

Gluten free gets a boost in dining out plan

Coeliac Awareness Week runs until Sunday and draws attention to the growth in the number of Kiwis diagnosed with coeliac disease and the related demand for verifiable gluten-free food.

General manager Carl Sunderland says Coeliac New Zealand aims to minimise any risk of gluten being consumed by developing a gluten-free accreditation programme for restaurants and eateries.

"For people living with coeliac disease the threat of being accidentally 'glutened,' is nerve-racking. Even the tiniest crumb can cause severe stomach pain, diarrhoea, bloating, headaches or vomiting. In fact most coeliacs say they are scared to consume food outside of their home. Simple things like dining out, sports trips, air travel or even Friday night takeaways become magnified by the risk of gluten slipping into the food," he says.

The new Dining Out Programme (DOP) will ensure eateries offering gluten-free selections will be able to substantiate their claims — an important aspect in a marketplace where many eateries and manufacturers are simply jumping on the bandwagon," Carl says.

To ensure the programme attracts widespread support Coeliac New Zealand has enlisted the help of leading dietician and immunologist Anna Richards. Carl says Anna has a large following and significant reputation within the coeliac and medical community and her profile was a positive factor in attracting cafes, restaurants and takeaway outlets to pursue accreditation.

Businesses become accredited for the DOP only once staff have completed a training programme and the venue has successfully passed an independent audit of safe food handling and accreditation procedures.

"DOP accredited restaurants, cafes and quick service outlets can then differentiate and market themselves as a safe choice for coeliacs, their friends and family. People rarely dine out alone — friends and family are typically influenced in their selection of where or what to eat by the dietary requirements of the coeliac sufferer. Restaurants and cafes that position themselves as an accredited gluten-free business under Coeliac New Zealand's new DOP will, we believe, be extremely well supported by kiwis and visitors to NZ," says Carl.

The DOP is another strategy for supporting people living with coeliac disease and adds to measures already in place such as the Crossed Grain Logo, indicating the product has been independently laboratory tested to contain no detectable gluten as per the Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) guidelines for gluten-free food.

Symptoms of Coeliac Disease include abdominal pain, diarrhoea, constipation, nausea, vomiting and joint pain or there may be no overt symptoms. If left undiagnosed or if gluten continues to be consumed, coeliac disease can cause infertility, poor growth and calcification of teeth and bones in children, multiple nutrient malabsorption and can link to depression and occasionally bowel cancer.

Go to www.coeliac.org.nz or www.facebook.com/CoeliacNewZealand



ALLERGY:
Speciality shops like Tauranga's One Stop Gluten Free Shop, owned by Lauren Cooke, cater for people with dietary allergies and intolerances like coeliac disease.