 350 degrees. Butter the sides of a 9-inch round cake pan and line the base with a circle of parchment paper.
2. Place the prunes, lemon zest and 2 tablespoons of the sugar in a food processor. Process until evenly ground. Add 1 of the eggs and process to blend, scraping down the bowl as needed.
3. Mix the almond flour, brown rice flour and baking powder together, and set aside. (If using whole almonds, combine in a food processor and process to a fine meal.) Combine the remaining 3 eggs and sugar in a bowl. Beat at high speed to the thick ribbon stage, 7 minutes.
4. Using a rubber spatula, spoon half the prune mixture around the edge of the bowl and fold in, followed by half the flour mixture. Repeat with the remainder. (Just dumping it all on top would deflate the batter.) Transfer to the prepared pan, and bake until the cake is golden and shrinks away slightly from the edge of the pan and an inserted toothpick emerges clean, 25-30 minutes. Let cool in the pan for 5 minutes, then unmold and peel off the baking parchment. Let cool right side up on a wire rack. Dust with powdered sugar.

-- From Jacqueline Mallorca from "The Wheat-Free Cook"

Per serving: 200 calories, 5 g protein, 29 g carbohydrates, 7 g total fat, .5 g saturated fat, 85 mg cholesterol, 50 mg sodium, 2 g fiber. Calories from fat: 30 percent.

-- Staff analysis

### **Fig Cookies**

Makes 30 cookies

FOR FIG SPREAD:

1/2 pound of dried figs (Shauna uses light brown Calimyrna and dark Mission figs)  
1/2 cup pomegranate juice  
1/4 cup port  
1/4 cup Meyer lemon juice (or 1/4 cup lemon juice with 1 tablespoon sugar)

FOR DOUGH:

1 cup brown rice flour  
1 cup sorghum flour  
1/2 cup tapioca flour  
1/2 teaspoon baking soda  
1 teaspoon baking powder  
1/2 teaspoon xanthan gum  
1 teaspoon salt  
2 teaspoons fresh ground nutmeg  
1/2 cup unsalted butter, softened  
1/2 cup packed brown sugar, packed in  
1/2 cup organic cane sugar (this is key, because it has a granular consistency)  
1 large egg  
1 teaspoon vanilla  
2 tablespoons molasses

1. Chop the figs into quarters. Put them into a large bowl and cover with the liquids. Soak the figs in these liquids for at least 24 hours. If you don't have the time, bring the liquids and to a boil add the figs, turn off the heat and let steep until cool.

2. Before you make the cookies, drain the figs of the liquid, except for a few tablespoons. Put the figs and remaining liquid in your food processor and blend until it is a thick paste, somewhat like a tapenade consistency.

3. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Mix all the dry ingredients together in a medium-sized bowl. Set aside.

4. Put the softened butter into a mixer (if you don't have a stand mixer, you really should splurge on one. They make all the difference in the world). Add the brown and organic cane sugar to the butter and cream together. Cream them only until they are well blended, then turn off the mixer.

5. Add the egg, vanilla and molasses. Mix until just blended. Add the dry ingredients, and mix until thoroughly blended. Refrigerate the dough in the refrigerator for at least an hour. This is key with gluten-free doughs.

6. After you have chilled the dough, roll out half of it to a 1/4-inch thickness. (Be sure to flour the board with gluten-free flour and be patient. Gluten-free dough can be hard to roll.) Lay this dough onto a baking sheet that is covered with parchment paper or a Silpat. Slather the fig spread over the surface of the dough, stopping about one inch from the edges. Roll out the rest of the dough and lay it over the fig spread. Crimp the edges to seal in the fig spread.

7. Slide the baking sheet into the oven for 15 minutes, checking once in a while to make sure they aren't browning too much. Take the cookies out of the oven when they are firm to the touch and just starting to brown. Let them cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes.

8. When the cookies have cooled slightly, cut the edges off to make even lines. (Don't throw them away! These are delicious, too.) Slice the giant cookie into small squares, and they will look like those fig cookies of your youth.

-- Recipe courtesy of Shauna James Ahern, "Gluten-Free Girl" (Wiley, \$24.95)

Per serving: 140 calories, 1 g protein, 25 g carbohydrates, 3.5 g total fat, 2 g saturated fat, 15 mg cholesterol, 120 mg sodium, 1 g fiber. Calories from fat: 21 percent.

-- Staff analysis

**October is Celiac Awareness Month**

- One of the best ways to keep up with tasty new gluten-free products and recipes is to visit Web sites and blogs created for the celiac community. Several blogs have Bay Area ties, including <http://www.bookofyum.com>, <http://www.glutenfreebay.blogspot.com> and <http://www.glutenfreegirl.com>.
- Mariposa brownies and biscotti are sold at all Bay Area Whole Foods Markets, Piedmont Grocery in Oakland, and Berkeley Bowl and Berkeley Natural Grocery in Berkeley. Cafe Mariposa & Bakeshop is located at 5427 Telegraph Ave., Unit D3, in Oakland. Contact 510-595-0955 or <http://www.mariposabaking.com>.
- The next Celiac Camp at Livermore's Camp Arroyo will be Aug. 3-8, 2008. For more information, contact <http://www.tff.org> or 925-455-5118.

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#### Resources:

- Bob's Red Mill has an entire line of hard-to-find gluten-free flours and bread mixes. They can be found at Whole Foods and at other specialty grocery and health food stores or online at <http://www.bobsredmill.com>.
- Trader Joe's has a list of their gluten-free products in the "Reading Room" section of their Web site: [http://www.traderjoes.com/reading\\_room.html](http://www.traderjoes.com/reading_room.html)

#### Products

- **Sorghum flour** -- Sorghum is an ancient grain, similar to millet, commonly used in Africa and India. Often called "sweet" sorghum flour, jowar or cholam flour, it can be found at specialty grocery stores and at many Indian markets.
- **Xanthan gum** -- The gum made from the outer layer of an inactive bacterium called *Xanthomonas campestris*, which feeds on corn sugar. It is a thickening agent and is found in many processed foods.
- **Tapioca flour/Tapioca starch** -- Derived from the starchy root of the cassava plant, tapioca flour and tapioca starch are interchangeable. It is an excellent thickener for pie fillings and lends a satisfying chewy texture to baked goods.
- **Brown rice flour** -- Milled, unpolished brown rice (rice in which the bran, germ and aleurone have not been stripped away, as they are with "polished" or white rice). Brown rice flour has a higher nutritional value than white rice flour. But, because it contains bran and germ (and therefore more oil) brown rice flour is more prone to spoilage and should be refrigerated.
- **White rice flour** -- Milled, polished rice. Both white and brown rice flours have a grainy texture and should be mixed with other flours, such as sorghum or tapioca for a smoother texture in baked goods. When shopping for rice flour, look for the finest texture you can find.

-- Sources: "On Food and Cooking" by Harold McGee; <http://www.celiac.com>; The Cook's