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Coeliac UK celebrates 10 years of commitment to gluten free food safety

The Gluten Free Accreditation Scheme that enables people needing a gluten free diet to eat out with confidence

Coeliac UK is celebrating 10 years since the launch of its Gluten Free Accreditation Scheme, with the mission to guarantee that gluten free food being served in catering establishments is safe and free from contamination. Prior to the launch no such scheme existed, but now there are around 3,000 accredited food establishments including cafes restaurants, hospitals and schools in the UK.

Coeliac disease is a serious autoimmune condition where the body's immune system reacts to gluten found in food and attacks the gut. It affects one in 100 people and currently the only treatment is to follow a strict gluten free diet for life. Safe food preparation is vital for those with coeliac disease as even very small amounts of gluten can be damaging.

The Gluten Free Accreditation Scheme offers the gluten free community peace of mind that they are safe when eating out. Accredited venues are trained in the importance of gluten free food preparation and understanding the potential issues that can cause cross contamination. As well as completing an audit as part of the initial accreditation, catering establishments also have annual audits to ensure all requirements of Coeliac UK's Gluten Free Standard are being met and safety standards continue to be upheld.

Accredited catering establishments can display Coeliac UK's 'GF' symbol in windows, on websites and menus, which can help customers quickly identify eateries that follow strict procedures in food handling and ingredient use to ensure a safe gluten free experience. The 'GF' symbol on a menu tells customers that the dish is gluten free according to the law¹ and that the caterer meets all requirements of the Gluten Free Standard.

Derek, a Frankie & Benny's, Glasgow customer, shared his thoughts on the issue, saying: "Following my coeliac disease diagnosis, eating out became a very daunting experience. It's exciting when I find a venue with gluten free options on the menu but then I feel worried when I ask about their processes, and I find there's often something out of place like they use the same fryer as they do for other gluten containing foods. The brilliant thing about going to an accredited venue is that I know they've been trained to deliver a safe gluten free meal to me, and I'm not going to see any statements on menus saying they can't guarantee the food will be gluten free like you might get in non-accredited venues."

Hilary Croft, Coeliac UK CEO, commented: "We are incredibly proud of our Gluten Free Accreditation Scheme and its growth over the last 10 years. We developed the scheme based on peer-reviewed research; the gluten free community can be assured that it meets the highest standards in food safety and so, any catering establishment bearing the GF symbol will do so also."

"The need and demand for safe eating environments for those following a gluten free diet, which is crucial for people with coeliac disease, continues to grow. We will be continuing our work to increase the number of catering businesses carrying the accreditation into 2023 and beyond."

The scheme has enabled people with coeliac disease to eat out with confidence, as it provides them with trust and reassurance that accredited catering establishments are safe places to eat. Customers shared their experiences of recent visits to Gluten Free accredited venues.

Chris, a customer at The Real Food Café, said: "Excellent experience at The Real Food Café. The staff were fantastic and talked through how they ensure their food is safe for those with coeliac disease by using a dedicated cooking area, fryer, and member of staff. The fish and chips were delicious, what a fantastic business! I wish there were more places like this!"

Tiggy, a Brunning & Price customer, said: "Fab, fab, fab! I was handed a gluten free menu so I could safely choose anything on it. The staff were very knowledgeable, and the food was superb. I can't wait to go again."

Jackie, a Côte customer, said: "I've just been for a meal in Cardiff this evening. Fabulous service with a separate gluten free menu and plenty of choice. I would definitely recommend!"

To find out more about Coeliac UK's Gluten Free Accreditation Scheme, please visit: <https://www.coeliac.org.uk/information-and-support/living-gluten-free/the-gluten-free-diet/eating-out/>

For a full list of Coeliac UK's Gluten Free accredited food establishments, please visit: <https://www.coeliac.org.uk/information-and-support/living-gluten-free/the-gluten-free-diet/eating-out/gf-accredited-venues/>

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For more information, please contact the team at McKenna Townsend:

E: coeliacuk@mckennatownsend.com

T: 01425 472330

Notes to Editors

References:

1. The term gluten free is covered by European regulation (Regulation (EU) No 828/2014) and embedded in UK law. To label a dish gluten free on a menu, dishes must contain 20 parts per million (ppm) or less of gluten.
<https://www.coeliac.org.uk/food-businesses/retailers/gluten-free-and-the-law/>

About the Gluten Free Accreditation Scheme:

- The Gluten Free Accreditation Scheme was launched by Coeliac UK in 2012 and is the only scheme of its type in the UK

- The scheme is a charity led and run initiative and is does not receive any government funding
- Coeliac UK has trained over 4,000 catering staff across the country
- Gluten Free accreditation can be found in around 3,000 food and catering establishments across the UK ranging from cafes, restaurants, schools and hospitals

About Coeliac UK:

For over 50 years, Coeliac UK has been the expert on coeliac disease and the gluten free diet. We are an independent charity helping people living without gluten to live happier, healthier lives. We do this by providing trustworthy advice and support, funding critical research into coeliac disease, working with healthcare professionals to improve diagnosis and fighting for better availability of gluten free food. And we do it all so that one day, no one's life will be limited by gluten.

For more information visit: www.coeliac.org.uk

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Helpline telephone: 0333 332 2033