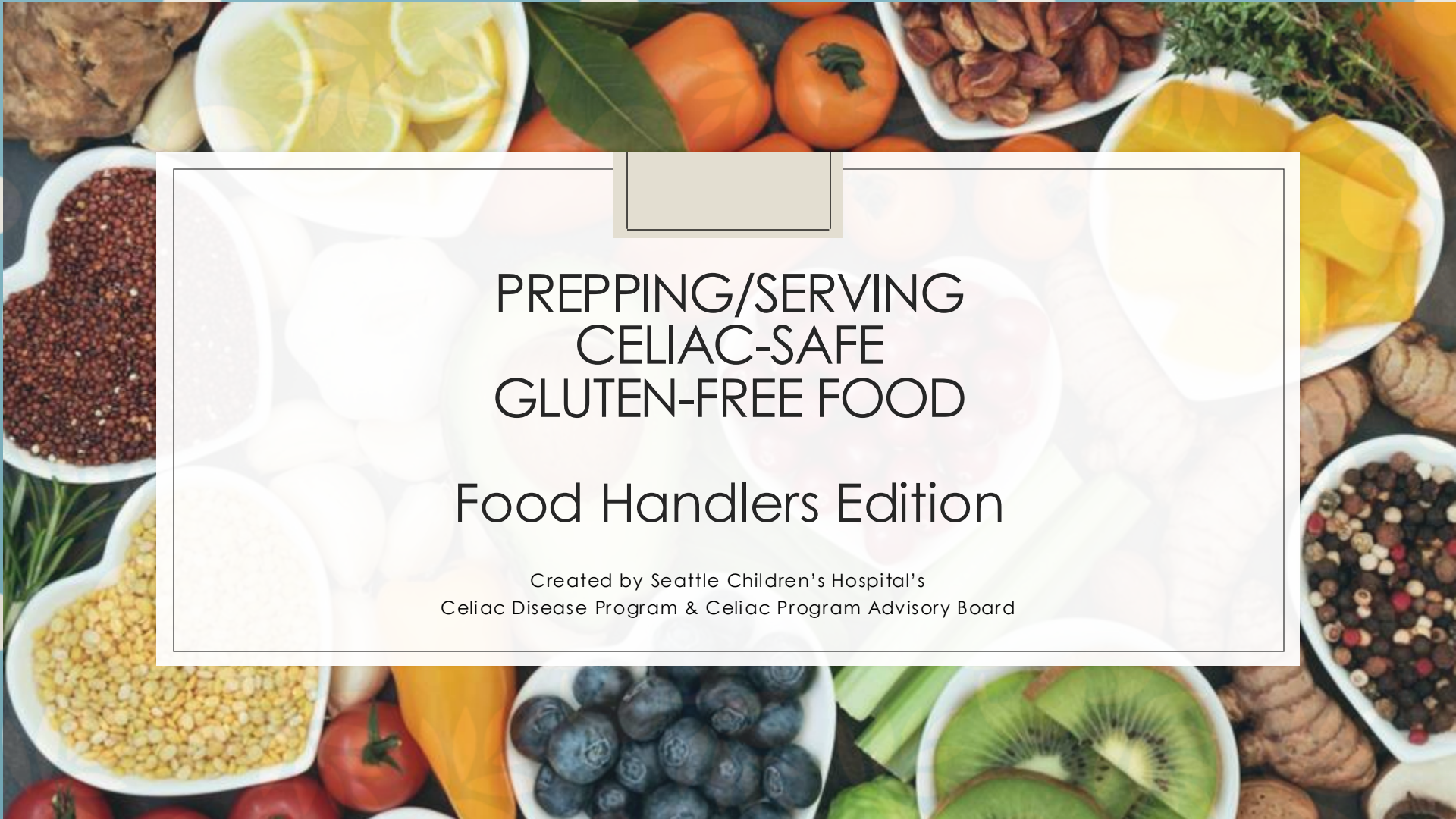

PREPPING/SERVING CELIAC-SAFE GLUTEN-FREE FOOD

Food Handlers Edition

Created by Seattle Children's Hospital's
Celiac Disease Program & Celiac Program Advisory Board

Your role matters

- Some people are gluten-free by choice
- But many **must** avoid gluten to stay healthy or avoid getting very sick
- **In your kitchen, you have the power to protect — or harm — someone's health**

> "I can't eat out unless I trust the kitchen. One crumb with gluten can make me sick for days."

What is gluten?

What is gluten:

- A protein found in **wheat**, **barley**, **rye**, and most **oats***
- It's in obvious things (bread, pasta) and hidden things (sauces, spice blends)
- Cannot be "cooked off" — heat does not destroy it

Why that matters in your kitchen:

- Gluten can **stick to surfaces** like wooden utensils, colanders, cutting boards, and cast iron
- Once it's there, it's very hard to remove — even after washing
- That's why **separate, dedicated tools and equipment** are essential for gluten-free prep

*Most oats contain gluten unless specifically labeled gluten-free

Hidden sources of gluten

- Soy sauce, marinades, dressings
- Shared fryers
- Cutting boards, toasters, griddles, strainers
- Dirty gloves or unwashed hands

> "Most people don't realize gluten is hiding in sauces or spices, or it is residually left behind on surfaces. It's not just bread."

Celiac Disease, Gluten Intolerance, Wheat Allergy

- Celiac Disease: Autoimmune disease affecting **1 in 100 people**
- Symptoms include pain, nausea, vomiting, fatigue, and long-term organ damage
- **Even a crumb** (20 ppm or less!) can trigger a reaction
- Only treatment: **100% gluten-free diet**

- Gluten intolerance: similar symptoms to celiac disease
- Only treatment: 100% gluten-free diet

- Wheat allergy: immune response - can include anaphylaxis.
- Only treatment: 100% wheat-free diet (⚠ Gluten-free does not mean wheat-free)

Restaurants are the #1 place for accidental gluten exposure

- **Cross-contact** during food preparation and handling is the most common cause
- Dining out is often **scary** for people with gluten disorders
- **You can change this** with a few key steps

> "The hardest part is when a restaurant tries to be gluten-free but doesn't understand cross-contact."

Why safe gluten-free options matter

- Gluten-free community is vocal and shares experiences with others
  - Facebook groups, gluten-free apps (e.g., Find Me Gluten Free, Gluten Dude)
- Community reviews are often the basis for assessing whether a restaurant is safe
- Positive reviews build trust, retain and grow customer base
- Increase revenue

> "Finding a safe meal out means the world. I get to feel 'normal.' I want to eat out with my family and friends, not worry about feeling sick for a week after."

Gluten free golden rules

1. **Take it seriously.** *Always*.
2. **Wash hands. Change gloves.**
3. **Use separate and cleaned utensils, tools, and cookware.***
4. **Use clean, gluten-free surfaces.**
5. **Avoid shared fryers, griddles, and toasters.**
6. **If a mistake happens — own it. Remake the dish.**

> "I know it takes extra time, but it means I won't get sick."

* Includes cutting boards, toasters, colanders, utensils (spatulas, tongs, ladles, serving spoons), pans, baking sheets, grills, blenders, food processors, fryers, storage containers

Cross-contact examples

Issue	Remedy
🚫 Gluten free items (meat, buns) grilled on the same surface as regular buns	✅ Prepare gluten free items in a separate, clean pan ✅ Use a barrier such as aluminum foil to prevent contact with gluten-containing surfaces ✅ Dedicate a grill to be gluten-free
🚫 Gluten free items fried in shared fryer	✅ Dedicate a fryer for gluten free items only
🚫 Gluten free pasta prepared in shared pasta water with regular pasta	✅ Boil fresh water for gluten free pasta
🚫 Using a pizza cutter on both regular and gluten-free pizza	✅ Use separate tools, serving spoons, pans
🚫 Gluten free dishes prepared in same area	✅ Prepare gluten free foods away from main prep area; use clean cutting boards, strainers, tools, pans, and gloves. ⚠ Ensure your apron, towel, and gloves are clean!
🚫 Gluten contamination on hands or gloves	✅ Wash your hands with soap and water and change gloves ⚠ Hand sanitizer does not remove gluten. Gluten is a very sticky molecule, not a germ.
🚫 Something with gluten was accidentally placed on a gluten-free meal (e.g., croutons on a salad)	✅ Remake the meal. If gluten-free food touches gluten containing food, the meal is no longer safe to eat.

Label reading basics

- "Gluten Free" must meet FDA standard (<20 ppm)
- "Certified Gluten Free" meets tighter standard (<10 ppm)
- Always check product ingredients:
  - Wheat must be declared
  - Barley and rye are not always clearly labeled
- **Wheat-free does not mean gluten-free**
- **Oats must be labeled gluten-free**

Trusted gluten free certifications

Gluten-Free Certification Organization (GFCO) from Gluten Intolerance Group (GiG)

Gluten-Free Certification Program (GFCP) from Beyond Celiac

NSF from NSF International

Gluten-Free Food Program (GFFP) backed by The National Celiac Association

Safe gluten-free foods

- Plain, fresh meats, seafood, tofu
- Fruits and vegetables
- Plain dairy products
- Eggs
- Beans, rice, nuts, seeds
- Most single-ingredient spices and herbs (blends may contain gluten)

Additional training for staff

Gluten Intolerance Group (GiG)
- Gluten-Free Food Service Validation Program:
- https://gffs.org/

Beyond Celiac
- GREAT Kitchen
- https://greatgfkitchens.org/

National Celiac Association (NCA)
- Gluten-Free Food Program:
- https://glutenfreefoodprogram.com/gf-training/-course-info

You make the difference!

- To someone with celiac disease, your care means they can eat safely

- Thank you for listening!

> "It means so much when you help me eat safely! I feel normal again when I can eat without fear."