

All Natural and Tasty Too

by Leah J. Matuson

What comes in a variety of flavors, has no hydrogenated oils, no refined sugars, no dairy, no wheat or gluten, no soy or corn, no additives or preservatives? No, it's not flavored water! Give up? It's pie! Pie? Yes, pie!

Well, believe it or not, it's one of those anomalies of nature – something that tastes great and is also healthy! We're talking about pies from the local Dover, MA company, Natural Feast.

How It Began....

Ten years ago, Natural Feast CEO and Dover resident, Allan Attridge nearly died from *celiac disease*, a chronic, genetic disease considered to be an autoimmune disorder (since the body's own immune system causes the damage).

Celiac disease is caused by an intolerance to gluten, a component of wheat, barley, oats and rye. Adversely affecting the small intestine, the body is unable to properly absorb essential nutrients and vitamins leading to symptoms of diarrhea, weight loss and malnutrition. Left untreated it can have serious implications such as anemia, cancer and seizures. Luckily for Attridge he was diagnosed before his condition got even worse. And the road back to good health would not be an easy one as he had to drastically change his eating regimen forever in order to not only recover, but *stay* healthy. But that's only the beginning.

Because the one true treatment for sufferers of this disease is to only eat a gluten-free diet, eating can seem pretty bleak. So when members of his celiac support group learned that Attridge was a professionally trained chef, they persuaded him to come up with some palatable recipes.

Not one to shy away from a challenge, Attridge finally succeeded in presenting several recipes for good-tasting pizza, muffins and pies. To say the least, fellow celiac sufferers were ecstatic.

But Attridge didn't stop there. He began talking to food manufacturers and discovered that most tolerable foods available to people with food intolerances didn't taste particularly good. That got him going and, with the urging of his friends and family, as he regained his strength, Attridge embarked on a new venture – in 1994 Natural Feast was born.

Attridge's primary mission was determining what celiac sufferers and those with a variety of food intolerances missed the most in their diets. Surprise, surprise! Through extensive research he found that they missed "reward" foods. In other words – desserts. So, after two years of research, removing hydrogenated oils, refined sugars and other not-so-healthy ingredients, Attridge came up with appetizing pies that are actually *healthy*.

Something for Most Everyone

How healthy? Well, according to Doug Roberts, Natural Feast spokesperson, the average slice of a Natural Feast apple, cherry or blueberry pie is about half the calories and half the fat of many of the popular, nationally known frozen fruit pies!

Roberts, a long-time native of Dover, MA, says that "In addition to celiac sufferers, our fresh frozen pies are great for diabetics, multiple chemical sensitivity patients, vegetarians, people who have heart problems, fibromyalgia and lactose intolerance...our pies don't contain additives or preservatives, or soy or corn, and we're also kosher. There's something for almost everyone – especially since we not only offer fruit pies but have a satin chocolate mousse pie as well."

And it only gets better! Natural Feast pies have been tested and approved for diabetics by the Joslin Diabetes Center in Boston and the Cape Canaveral Hospital in Florida. The American Heart Association has also given its blessing to these flavorful treats as has the International Vegan Society. With all that going for them, how can these pies miss?

Says Attridge, "Adults who haven't been able to have pie for years are thrilled. Children who haven't been able to have pies at all can eat them now...and this is only the start. Europe is way ahead of us at eliminating wheat and gluten from their diets; we're trying to play catch-up."

Coming Up Next...

What's next for Natural Feast? "We're working on a healthy, really tasty pizza," says Attridge. "And if everything goes right, we're hoping to have them in stores by the first of the year." (They're also working on cakes!)

So, what are you waiting for? Head on down to these local establishments and try one (or several) of these delectable desserts!

Look for a variety of 8-inch, fresh frozen, Natural Feast pies at these local stores:

- Bullard's Marketplace in Medfield
- Owen's Poultry Farm in Needham
- Marino Lookout Farm in South Natick

Can't make it to these stores. No problem! Order on-line at www.naturalfeast.com.

Questions? Natural Feast can be reached at (508) 785-3322 or email them at Natfeast@aol.com

About Celiac Disease

According to the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), approximately 1 in 4,700 Americans have been diagnosed with celiac disease while it remains the most common genetic disease in Europe. But, reports the NIDDK, a recent study in which random blood samples from the Red Cross were tested for celiac disease suggests that as many as 1 in every 250 Americans may have it. Physicians in the United States underdiagnose celiac disease since the symptoms of celiac disease can mirror those of Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis and irritable bowel syndrome, among others.

To learn more about celiac disease, check out:

Celiac Sprue Association/USA Inc.

Phone: (402) 558-0600

Internet: www.csaceliacs.org

Gluten Intolerance Group of North America

Phone: (206) 246-6652

Internet: www.gluten.net

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK)

(www.niddk.nih.gov/index.htm)

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