

Nutritional Foods for Those Feeling Deprived

By Alan Attridge

Eating good food is one of life's greatest pleasures. Because of busy schedules we rarely take the time to enjoy traditional family dinners. We all have nutritional concerns, but, which foods are safe and best for our needs? No one food is nutritionally perfect, as it would not supply all the nutrients to support health. To satisfy nutritional needs and individual tastes, we need to eat a variety of foods in moderation. It is quoted in many health publications that 73 percent of the U.S. population feels that health in general is determined by the foods they eat. However, for many millions there are limited choices, and these people feel deprived from not being able to enjoy traditional good tasting foods.

Food forms an integral part of life and remains the natural expression of hospitality. Several years ago, when I was diagnosed with Celiac Disease, I had to learn what foods were safe to eat. Before I was diagnosed, I had lost 80 pounds, was bed ridden, on oxygen, and most of the organs in my body were deteriorating. Continuous fevers, night sweats, and pain persisted for about a year before I started to recuperate ... by eliminating gluten, which is found in wheat, barley, non-gluten free oats, and rye from my diet. I still miss some of my favorite processed foods, but I cook my own food and have learned to use substitutes to replicate the flavors that came from wheat, refined sugars, hydrogenated oils, and many other processed foods. To day you can get gluten free oats that are not milled at a place that mills wheat and they are certified gluten free.

Most major food manufacturers have had little reason to eliminate ingredients or food components that don't serve the needs of what they believe to be the very few. As we are all aware, there are many of us with food sensitivities, diseases, or allergies who must refrain from foods with certain ingredients. Surprisingly, these individuals combined represent over 30 percent of the U.S. population. For years, consumers have made repeated requests from food manufacturers to produce foods that are safe. Sad to say, there are only a few that offer truly appealing products that also "taste great."

Nutritional foods or (as some call them) nutraceutical, functional, natural, or health foods have become a segment of significant importance. Many people cannot tolerate certain foods or the ingredients and chemicals that are added to them because of a food sensitivity, allergy, or disease. These same foods can cause pain, fatigue, neurological side effects, skin rashes, allergies, promote disease, and even death. In particular, children with food allergies need reassurance that an alternative food is safe. Acknowledging the health and well-being of children, the FDA has made numerous statements to emphasize the importance of healthful foods for school lunch programs.

There are many reasons why some individuals may develop a disease, allergy, or intolerance to foods or chemicals (drugs); however, many in the medical and scientific community do not agree on the reasons. Some say it is genetic, while others say that our bodies have become desensitized from consuming too much of certain kinds of foods, chemicals, or drugs.

OTHER SOURCES FOR INFORMATION ON FOOD ALLERGIES AND SENSITIVITIES INCLUDE:

Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network (FAAN) (www.foodallergy.org)
Cure Autism Now (www.canfoundation.org)
American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (www.aaaai.org)
Food Allergy Initiative (www.foodallergyinitiative.org)
National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (www.niehs.nih.gov)
American Diabetes Association (www.diabetes.org)
American Dietetic Association (www.eatright.org)
Autism Research Institute (www.autism.com/ari/)
Raising our Celiac Kids (R.O.C.K.) (www.celiackids.com)
Food Allergy Network (www.foodallergy.org)
Gluten Intolerance Group of North America (www.gluten.net)
International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders (www.iffgd.org)
Celiac Disease Foundation (www.celiac.org)
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (www.aafa.org)
The Skin Cancer Foundation (www.skincancer.org)
National Attention Deficit Disorder Association (www.add.org)
Mothers of Children with Allergies (Mocha) (www.mochallergies.org)