

THE CASE FOR GLUTEN FREE

Shelley Case publishes the definitive new guide

BY VAN WAFFLE

The gluten-free diet has emerged from the dark ages of rice cakes thanks in part to Shelley Case, RD. Her first self-published book on the topic, *Gluten-Free Diet: A Comprehensive Resource Guide*, made waves in the celiac community in 2001. However, her advice on food safety and nutrition reaches much further.

As a member of the professional advisory board of the Canadian Celiac Association since 1995 and a private consultant, she has advised Canadian and U.S. government agencies on food safety legislation as well as industry innovators as they develop new products.

The 2001 book received four revisions in response to new information and advances. For authoritative information on anything gluten free, Case's books were indispensable but intimidating.

Finally, she has published under a new title, *Gluten Free: The Definitive Resource Guide*, reflecting significant recent changes to labeling requirements in Canada and the United States. It contains more information than ever, but Case has made it more user friendly.

Recently she spoke to us from her home in Regina, Saskatchewan.

Van Waffle: Your first book in 2001 became a national bestseller. How has this shaped your career?

Shelley Case: I've been a dietitian for over 35 years but had no idea I would go into the area of gluten free at all. I come from Saskatchewan, the breadbasket of the world, where we grow a lot of wheat, rye and barley. I'm married to a farmer. At the time, I didn't know I had celiac disease.

In my first job at an outpatient diabetes and diet education center, I counseled children and adults who had various conditions like diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity, cystic fibrosis, food allergies and gastrointestinal disorders, including celiac disease. I felt prepared to counsel individuals with those health concerns, but celiac disease was definitely not

one of them. During my internship, I never encountered anyone with celiac disease, and only one of my nutrition classes at university offered relevant information.

In preparing for my first client with celiac disease, I scrambled to find any useful information about the disease but especially the gluten-free diet. What I did find was out of date and of little use.

I went to the local celiac support group here in Regina. They taught me a great deal about the disease and the diet. After I attended a number of meetings, they asked me to be their dietitian adviser, and I accepted that position. Over time, my knowledge expanded. Ten years later [in 1995], I was asked to be on the professional advisory board of the Canadian Celiac Association.

Clients kept asking for specific, practical information about the

diet, things like how long would it take on the gluten-free diet before you feel better? What happens if you consume a small amount of gluten? People needed help. After working for 15 years in the outpatient department, I decided to go into my own nutrition consulting business and get serious about turning the idea for a gluten-free resource book into a reality.

I never got diagnosed with celiac disease until I was 52, nine years after writing my first book.

VW: It has been revised several times, but this newest version represents a big overhaul. Why did you find this necessary?

SC: I received a lot of feedback from people with celiac disease and dietitians asking for more information and to make it more user friendly. I put it into chapters so people could find the information more readily. The progression starts with information about celiac disease, dermatitis herpetiformis and non-celiac gluten sensitivity, and then, "What is the gluten-free diet?"

I took all the technical information, detailed labeling regulations, nutrition charts, the history of gluten-free labeling regulations for each country, and moved those all to the back. I added a lot more references and web links to the appendixes.

I added a new chapter on oats because there is concern about the way they are being produced.

I discuss mechanically or optically sorted oats versus purity protocol oats.

Another topic a lot of people were struggling with was alcohol, especially the three types of beer: regular gluten-containing beer, gluten-free beer and gluten-removed beer. Distilled alcohols and wine was a topic that people were interested in as well. We needed a chapter on that.

VW: Contrary to popular buzz, a gluten-free diet is not inherently healthy. But you devote three information-packed chapters to nutrition, gluten-free alternatives such as grains and legumes, and meal planning. Can you speak to this concern about nutrition?

SC: A lot of people thought just because they were eating gluten free, that was all they needed to worry about. They focused on what foods and ingredients were safe. Nutrition often was left on the back burner.

Many of the products are made with white rice flour and starches, which are low in key nutrients, especially iron, B vitamins and fiber, that people often don't get enough of on the gluten-free diet. A lot of the products are not enriched.

I felt I needed to help people learn how to eat nutritiously. I included the nutritional analyses and recipes and made sure they

featured some of the healthier gluten-free grains and flours, especially pulses and pulse flours—dried beans, peas and lentils.

VW: The recipe section is one of my favorites. There are about 45 entries, such as Ethiopian flatbread and a traditional lasagna. There are alternatives for things people might miss, like a chocolate banana rum cake. I found some old favorites in here from the previous edition, but many of them are new. How did you decide what to include in this?

SC: There are lots of gluten-free cookbooks, but I tried to focus on using more nutritious gluten-free options. Many gluten-free products are made with white rice flour, tapioca, corn and potato starch, which are not high in iron, B vitamins and fiber, and tend to be high in glycemic load.

It is one thing to tell people that amaranth, buckwheat, flax, sorghum, millet, teff and quinoa are nutritious, but it is another thing to tell how to use them in cooking and baking. Especially oats, now that we know there are more gluten-free oats on the market. They are such a great ingredient, high in fiber and B vitamins, and they make such a wonderful baked product. The texture and taste closely resemble wheat.

VW: You have also included an updated directory of 3,700 gluten-free products. This looks like a nightmare to pull together because of the exacting detail. You also need to have faith that it is going to remain relevant as products change. You clearly indicate which brands produce only gluten-free foods versus brands that also offer foods containing gluten. How do you hope readers will use this section?

SC: People just starting out on the gluten-free diet have no idea

what is out there. It has become easier to find gluten-free products. When we go to the grocery store, they are everywhere. That's good news.

By looking through the different sections [in the book], people can see the vast array of gluten-free products in categories. If they don't have it in their store, they can ask their grocer to bring

diet is not necessary. Are you referring to the vast majority of North Americans or specifically the large number who choose to go gluten free as a lifestyle?

SC: Celiac disease only affects 1 to 2 percent of the population. We are really not sure how many have non-celiac gluten sensitiv-

or other claims that celebrities and athletes are making.

Build your diet first on the naturally gluten-free foods: plain meat, fish, poultry, seafood, nuts, seeds, eggs, legumes, milk, yogurt, cheese, fruits, vegetables and gluten-free grains. Then you can supplement your meal plan with gluten-free products, but make sure you look [at] and read labels to see the nutrition facts. Choose ones that have healthier ingredients or are enriched.

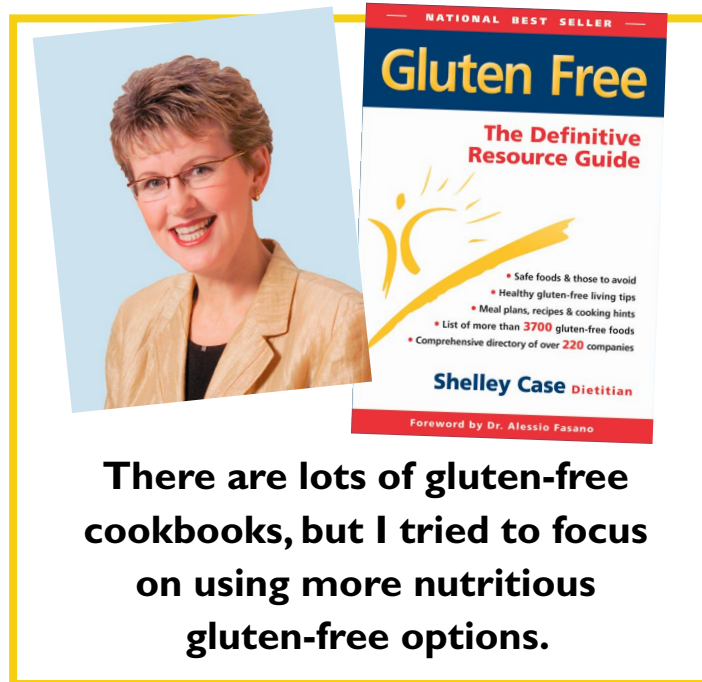
The book is a definitive resource guide for people that have to eat gluten free for whatever reason. It's also an important resource guide for dietitians, nurses and physicians as well as chefs and people in the food industry trying to understand the gluten-free diet.

VW: What new information would you like to be able to include in the next major revision in a book about the gluten-free diet?

SC: Well, if you ask my husband, he'll say, "You're not writing another book." I've been doing this since 2001, and it has been an incredible journey, especially these last two years. People have no idea, for example, when they look at a table in the chapter on the labeling. One entry about an ingredient or a regulation may have taken me four months of phone calls and emails and back and forth, trying to get the answer, talking to scientists and others so that I could make sure this was the definitive resource answer. It is going to be a while until I do another new book.

In new studies on celiac disease and non-celiac gluten sensitivity, we are going to see a lot more information. But the real focus of the book is on the gluten-free diet. That information, it is fairly safe to say, is going to be a timeless treasure. **GF**

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it in or they can order it online.

As you mentioned, some people only want to purchase products from dedicated gluten-free companies. That's why I use a diamond symbol to indicate those companies.

But the companies that do not have that diamond symbol that make gluten-free products are required to have food safety and quality control protocols to mitigate the risk of allergen and gluten cross-contamination. No company wants a food recall. I've included some of those mainstream products, because a lot of people want those as well.

VW: In [the book's] introduction, you say that for the vast majority of people, the gluten-free

ity because we do not know the mechanism. You do not need a gluten-free diet unless you have one of those two conditions.

Many people who think they have non-celiac gluten sensitivity may actually have celiac disease. When you look at some of the studies on patients who felt better on the gluten-free diet, many of them had already been gluten free for a long time before the blood test and biopsy were taken. You need to know whether you have celiac disease or not. You can be doing harm by going gluten free if you do not get tested first.

Then if you choose to go gluten free, remember a gluten-free brownie is the same as a gluten-containing brownie. It's not the magic bullet for optimal health, weight loss and increased energy