

Misty's View of FOOD SENSITIVITIES AND ALLERGIES



ilton. For three days I donned my chef's whites, sharpened my knives and led a class of young adults in lessons about food, the subject of their new professions.

What struck me the most about these enthusiastic students was their willingness to learn about the properties of the ingredients they were using. They were fascinated that we could turn eggs, flavouring agents and dairy products into so many different products just by coaxing them with heat, whipping, or ratios. Not just bound by the details of the recipes they were learning,

these students could easily see the connections between each one because they were beginning to understand the fundamentals of food, and more importantly, their relationship with it!

I mention this story because it reminds me that all cooks have to start somewhere, and that a **fearless, open-minded attitude is key to seeing meal making with receptive eyes.**

Unfortunately, a good number of people today regard cooking with terror or loathing; some hate the gender stereotyping it can engender. Visions of a 1950s'

nuclear family come to mind where the little woman is chained to the stove plus all of the domestic expectations the role of housewife involved back then.

We 21st-century North American families have sort of lost our way with food as a result. Without a family mentor or generational expert under our roofs, we tend to take furtive stabs at cooking, and then bail out blindly in search of commercial solutions shortly thereafter.

But **what if commercially prepared food became the enemy for a family member?** What would we do then? Would

I had the chance a few months ago to put on my culinary teaching hat and pinch-hit at a renowned professional culinary institute, Liaison College in Ham-

PHOTOS BY MIKE DAVIS



Health food stores like Foodstuffs of Georgetown stock non-dairy milk substitutes.



The yeast-free, wheat-free fresh bread bin includes Lovely Bites, totally natural cookies made by Foodstuffs' employee Kim Falls.



Dairy-free cheese shreds and other alternative products are stocked in one of Foodstuffs' coolers.



A wide variety of gluten-free and organic flours are packaged by Foodstuffs.

we be equipped with ready, flexible solutions? Would we know how to stock our larders with healing ingredients and prepare meals that would nourish and support our entire family?

I ask these questions both rhetorically and personally. My strapping, university-bound rugby-playing son was just diagnosed with a serious digestive disease, ulcerative colitis. After nearly four weeks of pain, vomiting, bleeding and significant weight loss, he was given the news of a life-long condition that would force him to become intimately involved in the food that he eats and prepares for himself.

I cannot tell you how many people have stepped up to share

Misty's View



Gluten-free and organic pastas come in convenient, attractive packaging.



New at Foodstuffs: imported specialty rice, whole grain, organic, even forbidden!

their stories of digestive woes with us, be it dangerous allergies to gluten, nuts, dairy, sugar or the roulette wheel involved in living with Crohn's disease and colitis.

For so many, this is a call to arms! And it starts with learning how to cook, learning about the food we bring into our homes

What if food became the enemy?
 What would we do?
 Would we have solutions?
 Could we prepare meals that will nourish and heal?
 Many people have dangerous allergies to gluten, nuts, dairy, sugar...
 First we will stock our fridge with dairy substitutes: almond, rice and soy milk.
 Next we will experiment with gluten-free products to get them to mimic favourite dishes.
 We will experiment until we find success.

tra. If you have allergic eaters at home, you need to find a variety of products to use to make your food safe and interesting.

You may think that as a chef I have nothing to learn to help my son. Far from it. It will be very much a trial-by-error approach that will be guided by the vast pool of information available.



Convenience and treats for sensitivities: frozen desserts and cupcakes among other prepared specialty foods.

The first thing we will do is stock our fridge with dairy substitutes so that he can develop a palate for them – take them for a test drive so to speak. Almond, rice, and soy milk are on the list. Next, we will experiment with gluten-free products and see how we can get them to mimic all of his favourite dishes. He will need to eat smaller meals more often, so maintaining interest and portion size will be paramount.

We have a plan, but ours begins with a solid foundation of culinary knowledge and a willingness to spend time in the kitchen to experiment until we find success. It comes down to a mindset. Preparing food is not an inconvenience; it is time well invested.

Searching for answers will be spent at home, in our kitchen. Sure there may be literature to help us, but the answers will come from our family lab, a place where we will all pitch in to discover delicious dietary solutions. **Careful, courageous cooking will bring us together.** I encourage you to take a similar approach to feeding your loved ones. Don't wait for a crisis to become the expert your family needs.

and learning how to make feeding ourselves knowledgeably a priority.

Cooking is the art of making food, any food, palatable. If you have picky eaters at home, you need to arm yourself with this man-

With chef-instructor husband Bill Sharpe, Misty Ingraham of Ancaster owns the catering business The Portable Feast at Home.