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During a recent visit to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Food and Nutrition conference in Philadelphia USA 6 – 9 October 2012, one of the hottest discussed issues in the food world seemed to be “gluten free” diets. As we all know, this is a life-long treatment for coeliac disease (CD)

30-40% of the population carries the gene for coeliac disease. In the US, only 1-2% of those people have the gene activated (1 in 133 Americans). In the UK and Europe, 1 in 100 people are estimated to suffer from coeliac disease; however, only 1 in 8 cases (10 -15%) have been diagnosed.

While at the conference, the Food and Culinary Professionals Dietary Practice Group had arranged a “gluten-free” culinary workshop at nearby Drexel University, hosted by the National Foundation for Coeliac Awareness (NFCA). Eager to learn, I signed up and here is what happened during the day.

The introductory session led by Alice Blast, president of the NFCA, reviewed current understanding of gluten-related disorders. She specifically addressed many quality of life issues faced by people with coeliac disease which impact on ability to enjoy life’s pleasures such as travel, socialising. Dining out has been an increasing trend both in the US and the UK and requires a person with CD to do more than “label reading” of food products; culinary skills are very important in ensuring dietary management. So, after an educational session including case studies and sharing of best practices, with some trepidation, I joined my group and moved into the kitchen for the next session: the “Ancient Grains Challenge” – a cook-off between teams of dietitians! The pressure was high, as in competing teams, we could choose from a variety of ingredients (fresh fruits and vegetables, sauces) including three different gluten-free grains (pre-cooked amaranth, buckwheat and quinoa), to prepare a gluten-free tasty lunch for the judges.....all within 45 minutes. As we prepared our meal, we checked and verified all our ingredients as gluten-free. My team-mate and I created a roast beet and quinoa salad with a honey and balsamic vinaigrette (see recipe). Unfortunately, there were no prizes, but we were complimented on our presentation.

Fruit and Vegetables



Gluten-free products



Our final dish!



The final session was the gluten-free baking workshop, led by chef Richard Coppedge CMB and professor at the Culinary Institute of America (CIA), author of "Gluten-Free Baking with the CIA". My team made gluten-free "Spritz" cookies (see recipe), Mexican wedding cakes and Apple Spiced Muffins. The flours provided were various blends of rice flour, teff, buckwheat, sorghum, white rice flour and soya. We chose the blend (light, medium, strong) we thought appropriate for each recipe. As the pictures show, this was not always an easy task!

My team - I'm the stressed one in the middle!



Spritz Cookies

Mexican wedding cakes



Baked Assortment – oh dear!



The points to note:

- Switching to gluten-free flours means baking times change – so keep an eye on your oven.
- Gluten-free flour blends can replace regular flour 1:1.
- Using individual moulds e.g. bun pans, can give better results than using one large tin.
- Cookies required a lighter flour replacement, mixed with rice flour. Try not to add extra flours as cookies will crumble.
- Adding egg-whites in place of whole eggs provides protein and helps the leavening process.

On my return to the UK, while wearily unpacking and reflecting on all I had learned at the conference, out tumbled my “Goody Bag” of gluten free treats and the box of gluten-free cookies I had painstakingly made. Oh well.....as they say “that’s the way the cookie crumbles”!

Some Recipes to try

“Roast Beet, Buckwheat & Quinoa salad”:

100 g each of buckwheat and quinoa (cooked according to package directions)

100 g beetroot roasted with sea salt (about 30 minutes), cooled and diced

1 green salad onion chopped

1 sweet red pepper diced and sautéed in olive oil

1 tablespoon chopped parsley

Squeeze of lemon juice

Handful of toasted chopped walnuts

Vinaigrette: Mix 1 tablespoon honey with 2 tablespoons gluten-free balsamic vinegar. Whisk in 4-5 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil to give a smooth emulsion and season to taste.

Combine thoroughly all salad ingredients (except walnuts) in a mixing bowl. Press into 3 or 4 ramekins. Place each ramekin upside down on a plate and carefully lift the ramekin to remove the mixture. Drizzle the vinaigrette dressing over the salad. Decorate with chopped toasted walnuts and chopped parsley.

Spritz Cookies (Makes 36 cookies)

Spritz cookies are formed from thicker dough that is piped, rather than scooped or rolled, onto a pan. Using a piping bag, you can form these cookies into various shapes, from simple circles to whimsical stars. When garnished with chocolate, nuts or fruit, Spritz cookies make a perfect accompaniment to an afternoon cup of tea, or a morning mug of coffee.

4 oz ½ cup Butter, room temperature

4 oz ½ cup Sugar

1 Egg, room temperature

1 Egg white, room temperature

6 oz 1 cup White rice flour

3 oz ½ cup Flour Blend #3

1/3 cup Raspberry jam

1. Preheat oven to 375 °F
2. Cream butter and sugar together until light and fluffy.
3. Blend in the egg and egg white, scraping down the side of the bowl as necessary.
4. Mix flours into the mixture just until combined.
5. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper. Fit a piping bag with a # 6 start tip, folding over the top of the bag to form a cuff. Fill the pastry bag with the cookie dough. Pipe the batter into shapes the size of a quarter onto the prepared cookie sheet.
6. Garnish the center of each cookie with a small dollop of jam.
7. Bake for approximately 10 minutes or until lightly golden brown.

Nutritional Information per Serving

Serving Size:	1 cookie
Calories:	70 kcal
Total Fat:	3 g
Sodium:	10 mg
Total Carbohydrate:	11 g
Dietary Fiber:	0 g
Protein:	1 g

Flour Blend #3 (Moderately strong carbohydrate/protein combination)

Ingredients	Volume	US Weight
White rice flour	¾ cup	5.25 oz
Potato starch	4 cups	14.25 oz
Guar gum	5 tablespoons	1.25 oz
Albumen	½ cup	3.38 oz
TOTAL	5 ½ cups	1.5 lb

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£10 Could help to produce a Food and Drink Directory, detailing products that are suitable for the gluten-free diet.

