

24th September 2021

Dear BBC Complaints Department

On last weekend's Saturday Kitchen (18th September 2021) a presenter served a guest, who had stated she has coeliac disease, a food product containing gluten. This was irresponsible and careless, and sent a dangerous and inaccurate message to those suffering from this serious autoimmune condition.

A strict gluten free diet for life is the only treatment for coeliac disease and there is no luxury for the opportunity for a 'cheat day'. When catering for those with the condition, all foods containing gluten (a protein found in wheat, barley and rye) must be avoided. Not only that, but to avoid cross contamination, any food must be prepared separately from gluten containing foods. Even just a crumb could cause unpleasant symptoms, and even if a food has only been briefly touched by a gluten containing product it will have collected the gluten protein. C

Coeliac disease affects 1 in 100 people in the UK, it's one of the most common autoimmune diseases – over 1.5 times more prevalent than Type 1 diabetes. But sadly awareness is still low and the effects of it are often misunderstood by the general population.

We have been contacted by countless people with coeliac disease, who found the programme upsetting and unhelpful and felt the condition was not taken seriously. The attitude of 'a little won't hurt' is not only incorrect but also affects the quality of life of many people with coeliac disease. They feel they cannot trust restaurants or even eat safely at the home of family and friends when this message is being communicated – not helped by hearing it on national TV and a respected food programme.

We ask to see an apology on the show itself, or direct from the BBC, to people with coeliac disease and want the BBC to review its policy on how gluten free is discussed in future programmes. It is a medical necessity not a dietary choice for people with coeliac disease and therefore the nation's leading broadcaster should present the facts clearly and with respect.

Further information on coeliac disease can be found on our website:

www.coeliac.org.uk

Yours sincerely,

Coeliac UK

CC Saturday Kitchen production team and Julie Shaw, Commissioning Editor at BBC Daytime