

# The Bennion Family

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Dear Family and Friends,

It's May! It's May! The lovely month of May! Not only is May exquisite for all of the usual reasons, but also because countries all over the world recognize May as Celiac Disease Awareness month. As many of you know in April of 2007 Will was diagnosed with Celiac Disease. In September 2007 the test results were confirmed after a biopsy and we started our pathway to gluten-free family living. Like all new habits we have moved in phases of our gluten-free (GF) living. First reading as much as we could and trying new recipes. Then integrating new food, and finally, cleaning out our cupboards. We now find ourselves with a pantry full of goods, a cupboard full of GF cookbooks, exploring new flavors and foods we've haven't before, and loving what we eat!

We've made mistakes, we've had successes, and we continue to learn a lot. Early on we learned that Will understands a lot about his disease and that he is quite capable of speaking up for himself. He understands that he is the only one with Celiac Disease and that Eric, Walker and Shell eat gluten. He usually won't eat anything unless someone tells him it's gluten-free and often asks, no matter how tempting it looks!

Our goals for this next year of gluten-free life are: (1) to educate everyone we love about this disease and provide tools for for you to use and (2) to provide a truly GF experience for Will that allows for good food, fun, and inclusion.

So let's get started!

## Education:

Celiac Disease is an auto-immune disease in which the body cannot process gluten and in the process starts attacking the digestive tract. This attack on the digestive tract prevents vitamin absorption, stunts growth, and can have other dramatic health effects. It is not an allergy. If Will ingests gluten he might not have an immediate visible reaction. He might get moody, stomach sick, or he might not have anything obvious happen. Or his face might get red, his eyes turn sallow, and a cough begin. Regardless his digestive tract will still be under attack. This is where it can get a little scientific so we've enclosed more information for those details. The big question is...

What and where is gluten? Gluten is a protein found in some grass-related grains. However it is only the gluten proteins (gliadin & glutenin) found in wheat (all species), rye, and barley. Ahh...if only it were that simple. See each of those are often used to create other products. Wheat is commonly found in soups, rye in luncheon meats, and barley in the malt flavoring found in cereals!

Sound overwhelming? That's what we thought too. Yet on the other hand fruits, vegetables, and meats are all gluten-free in their natural state. There is so much good gluten-free food! Yum!

## Tools:

Enclosed you'll find the following tools. We hope they'll help you help us with our goals!

- Celiac Disease Information from the Celiac Disease Foundation
- Gluten-Free Food Chart. Put it in your cookbook, on your fridge, or a drawer. We created it to be as helpful and informational as possible while still being understandable.

## Fun and Inclusion:

Since we have made changes in our house and in our eating habits, we wanted you to be aware of them. What our GF life means for you:

- If you invite us for a party (and please don't hesitate!) it means that we will probably ask what food is being served. We might bring something just for Will or we might eat before we come. Please don't be offended if we bring our own food or are full when we get there! If you do want to prepare GF food we'll be happy to give suggestions.
- We may be less inclined to meet you at a restaurant or fast food place. While some fast food establishments have some naturally gluten-free items most are cross-contaminated during preparation. We may continually suggest meeting at the same restaurant. Some like Chili's, Outback, and Spaghetti Factory have specifically GF menus.
- If we are visiting or staying at your house we may show up with a trunk full of food.
- You'll be introduced to yummy gluten-free food! And you'll be surprised at how good it can be. We are loving what good food we've found and made - and how healthy it is!

We hope you have found this helpful! We invite you to celebrate this merry gluten-free month of May with us by visiting your local health food store and check out all the glorious products! Maybe even try something new! Or read through the labels of your food as you unpack from the grocery store - you'll be amazed at where gluten is and isn't!

For more information feel free to check out some of our favorite sites:

\* Celiac Disease Foundation: [www.celiac.org](http://www.celiac.org) \*

\* Gluten-Free Girl: [glutenfreegirl.blogspot.com](http://glutenfreegirl.blogspot.com) - she has really helped us explore new foods! \*

\* Celiac.com: [www.celiac.com](http://www.celiac.com) - a great source for information and GF shopping \*

\* Gluten Free Goddess: [glutenfreegoddess.blogspot.com](http://glutenfreegoddess.blogspot.com) - the name says it all! \*

Much love and many thanks for your help towards another fantastic gluten-free year!

Eric, Shelly, Will and Walker