

NORTH SURREY LOCAL GROUP NEWSLETTER



North Surrey
Local Group

Edition 8: June 2021

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WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR

Hello, I hope you are all well and beginning to look forward to coming out of lockdown this summer.

The week of 10th May was Coeliac Awareness Week with the theme 'Shine a Light'. Of course, it is the 2nd year in a row where this week of awareness and fundraising has been hindered by lockdown and covid restrictions. Although we did nothing as a group for this event, we know that some of you may have done individual acts of fundraising or raising awareness at school, work, or the local community. Well done, and thank you.

We have definitely seen less interaction from our membership over the last 16 months and take this as a sign that we are all 'living well gluten free' – a positive thing indeed!

However, it is also with this in mind that I must share with you the news that Kirsty and I, along with another eight members from the North Surrey Local Group committee, will be stepping down from our roles. Many of us have found that work and family commitments are taking up more of our time, and this must take priority, especially while there is little we seem to be able to offer for the local group members. Coeliac UK Head office has been informed, and the priority will be to try and keep the group running, but of course, this will require volunteers from within the membership to take up the critical roles on the committee: Group Organiser, Treasurer and Secretary.

Please contact volunteering@coeliac.org.uk or call 01494 796118 if you feel you would like to stand for a general role on the committee or stand for one of the key roles.

Jon Cranefield

Fundraising and Awareness

Top Tip from one of our members

Do you know about Smile Amazon?.....I've made Coeliac UK my linked charity, so 0.5% of the value of my purchases goes there, with no difference otherwise in the price of goods for the buyer. It's amazing how quickly it builds up, and each penny counts for the charity when other fundraising options are so limited by the pandemic.



Margaret Appleby

To find out more, visit <https://www.coeliac.org.uk/get-involved/fundraise-for-us/other-ways-to-give/>

Feedback on the Food Bank Donations Initiative

Following the article in Edition 7, suggesting that we may be able to set up donation points for Gluten-Free Food for the Food Banks in the SM and KT postcode areas, we have heard from one of our members who has given a better understanding of the situation and an alternative suggestion as to how our members can better support the food banks. We share here some excerpts from the email we received from Mark:

I'm coeliac myself but volunteer every week at the Epsom & Ewell Foodbank warehouse and have done so for several years. So I was pleased to see your suggestion about GF food donations.....

...If you really are going to collect quarterly rather than weekly or monthly, donors need to be told that everything put in the box must have a shelf life to go off at least three and preferably six months when they are donated.

And it must be admitted that the logistics of the foodbank dictate that we are unable to avoid potential cross-contamination during handling, sorting and packaging, so we are very reliant on the strength and integrity of the packaging. GF microwave porridge in particular seems to be routinely packed in oversize boxes that get crushed, so the sachets fall out and some brands have no Best Before date on the sachets, which thus become "instant waste". So things that are strongly packaged and preferably double-wrapped are best.

So perhaps the best thing for members to do for our very few GF clients (.....the office and packing teams suggested that we might have had a dozen or so overall) is to donate money to the foodbank so that we can buy GF items (especially bread) when required because we have none left....

However, we do have two crates in the packing room reserved for all GF products (one sweet, one savoury) so that our packers know where to go when GF is required. I checked yesterday and we have at least a 2-year supply of GF pasta (fortunately it has a long shelf life!), but not much in the way of biscuits, cakes or cereals. Flour is not much use either, as our clients tend not to have equipmentto do home baking. Some have no cooking facilities at all except possibly a microwave.

And in any event, it's good to steer members to the website Epsom & Ewell Foodbank, who also have a Facebook page. Both include a wanted list which is regularly updated (but does not include special dietary requirements).

Mark Bristow

Upcoming 2021 Events

We have now closed the Survey Monkey Questionnaire, which has been running since last year. As we only received 12 responses, we can only conclude that our majority membership does not feel the need for face to face meetings and events, which suggests a very confident and independent gluten-free community in North Surrey.

As so many key members of the committee are stepping down, no events are currently in the pipeline for later this year as this will rely on new committee members stepping forward to keep the group running. We do very much hope that for the benefit of those who do enjoy a meal out or a GF afternoon tea, that these will resume for you as and when covid restrictions allow and as the new committee find their feet.

Top Tips for our newly diagnosed members (By Kirsty Cranefield)

Holidays, something we are all looking forward to at some point in the future when we are individually ready to come out of lockdown and resume the 'new norm' that covid has presented us with. However, while packing lists, tickets, transportation, and passports are the downside of a holiday for most people, those living with a medically diagnosed dietary requirement face a whole other level of stress and planning! Will I get GF food on the train/Plane or at the service station? Will the hotel be able to cater for me safely and understand cross-contamination concerns? Will there be a shop nearby to my accommodation that will stock GF food products? How do I communicate my medical needs in a foreign language?..... Ring a bell?

So my top tips for you, in my final article, is the following strategy that we use ourselves. We:

1. Plan the route in advance, looking for service stations that contain Leon, Marks and Spencers or McDonald's. This way, we know we can get a chicken burger and chips from Leon, GF sandwich (albeit often a minimal selection) and cake/biscuits from M&S and, of course, the bunless burgers and fries from McDonald's.
2. Take a packed lunch or selection of fruit and GF snack food as a backup if service stations can not provide.
3. Contact hotels/B&Bs etc.. directly to discuss dietary needs and to ensure that the risk of cross-contamination is fully understood. As we have a coeliac adult and child (aged 8), we always ensure that there is a suitable and exciting GF provision for all age groups. Too often, the children's catering and taste buds can be overlooked when it comes to GF offerings. If in doubt, we don't book. Putting it in writing is also a good idea and asking for acknowledgement of what has been explained.
4. Use social media and coeliac websites, which can be a rich source of recommendations to point us towards venues that can cater for our GF needs. We were astounded how many places and great GF reviews there were for places on Isle of Wight, Barcelona and various other short breaks or summer vacation destinations.
5. Contact the local group of Coeliac UK for the area we are visiting if staying in the UK. They can be a great source or recommendations for accommodation and eateries. They can also warn you of places with no GF provision, which is sometimes more helpful than the recommendations!
6. Get to know the waiter/waitress and help them understand coeliac needs. If dining in at a hotel or holiday camp, we try to establish a routine with the same 1 or 2 waiting staff and ask to speak to the head chef on day one so that we don't need to repeat the whole spiel every mealtime for a week! It is surprising how staff will go above and beyond once they get to know you and are personally caring for your wellbeing. We have found that the menu becomes a lot more flexible and a greater range becomes available to us as the days progress. The Chef wants to rise to the challenge of offering a varied and exciting menu that caters to our coeliac needs. We found this especially the case when holidaying abroad!
7. Ask for fresh products to come straight from the kitchen rather than eating from the buffet. Too often, "safe" items such as fresh fruit and salad, cold meats (take caution of breaded ham!!), and even creams/ice creams are cross-contaminated by other guests who are not aware of the risk they are putting on those with dietary needs. So if we see something we like, we ask if it is gluten-free and whether it is possible to have some served directly from the kitchen rather than off the buffet. This has never been an issue once we have explained why.
8. Always ask for ice cream to be served from a new container from the freezer and not from the open container in the counter that will most likely have glutenous crumbs in from the cones, waffles or other flavour ice creams. If in doubt, an ice lolly is usually a safe option. We always check the ingredients list just in case, as we have found some that had not been safe.
9. Carry coeliac information cards in the language of the destinations to which we travel. This enables us to hand over a card to a waiter/waitress and ask it to be shown to the Chef, so the kitchen staff are also aware. That way, there can be no miscommunication due to language. Ours came from Coeliac Sanctuary, but there are print your own options from other companies online. <https://www.coeliacsanctuary.co.uk/>
10. Look up Tourist Information and Trip Advisor for the area you are visiting and ask for their advice on accommodation and eateries with a good reputation for gluten-free provision.
11. We have also been advised that some air lines allow an extra bag of carry-on luggage for people with special dietary needs when flying abroad. You will need to contact the airline first to ask, and a doctor's note confirming your condition may be required, so always carry a copy with you in your hand luggage. This means that you can take some GF cereal, crisps, bread and biscuits with you on your holiday in case you find you can not source any locally once at your destination.

Recipes *(Please check individual links for nutrition information)*

This editions recipe has been submitted by Karin Dubois and sounds like a delicious idea as a scrummy cake or an indulgent creamy dessert!

Swedish summer strawberry cream cake

Base:

125 gr ground almonds

100 gr Doves gluten-free self-raising flour

2 teaspoons baking powder

Vanilla essence (optional)

225 gr golden caster sugar

4 large eggs

225 gr spread



Whisk together and cook in two 18 cm tins at 180 centigrade for 25 minutes.

Leave to cool and divide into three layers.

Filling:

Layer one – whisk together custard and whipped cream

Layer two – mash strawberries and whisk together with whipped cream

Cover cake with whipped cream and strawberries.

Recipes with Glutafin White Flour Mix

If you are fortunate enough to get the Glutafin Multipurpose white mix on prescription, you have a vast array of goodies that you can make with each box. Last week I used the recipe for the Victoria sponge (successfully tried and tested on numerous occasions). Still, I split the batch into two, making a dozen small fairy cakes (which I topped with Betty Crocker Vanilla Butter Cream and choc sprinkles). I added some desiccated coconut and glace cherries in the other batch, gave a mix, and spooned them into muffin cases. They all rose perfectly, were popular with the kids and the adults and only used half the box of the mix, so I have enough to repeat the baking this week, but perhaps experimenting with choc chips and stem ginger? The ideas are endless!

<https://www.glutafin.co.uk/products/flour-mixes/gluten-free-select-multipurpose-white-mix/>



Kirsty Cranefield