

Press Release: Immediate Issue

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WHEN EATING OUT IS A PAIN IN THE BACKSIDE!

Coeliac UK, the national charity for people with coeliac disease, is calling on chefs across the country to provide more gluten-free options on their menus which would enable thousands of people to eat out.

Research of more than 3,000 people with coeliac disease found that nearly one third of respondents said that they never eat out, or eat out less than once every other month. Nearly a quarter said they have travelled for an hour or longer in order to find a restaurant that provides a gluten-free meal.

At least 1 in 100 – 600,000 people in the UK has coeliac disease which is an autoimmune disease caused by intolerance to gluten. Damage to the gut lining occurs when gluten is eaten; there is no cure or medication for the condition and the only treatment is a strict gluten-free diet for life.

If someone with coeliac disease eats food that contains gluten, which is found in wheat, barley and rye, they may become ill within a few hours. Without keeping to a gluten-free diet, coeliac disease can lead to other conditions, such as malnutrition, infertility, multiple miscarriages, osteoporosis and bowel cancer.

Chef Phil Vickery, Coeliac UK's Food Ambassador said: 'I'm passionate about improving understanding in the food industry on the need for more gluten-free cooking as more and more people are diagnosed. Currently, eating out is a lottery for people with coeliac disease. According to the Allegra Strategies² consumer research, on average, one in nine meals are eaten out of the home every week, equivalent to an estimated 148 million meals in 2009. People with coeliac disease do not have the luxury of choice or availability on their doorstep and the idea of having to travel over an hour just to find somewhere safe to eat is unthinkable for most people.'

However, 30% of the respondents stated that they would eat out once a week if they could be confident of a safe gluten-free menu option. The survey also highlighted that there is a potential £100 million¹ market amongst those diagnosed with the condition and the friends and family they eat out with.

Sarah Sleet, Chief Executive of Coeliac UK said: 'People with coeliac disease want to eat out more often and are ready and willing to spend their money, if only they felt more confident about gluten-free provision.'

It is not only those with coeliac disease who have the perception that gluten-free can be a pain as many caterers do too. An instant poll of the 250 plus attendees from UK catering colleges taken at the Professional Association for Catering Education (PACE) Conference³ this year, showed around three quarters were sceptical about the value of catering gluten-free. However, having the facts on the potential market size and the required change in catering practice for gluten-free menus revolutionised attitudes with more than 80% of the delegates recognising catering gluten-free as a business opportunity, rather than a kitchen nightmare,' said Sarah Sleet.

Coeliac UK is running an Awareness Campaign from 10–16 May 2010 to promote understanding about coeliac disease and for the need for increased gluten-free provision in the hospitality industry. See www.coeliac.org.uk for further details.

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For further information on coeliac disease please contact:
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 Or visit the website: www.coeliac.org.uk

Notes to editors:

Statistics taken from a survey of over 3000 Coeliac UK Members, December 2008

¹Research found that those who do eat out, do so with a minimum of 2-3 other people. And with an average spend of £10 - £20 per head, each meal eaten out is worth around £60 of business to the catering sector

²Allegra Strategies Eating Out in the UK Survey 2009

³The PACE conference took place on 18 March in Northamptonshire and is the biggest conference and exhibition dedicated to catering education in the UK.

- A range of case studies of men, women and children are available on request from Coeliac UK.
- Coeliac disease is a serious illness where the body's immune system reacts to gluten found in food, making the body attack itself.
- 1 in 100 people in the UK has coeliac disease, however only 12.5% of these have been diagnosed and average length of diagnosis is 13 years.
- Gluten is a protein found in wheat (including spelt), rye and barley. Some people are also sensitive to oats. Obvious sources of gluten include breads, pastas, flours, cereals, cakes and biscuits. It is often used as an ingredient in many favourite foods such as fish fingers, sausages, gravies, sauces and soy sauce.
- The symptoms of coeliac disease range from mild to severe and can vary between individuals. Not everyone with coeliac disease experiences gut related symptoms; any area of the body can be affected.
- Symptoms can include bloating, abdominal pain, nausea, constipation, diarrhoea, wind, tiredness, anaemia, headaches, mouth ulcers, recurrent miscarriages, weight loss (but not in all cases), skin problems, depression, joint or bone pain and nerve problems.
- Around 1000 newly diagnosed people are joining Coeliac UK every month. For further details on membership please call the Helpline on 0845 305 2060 further information can be found at www.coeliac.org.uk.