



Celiac Sprue Association®

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**In sickness and in health
by Carol Barnes, wife of a celiac**

Lake Jackson, Texas

When someone is diagnosed with celiac disease, it affects everyone in the family. When a husband or child is diagnosed, the main responsibility for keeping the patient healthy usually falls to the mother or wife.

I am one of those wives. Almost 43 years ago, I married the love of my life. In October 2004, he was diagnosed with celiac sprue disease. In the past few months, I have come to understand the meaning of the “in sickness and in health” part of those wedding vows.

I was completely overwhelmed at the thought of not being able to have anything in the kitchen that contained wheat, barley, rye or oats. After all, doesn't everything in the grocery store contain those four things? (That is what I thought at the time.)

The first time I went shopping after Lloyd's diagnosis, I spent what seemed like an eternity reading labels. The only thing that sounded safe for him to eat was fresh meat, fresh vegetables and fruit, and rice. I prepared rice in every conceivable way you can imagine. I don't know about Lloyd, but I was darned tired of rice.

If he ever disliked or grew tired of anything while I was finding my way through the maze of gluten-free foods, he never said so. He ate all of the really bad things that I made in those first few weeks, and was always complimentary even when it was awful.

I decided to try the Peak Health Food store in hopes of finding something gluten-free that tasted good. I was so excited when I saw a flyer from the Brazoria County Celiac Support Group on the counter. Tara answered the phone when I called. It was the beginning of “the light at the end of the tunnel” for me. Tara and Cecilia have become my celiac guardian angels. I have sent many e-mails to them with “help” on the subject line. They are always quick to respond and to try to answer all of my celiac-related questions.

I have learned that there are many gluten-free dishes I can cook that are really quite good. I actually enjoy the challenge of preparing good, nutritious meals. We were able to have a gluten-free Thanksgiving and Christmas with the support and understanding of our family. Lloyd's sister Lori altered her famous yam casserole and green rice dish. Lloyd's mother made gluten-free turkey and dressing, and our daughter-in-law Sissy made a wonderful fruit salad. I made several other gluten-free dishes and desserts. Lloyd said that he did not feel deprived at all during the holiday.

I also have to make my way through over-the-counter medicines, prescription drugs, shampoos, aftershaves, toothpaste and mouthwash. Lloyd's sister Janis is a dental hygienist and recommends gluten-free products for dental care. She also looks for any gum problems that may develop due to his celiac disease.

We are about four months into this gluten-free lifestyle and quite frankly, it is still extremely daunting at times. I

have come to realize that very few people understand this insidious disease, including the doctors who diagnose it. But I have also learned that a lot of good people are willing to help. I have e-mailed or called dozens of companies to ask if their products are gluten-free, and at least 98 percent of the time they are very kind and helpful.

There have been many people praying for us during the past few months. We can feel the Lord's presence as we continue this journey. As my grandmother used to say, "If God's willing and the creek don't rise," together Lloyd and I will overcome this celiac disease.

Editor's Note:

In June 2005 Carol Barnes passed away, CSA expresses their deepest sympathy to her family.