

# Living Gluten Free

## *A Beginner's Guide To Gluten Free Living*

An Interview with Mary Blackburn,

author of [Gluten Free Get Togethers](#) & [EasyGlutenFreeLiving.com](#)

and Shannon Stoltz of [Living Life at Home](#)

For Mary's Tried & True Gluten Free recipes, visit [Gluten Free Get Togethers](#)

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## Living Gluten Free: What is Gluten Intolerance and Celiac Disease?

A few years ago, I was introduced to the Gluten Free world through a friend whose daughter was diagnosed as gluten intolerant, and followed along as they made the transition as a family to being completely gluten free. Since then, my mom has been diagnosed as gluten intolerant, and my circle of friends and acquaintances with gluten free families or children seems to have grown.



So in today's podcast, I am excited to pick the brain of Mary Blackburn, from [EasyGlutenFreeLiving.com](#), on what it means to be gluten free, and specifically be gluten free with kids.

Mary was diagnosed with Celiac Disease in 1987 when she was a young mother of 2, and has been living Gluten Free ever since.

Her website is dedicated to helping those who are new to Gluten Free living find the information and encouragement they need to be successful in the gluten free lifestyle. Mary also shares her tried and true gluten-free recipes in her e-cookbook, [Gluten Free Get Togethers](#).

Mary is an incredibly knowledgeable and generous person. During our entire interview we experienced all kinds of technical problems and she was so gracious and wonderful about it. It's always a privilege to share with you someone who really knows their topic, but also is just a great person as well. And that's Mary.

**Through this interview, she has given us a Beginner's Guide to Living Gluten Free. We covered:**

- What it means to be "Gluten Free"
- What Gluten is, and what foods it is found in

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- What the difference is between being gluten intolerant and having Celiac Disease
- The symptoms and indicators of gluten intolerance and Celiac Disease
- What you should do if you suspect you or your child is gluten intolerant (and what you shouldn't do!)
- What grains are gluten free and what you can eat on a gluten free diet
- The foods you wouldn't think of that have gluten hidden in them
- How to read labels to ensure the foods you are buying are gluten free
- How to eat out when you are gluten free and ensure that you won't get sick.
- Her little trick that helps restaurant staff understand what is safe and what is not.
- When to get screening for Celiac Disease, and who in your family should be tested.
- What misinformation is out there about Gluten Free Living
- How to help family members and friends understand what is safe and what is not on a gluten free diet
- And so much more

I learned so much from Mary in this conversation, and I've been researching this for a couple years now. If you know anyone who is gluten free, or if you or your child is gluten free, I encourage you take the time to [listen in to this interview](#), and share it with others who need to understand what is okay and what isn't on a gluten free diet.

*...Shannon*



Shannon Stoltz, host  
Living Life at Home

To learn more about Living Life at Home, download episodes of the podcast, or ask a question, please visit [Living-Life-at-Home.com](http://Living-Life-at-Home.com).

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**Shannon:** Hi. This is Shannon from [Living Life at Home](#) and today's podcast is about being gluten free, or being gluten free with your kids. My guest today knows all about being gluten free because she's been gluten free since 1987. **Mary Blackburn** from [EasyGlutenFreeLiving.com](#) is here to share with us what she's learned over the years.

I'm so excited to pick her brain, because I have been learning about this through friends and family for the last couple years and this is a wonderful opportunity to really hear from somebody who has gone down this journey.

Mary, thanks so much for being with us today.

**Mary:** Thanks, Shannon, for having me.

**Shannon:** Why don't you tell us a little bit about who you are, your website, and your gluten free journey?

**Mary:** Well, my website as you said is at [EasyGlutenFreeLiving.com](#). I basically started my website because I wanted to help other people who are newly diagnosed or have children that have children that have been diagnosed with either Celiac Disease or a gluten intolerance.

I was diagnosed, like you said, back in 1987. I was about a 28 year old mother of two young children. It started with my daughter and I went to Girl Scout camp, I was her Girl Scout leader, and it was a dry summer in Pennsylvania so I just assumed that I picked up Giardiasis. I spent most of my four days at the ladies room with my very own bottle of Kaopectate.

**Shannon:** Oh, dear.

**Mary:** When I came home I went to the doctor and he basically treated it as Giardiasis, but it got better because that was in July and in August my father-in-law had a really huge garden and we would eat out of the garden all summer, tomatoes, fresh corn, and the whole nine yards of fresh fruits and vegetables.

**Shannon:** Sounds good!

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**Mary:** Yes. So, the months of August and September I was fine. Then we started into October and started eating back the pastas, and we ate a lot of pasta because my daughter is/was an athlete, so she was always wanting her complex carbs, and I started back with diarrhea again.

By Thanksgiving I had dropped down to 100 pounds, I had no energy, I was sick all the time. Just numbness in my hands and face. We were at my mother-in-law and father-in-law's for Thanksgiving weekend and I came home, I couldn't wait to get home that weekend and my husband said, "You know what? You can't do this anymore. We've got to find out what's wrong with you."

So, I called my gynecologist and told him what I was going through. He said, "You know what? I think you need to see a gastroenterologist." So, I got an appointment with a gastroenterologist and had an endoscopy done. That's where they do a scoping down your throat and take a small snip of your small intestines.

Your intestines should have little hair like fingers called villi and mine was like a garden hose, the villi had been totally flattened. So, basically I was not absorbing any nutrition at all whatsoever, everything I ate was just shooting straight through.

I was a classic Celiac Disease case, there was no question that that was what my problem was. After starting on a gluten free diet I started feeling better, not tired anymore and not sick anymore. It was really rough back then because there were no over the counter gluten free foods, basically, and what there was the bread tasted like styrofoam and it was terrible.

I just started making my own foods and things. Back then with the pasta and stuff, I did not make my own pasta, the store bought gluten free pasta was awful, it would stick together when you made it. So, my family did not go totally gluten free. If we were having something like pasta, I would make mine and make theirs and it was like two separate meals.

Now, [Tinkyada makes a great pasta](#), several different kinds. They make elbow macaroni, they make noodles, and they are really good to the point where my husband actually eats those now.



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**Shannon:** In my household if my husband will eat it that says something.

**Mary:** Yes. So, my household is pretty much except for the bread situation gluten free. I make up [my own flour mixtures](#). I tried Bob's Red Mill Flour and it's very good, but I don't know, it has something in it that I don't care for the flavor so much, so I just use my own mixes of flours and things.

It's nice now that there's actually food out there that you can buy that actually tastes good.

**Shannon:** Right. I have noticed just in the two years that I have been looking at gluten free products that there are just so many more out there just this year than there was even two years ago. I don't know if that's awareness or whether that's just more products coming to the market.

We're such a ready to eat, easy grab it off the shelf or through the drive-through kind of society and maybe the demand is that way now, I don't know. But, it just seems like there's a lot more available now.

**Mary:** There is. It seems to me that there are a lot more people being diagnosed with gluten intolerance, if not full blown Celiac Disease. I think that's helping a lot, there's a huge push for there to be more gluten free products and more information on labels as to whether it's gluten free or not.

If it doesn't actually say "gluten free" a lot of times, especially in the United States, you can read on the label and it will actually say, "This product contains soy, wheat," or whatever.

**Shannon:** Yes, and that's a nice thing. I have a friend who in their case their daughter was diagnosed as gluten intolerance and they went through the process and they just decided for the whole family to convert to gluten free. They have seen so many benefits from doing that.

But, in their case they're not only gluten intolerant, they're soy intolerant and yeast intolerant. Boy, shopping and thinking of things for them when they come to visit and so forth, you really have to watch the labels.

**Mary:** Yes.

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**Shannon:** I want to talk about that a little bit more, but let's talk about this thing between being gluten intolerant. There's a range between being gluten intolerant to being full blown Celiac Disease.

**Mary:** Just Celiac Disease, there's no S on the Celiac, but I see a lot of people do that. The difference is, like I said, with full blown Celiac Disease your villi basically is damaged. You will have varying degrees of the damage depending on how quickly it's caught.

Celiac Disease is one of the most difficult, or had been of the most difficult problem diseases to actually be diagnosed because the way that you have it, the way it affects your body can be so different. It can affect you from depression to you can have diarrhea, you can be constipated, you can have bloating, a lot of tingling in your face or hands, numbness in your hands.

**Shannon:** So, there's many different symptoms that may or may not occur with each person that has it. Is that what I'm hearing?

**Mary:** Yes.

**Shannon:** So, that can be difficult to diagnose. Those things can be so many different other things as well.

**Mary:** Right. A lot of people will basically kind of self-diagnose. I say on my website if you suspect that you are gluten intolerant don't stop eating gluten, because if you're going to be diagnosed by a doctor you have to be eating gluten in order for it to show up in your blood work.

If you stop eating it and then you go to the doctor then the doctor will say, "Well, no, you're not showing any signs at all. Your blood work came back normal, everything is good. You're fine." And you're really not.

**Shannon:** Because you've already taken it out of your diet. I read that on your site a few months ago and it was during a time where I was experimenting a bit with taking a lot of the foods that have gluten in them, the flour based stuff, out of our diet to kind of see if that helped with some of the behavioral things that we have going on in our house with my boys in particular and in how I was feeling.

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Then I read that on your site and I went, "Oh, I guess I better put it back in our diet if I want to get a confirmation." I made muffins today for the first time in a couple months because I really need to get my son tested for this.

I'm glad you shared that because I would have made, and I did make the assumption that if I suspect therefore I should take that out of my diet.

**Mary:** A lot of people do that. If they do that there's something called The Gluten Challenge that I guess is kind of going around right now where if you have taken the gluten out of your diet they tell you to go back on gluten for anywhere from three to six months. If you're full blown Celiac Disease you sure don't want to have to do that.

**Shannon:** You don't want to feel that miserable.

**Mary:** Right.

**Shannon:** For those people who aren't fully clear on what gluten is and what that means to be gluten free, can you share just for somebody who is completely new to this and has just been told that a family member needs to remove gluten from their diet or that they need to remove gluten from their diet or their child needs to remove gluten from their diet, what does that mean?

**Mary:** Gluten is a protein that is found in wheat, barley, rye, and contaminated oats. What I mean by contaminated oats is a lot of time oats in the United States are processed in the same factory as wheat, barley, and rye, so they can pick up the flours or whatever from the barley and wheat and have that on the oats, which makes them contaminated. It goes into a cross-contamination type of thing.

**Shannon:** That's good to know because I've seen that, "and some oats." I was like, how do you know which ones? So, is that where you have to look for the "gluten free" or "this was processed in a factory with wheat," or what do you look for?

**Mary:** I basically buy strictly [Bob's Red Mill Gluten Free Oats](#), that's the only kind I buy. When I was diagnosed I was told no oats at all, period. But, that was back in the dark ages and Bob's



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Red Mill was not around and they didn't have strictly gluten free oats processed in a non-contaminated factory.

They also say for newly diagnoses Celiacs you should not eat oats until at least six months after you go on the gluten free diet. If you're a Celiac it's to give your intestines time to heal and the villi to grow back, because oats also contain a protein that is kind of like gluten, it's a completely different protein, it's not gluten, but in new Celiacs it can actually react the same way as gluten would.

**Shannon:** Interesting. So, the recommendation is once your diagnosed to wait six months and let that healing process go and then make sure you're doing gluten free oats.

**Mary:** Yes. And they recommend that you only do a half a cup of oats a day. I'm not sure why, but that's the general rule of thumb.

**Shannon:** Okay, to limit the intake. That's interesting. I know that my youngest daughter, she doesn't eat meat but she loves her grains. That would be an interesting thing for her, because if it ever comes up that she's gluten intolerant she eats oatmeal by the bucket full.

When you find something that doesn't have wheat in it, it might have oats in it. So, that's something to still watch for on your labels then. Not only does it have wheat, barley, and rye, but also you may have watch whether it has oats or oat flour or something like that when you're in your first six months.

**Mary:** Right, yes.

**Shannon:** Back to those labels again. So, that's what you can't eat. In our world, in the American Standard Diet, wheat based products are so prevalent. We've got bread, we've got pasta, we bake cookies, cakes, doughnuts, bagels, and all these things.

I know that some of my friends when they have first had to deal with "now we can't have gluten stuff," it has been kind of a "What do we eat?" Because these things are so prevalent in their diet and not having those things anymore it's like, "What do we do now?"

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So, how do you handle that?

**Mary:** Actually, there are so many foods that are naturally gluten free. All your fruits, all your fresh vegetables, meat, potatoes, all of those are all naturally gluten free and they're healthy for you.

There are grains that are in the United States not really thought of as normal food for us, but in other countries they're used very prevalently. There's quinoa.

**Shannon:** I love quinoa.

**Mary:** There's also millet and sorghum. Sorghum actually is the world's third largest grain and it actually is used a lot in gluten free baking because the protein in it and the fiber content resembles whole wheat flour, so it helps with the texture of the bread and flavor.

**Shannon:** Really? I've never heard of sorghum before, so I'll have to look at that one.

**Mary:** If you have a Whole Foods, I know they sell it. There's a lot more of these types of flours and things that are showing up in mainstream grocery stores, which is kind of exciting. But, I find that you have to watch your prices, because a lot of times I live out in the country and although they have these flours and things at my normal grocery store they also cost about three to four dollars more than if I go into the city and buy them at Whole Foods.

**Shannon:** Wow. You mentioned quinoa and I love quinoa as an alternative to rice, because it cooks quickly and has a similar texture and so forth. I know that if I get it off the shelf in the grocery store, which actually around here has a really good selection of alternative foods, it's so much more expensive.

But, I've found that Costco carries it in a much bigger container, but at a much lower price. So, shopping around does make a difference. I know a friend has found that Whole Foods can offer it to you by the case.

**Mary:** Yes, they do.

**Shannon:** I know that for like wheat you can buy bulk wheat from various places, can you do that with these other grains?

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**Mary:** I don't know. I've never tried. Mostly with the sorghum it's a flour, I buy that as a flour. I keep all my flours in the freezer because rice flours can go rancid. They will go bad very quickly, so you want to keep your flour in the freezer.

**Shannon:** Okay. So, you want to keep them in the freezer. Can you go straight from freezer to cooking with it?

**Mary:** No. You want to bring all of your ingredients to room temperature, your milk, your butter, your flour, your eggs, just because, and I'm not sure why, but just because for gluten free baking and cooking (not so much with the cooking, but with the baking) they seem to incorporate better.

**Shannon:** Interesting. So, the way they bind together seems to work better. Okay. Bean flours, like garbanzo bean flour and so forth, do you use that kind of stuff?

**Mary:** Actually, I don't use it quite as much, because like with the fava bean flour, and it's probably just me because I never really used it a lot, but they kind of have a funky flavor.

**Shannon:** I've heard that some people don't like the bean kind of flavor.

**Mary:** Yes. I experiment a lot with my family with my baking and stuff. My son-in-law, if he even remotely thinks that it's gluten free he won't touch it.

**Shannon:** So, you really have to make sure.

**Mary:** So, I make up my own flour mixes and that's why I stopped using Bob's Red Mill, because he has a I believe it's fava bean flour in there and it has a slightly different flavor. But, if you just use the flour mixes that I have mixed up they tend to incorporate into your cakes and muffins and things and you can't tell any difference.

**Shannon:** Really? Now, do you have this recipe on your site or is it in your cookbook?

**Mary:** It's in [my cookbook](#). I have five different flour mixes. A lot of recipes will call for self rising flour, so I have that recipe. I have a high fiber, which you would use more for to give like a texture of a whole wheat kind of bread.

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Then there's an all purpose flour, which is basically just white rice flour, tapioca flour and cornstarch. I use that a lot for gravies and thickeners in stews and that kind of stuff.

**Shannon:** See, that's another thing I would totally forget about. I'm thinking about I have Thanksgiving coming up with my mom who is just now had to switch to gluten free and I would have messed up on the gravy, because I forget about the fact that we put flour in that. That's good to know.

**Mary:** The thing is, you can use cornstarch and I did for years. But, the thing with cornstarch in gravy when it gets cold it solidifies, it just gels up and you think you've got Jell-o going on there. So, with the flours it thickens up nicely, it's more of a regular wheat flour type gravy.

Since you brought up Thanksgiving, I just want to interject about cross-contamination. I don't know, there's a lot of controversy about stuffing a turkey and not stuffing a turkey. If you stuff your turkey you've just cross-contaminated that turkey with gluten.

**Shannon:** So, you have to be careful about that if you're using a traditional stuffing. In my case, I stuff it with vegetables. But, a traditional stuffing, that's another thing that I don't know that I would think about.

**Mary:** A lot of people don't. I still have trouble with a lot of my family and my sisters. Celiac Disease is something that after you go on the gluten free diet you look normal, it's not like diabetes where if you've got Type 1 and you're on insulin people see you taking your insulin or whatever.

Or if you've got cancer or some physical some very prominent disease that you have and people see that you look sick or whatever. With Celiac Diseases it's controlled strictly by diet, so once you're healthy and you've got healthy villi again it's hard for people to really think that you can be so sick just by eating a little bit, just a breadcrumb or whatever.

So, it's hard when you're going somewhere other than close family members to actually be able to be comfortable eating, because you're not sure.

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**Shannon:** Right. When we think about kids that are gluten intolerant or you have Celiac Disease, that's something else too is that I know that I tend to try and be very respectful of my friends that have allergies.

I am a homeschooler and in a homeschooling world you run into kids with Celiac Disease, with gluten intolerance, with peanut allergies or latex allergies where they have these very strong ones, because it's easier to control that stuff at home and so they tend to gravitate towards homeschooling a bit.

On the other side of that is nobody lives in a bubble, so we have family and we have friends and there's always activities and so forth. I try to be respectful of this, I mean we were just shopping for peanut free gluten free candy and that was an interesting thing. But, that's because I understand.

Trying to educate our children, I've had to educate my children that know their friends can't eat this and why they can't eat this and what happens to them even though they look normal, they play normal, this is just part of how their body chemistry is. Those are discussions that I think are valuable to have, but it is hard to remember sometimes that somebody can get so sick from something as simple as this one little protein.

**Mary:** I can't even fathom what it would be like to send a child to school. It's hard enough for teenagers, but a child in elementary school to make sure that their friends are not sharing their lunch and the teacher realizes how serious this is.

There's a website, [FoodAllergy.org](#), that addresses a lot of issues for school age children, for small elementary school children. They have an action plan for parents to print out and give to their child's teacher. It's not an affiliate link, I don't have anything to do with it, I just came across it and I think it's a really good thing for people with small children.

**Shannon:** Right. I think that's great. Even just as a parent having to educate not just teachers, but for Sunday School things. They have snacks at Sunday School and Goldfish Crackers are a really popular snack, but you can't have them if you're gluten intolerant.

**Mary:** Right.

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**Shannon:** I know that for my daughter's friend who is gluten intolerant that was a really hard thing to have to give up was those Goldfish Crackers.

**Mary:** And the Cheerios.

**Shannon:** Oh, yes.

**Mary:** I gave my kids Cheerios from the time they had teeth in their head and were able to eat them. Fortunately now there's a [cereal that is gluten free that is little round O's](#), and you can get those at Whole Foods also. I don't have the name right in front of me and it totally escapes me, but at least with the Cheerios you can get an alternative.



**Shannon:** I know I have seen a gluten free recipe for homemade Goldfish Crackers that uses brewer's yeast – or not brewer's yeast, nutritional yeast to help with the coloring and so forth. I found that online a couple of years ago when my friend and I were talking about this whole "can't eat Goldfish" thing.

In her case, her daughter can't have yeast either, so we ended up not trying it because that didn't work for her. I know that there's alternatives, but again having to bake up a bunch of crackers, that's one of those things I would have to do like on a Saturday afternoon let's get together and bake crackers and have fun and then have a whole bunch of them for later.

(**note:** here's [another recipe for homemade gluten free goldfish crackers](#) without yeast)

Because time is precious and we're a ready to go society, grab something and let's head to a baseball game or whatever. So, what I do is if I have the ability to is take an afternoon and do something social and fun as a family to cook together and then that way that stuff is just there. It can get kind of expensive to try and track things down off the shelf and then when you have to read the labels like that, that's just additional work.

**Mary:** The nice thing about, and this is strictly for the United States, they have to list if it's a known allergen, like peanuts, soy, milk, or gluten they have to list it on

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the label. So, it says "modified food starch" for years that was a red flag we can't eat that because we don't know what the starch is that they used.

If it says "modified food starch," but does not specify that has wheat or barley or whatever then in the United States it has to be a non-allergen starch, so it would be corn.

**Shannon:** Right. I actually didn't realize that until just a couple days ago when I was looking for Halloween candy that was allergen free. Thankfully, there are some people that have put together some wonderful lists online for allergen free candy.

I was reading, I think it was Jelly Belly's, they clearly say what allergens they have and don't have and that modified food starch thing, they specify that is corn starch. It's nice that companies have stepped up to do that and to disclose that, because it can be so very severe.

My daughter was going to a Halloween party, well it was a game night and they were doing a candy exchange, it just coincided with Halloween timing, and one of the boys is deathly allergic to peanuts and that's a cross-contamination issue.

**Mary:** That can even be an airborne type of thing.

**Shannon:** Right. That's another one like the gluten, you look healthy, you look normal and you just don't know that that's going to be something pretty serious.

Getting back to it. I mentioned the Goldfish Crackers and so forth, with kids pizza and you have a pizza party or you have cupcakes and you bring those to gatherings or you go to a birthday party or a school activity. In our case, our kids have all different kinds of extracurricular activities and those are common things that are there that are handed out.

I have a friend that bakes up the gluten free versions of cupcakes and so forth, and calzones and she brings them with them so that her daughters have something. She keeps them in the freezer and then she brings them with her to these parties or gatherings so her daughters have something similar to eat.

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**Mary:** That's great that she does. That's what I recommend parents to do as well, because kids never want to feel like they're different. They want to be able to eat what everybody else is eating.

Now there are actually frozen pizza crusts that are rice pizza crusts, I think one brand is brown rice, and they actually look like a normal kind of pizza crust. You still have to make the pizza yourself, but I've seen at Whole Foods they also have some already made pizzas, but I'm not sure if they have any that kids would actually want to eat like pepperoni or something. But, at least they can have their pizza or their cupcakes.

It's so nice that Betty Crocker has now come out with [gluten free brownie mix](#), [gluten free cake mix](#) in chocolate and yellow. It makes it so much easier that you don't have to make up your own every time, you can just go and get a box and mix it up.



**Shannon:** I saw those recently, I know that they weren't there years ago when I started looking for them and now they're there, which is nice.

**Mary:** I'm thinking they just came out with these within the past year.

**Shannon:** That's really nice. I come from a perspective of looking at it from I have these friends and these family members that are gluten intolerant and how can I support them in that, and for someone like me who doesn't live and breathe gluten free as someone like you does or like my friend who that's part of their daughter's health, those types of things are helpful for those of us who want to support a gluten free lifestyle or a gluten free need for a friend or a family member and really don't have a lot of clue as to how to go about doing that, so that's a nice thing.

And all the postings that you can find online with recipes, including your site that has so much great information on it, it's really helpful for those of us who are learning.

Another thing, we talked about making your own stuff and we've talked about these ready made products that you can work with from the grocery stores. Obviously, as you mentioned there are so many whole real foods that you can eat. We start looking outside of the Standard American Diet and look at what other grains and other foods that people make from other cultures.

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I know that whenever we talk about cooking whole foods and cooking real foods and more of that one of the things that comes up, especially for parents that are working parents, or working and homeschooling, or working and their kids are in school, whatever it is, how in the world do you have time to cook all this from scratch?

**Mary:** Well, I work full time with my husband. We leave our house at about 6:00, between 6:00 and 6:30 in the morning and a lot of times we don't get home until 6:30 – 7:00 at night, so yes, it is a pain. I do a lot of my cooking on Sunday afternoon or Saturday during the day.

Now in the winter time as the weather starts getting cold I make a lot of homemade vegetable soup, I make chili, and things like that. Or I'll roast a chicken and that makes several meals. I try to make things that will make a lot of leftovers. It's just my husband and I, so I don't have to cook quite as much as if I was cooking for a family of four, but that helps a lot being able to cook it in advance.

In the summertime we do a lot of grilling. I make a lot of chicken on the grill or burgers on the grill. We eat a lot of homemade pizza, which the pizza crusts are just frozen and you pull them out, put the sauce and cheese on and in 12 minutes they're done.

**Shannon:** Right. Actually, we do homemade pizza here too. My husband had to fill in for me one day and he's like, "I don't remember how to do this." I said, "Just ask Esther," she's my six year old, she knows how to make the pizza and she can make it. The sauce, the cheese, into the oven and out again in less time than it takes to go down to the grocery store and buy a frozen one. So, that's a neat thing.

I do some of the similar things by going and making things in larger batches and then freezing off smaller pieces of it in individual size packages, because it's just a faster way to get a lot done. I have four kids, so with all the activities and so forth it's just easier to grab something from the freezer and go with it or just put something in the crockpot in the morning, or in my case in the afternoon and it's done later on. That's helpful and there's a lot of gluten free things that you can do in a crockpot.

**Mary:** Oh, yes.

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**Shannon:** Your comment about vegetable soup made me think about when I would make vegetable soup I would normally put a barley in it, and obviously you can't do that. Do you use a different grain for that or do you just leave it alone?

**Mary:** Mine is strictly just a straight vegetable soup. I make it with beef broth. I just need to interject here, with chicken broth or beef broth you need to watch the label on those very carefully because a lot of chicken broths have wheat flour in them. Why? I have no idea, because they're really not thickened, but they do. So, I make all my own chicken broth and beef broth and freeze it.

**Shannon:** Well, that is fascinating. I don't buy chicken broth because it's so much cheaper to just take my whole chickens that I've roasted and I put them in a freezer bag for when I have time to put them in the crockpot and make my own chicken broth through the crockpot overnight. I would never have thought that off the shelf it has wheat in it. That is just crazy, all these hidden things.

I was completely shocked about six weeks ago I was going through and I needed some sour cream and they were promoting in a special way, you know how they do that at the grocery store, they have whatever calling attention to a particular product, it was the all natural sour cream. I went, "What do you mean all natural? Isn't all sour cream all natural?"

So, I just lined up a whole bunch of them in the grocery store and I was reading the labels, because I never thought about it, I just assumed sour cream is sour cream. I didn't realize that some of these, especially things that are light.

**Mary:** I was just going to say the "light" ones have a lot of strange fillers in them.

**Shannon:** Oh my goodness, I was shocked. I had no idea. I immediately then started reading the labels more carefully on the sour cream and the dairy products.

**Mary:** I actually have a post on my blog about that called, [Celiac Disease, is there anything I can eat?](#) I list a bunch of products that are right off of the store shelf that you can go to and not be afraid that there's hidden gluten in there. I actually have on there; sour cream, but not light or reduced calorie or fat free, because they can contain fillers that sometimes have wheat in them.

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You think you're going to do something healthy, and I learned that the hard way because I thought, "Oh wow, I need to lose a few pounds, but it's the holidays," this was last year, "I think I'll make my dip with a light version or a fat version." And you start reading the labels and it's like, "Oh my gosh, I can't do that."

**Shannon:** Okay. So, we've talked about all these things that we can make and these ingredients that we can buy off the shelf that we really have to watch the labels for those cross-contamination situations and those hidden ingredients, like with sour cream and soy sauce and stuff like that.

How do you handle eating out? With kids, I've got four kids, we go out to grab something quick through a drive-through or whatever all the time, that's part of the Standard American Diet and our lifestyle. How do you handle those eating out situations?

**Mary:** Well, it's getting a little easier with all of the information that's out there. There's more and more awareness, I guess is what I'm trying to say. It's a lot easier because with the awareness that's out there restaurants are now offering gluten free menus to their customers.

I know [Eat 'N Park has a gluten free menu](#). Actually, I was kind of surprised, the other morning I was watching the news and they actually said right on their advertisement that they had a gluten free chicken thing. I thought, "Wow, that's kind of cool." Also, I know [Outback Steakhouse has a gluten free menu](#).

There's a new book that I will be reviewing on my blog later on in the week that is all about every restaurant in the United States and they go state by states as to who has gluten free menus and what kind of food they offer. It's kind of cool.

**Shannon:** That's a lot of research right there.

**Mary:** Yes, it is. It's pretty neat to have because they also talk about even the restaurants that don't have an actual gluten free menu they will go through like McDonald's or Wendy's or the fast food places and actually say you can't have the burger on the bun, but you can have just the burger in the wrapper. So, that's helpful too.

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But, it all comes down to trust. You have to trust that they are going to not make you sick, and it's in their best interest not to make you sick. But, when you go into a restaurant, if you go to the same restaurant over and over and they get to know you and stuff it's a little easier.

But, if it's your first time going to a restaurant, ask to see the manager or the maitre d or whoever that's actually in charge that can actually help keep you from ingesting food that's going to make you sick. Be honest with them, tell them, "I have a severe allergy or intolerance to gluten and I need to know if you can actually prepare food for me that is not going to be cross-contaminated or have gluten in it."

Most of the time they're very helpful. On the rare chance that you get somebody who just really doesn't give a rip then say, "Okay, I'm just going to have to go somewhere else." Be open for that. If you're going there with a bunch of friends kind of tell them, "If I can't eat here, we're going to have to go somewhere else." That can be a real pain simply because it all comes to, especially for me, I don't like to make waves, so it's been very hard for me when we go out to exert that to make them aware of me not being able to eat this stuff.

A lot of times I would just order a salad with no croutons or whatever. It took a long time to get comfortable telling people, "This is how I have to eat and there's no way I can get around it."

**Shannon:** Right. I'm also not fond of making waves and I know that in my case I have issues with beef and pork. At this point in my life I can't digest them, they make me very sick and that's been something that I've had to be careful with. Sometimes on a salad they put bacon or on potato skins they put bacon or whatever and I've had to be very firm with them and say, "I'm sorry, this is really important. I'll get sick."

Most of the time the service people are good about it, but sometimes they forget and they don't get that it's a big deal. But, most of the time it is good.

**Mary:** I've made up a gluten free dining card that I find is quite helpful. It's basically a card that says, "I'm on a very strict gluten free diet and the following ingredients will make me extremely sick, so please read this card carefully." It helps if the waitress will take it back to the chef.

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**Shannon:** That makes sense, because you know how things get lost in translation.

**Mary:** Yes, exactly. This way they can actually see, I list on there that gluten is a protein found in and I list everything that it's found in. Then there's foods that may contain gluten, which is soy sauce and marinades and imitation bacon, believe it or not, is made out of wheat.

**Shannon:** That's crazy, I never would have thought of that.

**Mary:** And then there's questionable ingredients, like brown rice syrup, which sounds benign, but it can have a wheat or a barley base for whatever reason. So, it helps because it actually gives them a visual of what you cannot have or what they need to watch out for.

**Shannon:** As a person who doesn't like to make waves, it easier to convey to someone when you just hand them something and say, "This is really important."

I would think that thinking about a child who unfortunately isn't as often taken as seriously as an adult in certain circumstances or doesn't have the ability to communicate their needs as well, when they're out in a group setting or maybe a grandparent is taking them somewhere or friends are taking them somewhere that would be a really helpful tool for them to be able to communicate their needs.

**Mary:** Yes.

**Shannon:** So, where do we get one of these things?

**Mary:** I made them up myself, these particular ones, and they will be going up on my website probably by the end of this coming week or next week.

**Shannon:** Okay.

**Mary:** If your readers and listeners want to email me or leave a comment I can get them the information on getting those.

**Shannon:** For everybody who would like to get one of these from Mary, her website again is [EasyGlutenFreeLiving.com](#) and you can get that information there or contact Mary through there. If you're having trouble with that you can [contact me on the Living Life at Home](#) site and I will gladly get you in touch with Mary.

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As we talk about this going about thing and I think about when my dad comes and he takes my kids to ice cream or to a fast food restaurant and so forth. He lives elsewhere and he comes to visit a couple of times a year, if that, and so the kids with special needs, and my kids have some, aren't necessarily on the forefront of his mind as they would be for me who lives and breathes it every single day. In a gluten free world or a gluten intolerant world I would imagine that this is incredibly important to be able to communicate and have others who are taking your children elsewhere understand the seriousness of this and what to look for. What are your thoughts on that?

**Mary:** Yes. I can't fathom how a mom would feel sending a child off knowing that whatever they eat they could be getting sick from. With Celiac Disease or with gluten it's not as dangerous as say a peanut allergy or something where the child can go into anaphylactic shock. That just doesn't happen with gluten, it's more of a you're either going to have headaches or you're going to have diarrhea or something like that, you're not going to necessarily die right then and there from it.

But, it's still serious enough because if you are, especially a Celiac, and you continue to ingest even small amounts of gluten, eventually it will take its toll and you can end up with something called Barret's Esophagus. That's actually you have a lot of acid reflux type thing. The reason I bring this up is because even though I've been totally gluten free I have had a lot of acid reflux and it's a genetic thing, but Barret's Esophagus is actually a precursor to Esophageal cancer.

**Shannon:** Wow.

**Mary:** So, it's something that you need to be aware of, that even though you can't die from just ingesting a bread crumb or something like that it will eventually take its toll on your body in other ways.

Celiac's are prone to arthritis and they're also prone to GERD, so you want to make sure that your child is not getting this gluten by accident. When they go out people think, "Oh, we'll take them for ice cream." Ice cream is a benign thing, but they can't have a cone. "Okay, we'll get it in a cup."

But, if you go to say Dairy Queen and you get a Blizzard they can't have the Blizzard, even though they can have a Blizzard with M&Ms or something like that, unless the

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Dairy Queen people are kind enough to clean their machine before they make your child's Blizzard it can be cross-contaminated with gluten because they make Blizzard with Oreo cookies and things. I don't eat them, so I'm not sure exactly what all, but that's one thing you need to worry about.

**Shannon:** Right, that cross-contamination again. In another conversation you and I were talking about french fries, and french fries are just a normal kid thing and potatoes don't have gluten in them, but you had a bit of advice that I hadn't thought of before. Can you share that?

**Mary:** Yes. Say you go to Arby's and they have those curly fries, they are actually breaded with wheat flour something. So, they fry those in the deep fryer and they use that same oil for the regular french fries that are not breaded, but now your regular french fries are contaminated because they did not use a different oil.

So, that's something you have to worry about. Say you're going to Kentucky Fried Chicken or whatever and if they don't use a designated fryer for the french fries.

**Shannon:** Because the breaded chicken then crosses over.

**Mary:** Yes.

**Shannon:** Like the Arby's example, we like to get the mozzarella sticks and those are breaded and that would be a problem.

**Mary:** Yes. If they don't use a designated fryer for the stuff that has wheat flour on it and a separate one for just the french fries then you're being contaminated and getting gluten in your diet.

**Shannon:** These are things that not only do we have to be aware of, but we need to make sure that those people who are taking our children out are aware of, or that our children are articulate enough and confident enough in who they are to either make those smart choices to not get these things or be able to convey to others, "No thank you, I can't have that."

**Mary:** Yes. Even if they don't feel comfortable talking to say the lady behind the counter at McDonald's, if they feel comfortable talking to their grandma or grandpa

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or their friend's mom and saying, "I can't have that if it's been fried with something else," then at least so the adult can kind of watch out for them.

**Shannon:** Right, that makes sense. Again, I really like that idea of the gluten free dining card. That just seems like such an empowering tool to me.

**Mary:** Yes, it is. I kind of got the idea when I bought the book [G-Free by Elizabeth Hasslebeck](#) and in the back of her book she has a little card.

Everyone was really excited when she came out with her book G-Free, and I read her book and there's a lot of really good information in there, but there's a lot of wrong information in there.



Like she talks about marinades, "all marinades are bad, they all have things in it that you can't eat." Well, that's not true. There again you have to read the label. She also talks about how you can't have seasoning.

**Shannon:** Prepackaged seasoning?

**Mary:** Well, no.

**Shannon:** Like I have a drawer of seasons and spices.

**Mary:** Herbs and spices, yes. She says that a lot of those spices have wheat flour mixed in with them.

**Shannon:** Oh, as a filler.

**Mary:** Right, but they don't. In the United States they do not.

**Shannon:** In other countries they may, but in the U.S. they don't.

**Mary:** Yes. So, you do have to watch like taco seasoning mix. I don't use Mrs. Dash, my sister uses a lot of that, so I'm not sure, but that would be something that you would want to check.

**Shannon:** Right, so anything that's a mixture. That makes senses for anything that's a mixture, sometimes they use something in there to help things have the right texture, make it shake out better, or whatever the right word is.

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**Mary:** Yes. So, that's how I got the idea for this gluten free dining card, but I didn't like hers because I didn't like some of the misinformation that was on it, so that's why I made up my own.

**Shannon:** Well, that makes sense. I really like that idea, I think it's a great idea. Now, we've talked about things that you ingest, do you have to be worried about gluten in things like hand creams, face creams, or makeup? I saw something on your site about glue, crayons, or paint. Do we have to worry about those things?

**Mary:** Yes.

**Shannon:** Oh my gosh, really?

**Mary:** Plah-doh.

**Shannon:** Oh, Play-doh is made with flour. When I make my own Play-doh I make it with flour.

**Mary:** Yes.

**Shannon:** I never thought of that.

**Mary:** If you have a child that's 7, 8, 9, 10 and he's not going to put his hands in his mouth after playing with the Play-doh then it's not so much a problem. But, if you're got a 3 year old, they play with the Play-doh and then they put their finger in their mouth or whatever, they're getting gluten.

**Shannon:** Wow.

**Mary:** There is now, and I don't have the name of it and I should have checked before we had this interview, but there is a new product out and I saw it at Wal-Mart. I don't know if every Wal-Mart has it or not, but it actually says right on it that it's some kind of Play-doh type modeling clay and it's gluten free.

**Shannon:** Great.

**Mary:** It comes in a bunch of different colors. I should buy a package of it just to play around with it just to see what it's like. You know, on my blog I talk about stuff like this and it helps to actually know what I'm talking about.

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**Shannon:** Well, you've got a 3 year old granddaughter to play Play-doh with, I'm sure she'd love it.

**Mary:** Right.

**Shannon:** I make my own Play-doh because it's cheaper and you can make a lot of it and it lasts a lot longer for me, and with four kids that even the teenager likes to play with it. I would imagine that there are homemade Play-doh recipes that we can find that are gluten free or that we might be able to exchange a gluten free flour combination for the wheat flour that we would normally use. Do you think?

**Mary:** I wouldn't see why you couldn't. Just experiment with different ones, possibly the all purpose flour mixture that I have in my cookbook could possibly be a substitute. You would probably just have to kind of play around with it. It's not something that I have done just because I'm not into that.

**Shannon:** Right, that doesn't fit with you. Play-doh is a good example. What about for like a teenager or a tween, makeup, do we have to worry about makeup?

**Mary:** This is another thing that was in G-Free by Elizabeth Hasslebeck, she says that you have to worry about hand cream or shampoo. She doesn't use any shampoo that has any kind of gluten in it or hair sprays. And actually, the gluten molecule is too large to be absorbed through your skin.

The only reason you would need to worry about gluten in hand creams or anything like that is if you have a part of Celiac that's called Herpetiformis Dermatitis and that's basically an itchy rash. They look like little tiny blisters and they are extremely itchy. If you have that then it would obviously irritate your skin.

As far as makeup, the only thing that you need to worry about is if it's going into your mouth, so lipstick you would need to worry about, lip gloss.

**Shannon:** What about Chapstick?

**Mary:** Chapstick, I use Chapstick all the time.

**Shannon:** So, that's safe for us?

**Mary:** Yes.

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**Shannon:** Now, not everyone who is gluten intolerant or has Celiac Disease has the rash piece of it?

**Mary:** No.

**Shannon:** Okay. So, in your case you don't have the rash piece of it so it's not a big deal for you, but if somebody does have the rash piece of it then it is.

**Mary:** Yes. Actually, I think before I was diagnosed I did have these little tiny blister type, they're like little pinhead blisters, and I got them on my fingers and on my ankle. They were horribly itchy and I went to a dermatologist and as soon as she found out that I had a dog she told me they were flea bites.

**Shannon:** What?

**Mary:** Yes. Now in hindsight I'm thinking I probably would not have gotten so sick and been to the point where I was down to 100 pounds and had no energy at all had I actually had a dermatologist that knew about Herpetaformis Dermatitis and Celiac Disease and would have actually diagnosed me correctly, because I did.

When it first started on my hands I thought it was an allergic reaction to dish soap, so I started wearing rubber gloves, but it didn't help. Then it moved onto my ankles. A lot of people will get them on the back of their knees. I actually have a friend who got on her buttocks cheeks and she said it was terribly embarrassing because any time she would put on clothes she just was beside herself with the itch.

**Shannon:** If you have a child that has that you know that's just going to really come out behaviorally and emotionally for a child if they're having that. I know that not feeling well, like if your child isn't diagnosed yet with gluten intolerance or in the beginning of that, some of that behavioral stuff comes out from not feeling well and not being able to articulate that.

**Mary:** Right. You can develop Celiac Disease or a gluten intolerance at any time in your life. I was 28. And Celiac Disease is actually hereditary.

**Shannon:** Really?

**Mary:** Yes. Because I have it, my children have a higher risk of developing it. They have a one in 10 chance of developing Celiac Disease. My son has Type 1 Diabetes,  
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he was actually diagnosed as an adult about five years ago. Because Type 1 Diabetes is an autoimmune disease and so is Celiac Disease, believe it or not, it's an autoimmune disease, they are related.

So, both of my children have a one in 10 chance of developing Celiac Disease at some point and my grandchildren also have a higher chance of developing it. So, if you have someone in your family that has Celiac Disease or has a gluten intolerance you definitely want to, especially with children and small infants, they usually start them on cereal at four months and you may want to stretch that out to six months and don't give them the wheat type cereal, give them the rice.

They're finding that with infants if there's a chance of Celiac they seem to have a higher chance of developing it if they're introduced to wheat and gluten earlier in their little lives.

**Shannon:** That makes sense. I know that there's some discussion in the autism world also about whether or not gluten plays a role in that. That would probably be a safe thing to do then too if that's a concern.

I'm thinking about that and my mom here was diagnosed late in life as gluten intolerant and she's just converted to gluten free and sugar free here in the last year. She's 19 years older than I am and her sister also is gluten intolerant, so that has me watching that pretty closely in my own household.

**Mary:** I just went in December, actually January of this year and had another scoping done just because I was having so much problems with acid reflux and stuff. They told me that I should have been checked continuously over my life just because I am a Celiac. Back when I was diagnosed they didn't say, "You need to be checked every year," or whatever, just to make sure that everything is still fine.

So, it's been 20 years. But, when I had this scoping done they said that actually all of my siblings and my mother should have been checked also. My dad passed away when he was 50, but they said, "Every one of your siblings should be tested." Well, I'm the baby of the family, so my nearest sibling is 11 years older than I am. Telling my siblings that they need to go get tested when they have no symptoms at all, they're looking at me like I'm nuts.

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But, I did make my children go and be tested, mainly because my daughter had no problems at all with her pregnancy with my 3 year old granddaughter, but she had two miscarriages between my 3 year old granddaughter and my new little one month old granddaughter. That is also a symptom of Celiac Disease if you have miscarriages or have trouble conceiving, depression, there are just so many different symptoms and indicators.

So, I told her, "You really need to get it." It's a simple blood test, just have it done whenever they're doing something else. So, she did and so far fortunately she's not showing any signs of being Celiac, which is good because she loves her bread.

**Shannon:** You can have gluten free bread, it just doesn't taste the same.

**Mary:** Oh, yes.

**Shannon:** My friend that they decided to convert the entire family once their daughter was diagnosed as gluten intolerant and soy and yeast, they had their other daughter tested as well and she came back with some allergies as well that they had not had any awareness of. And they didn't have any of the indicators with her that they had with their daughter that was diagnosed first. So, in their case they did that and it was a beneficial thing for them because hopefully they've caught that early enough to put them on the right track.

We're running long, so let's go ahead and wrap this up a bit. But, before we do so, I'd like you to if you can share a little bit about your new cookbook. It's coming out very soon and I'd love to hear a little bit more about that. Can you share that with us?

**Mary:** It is called [Gluten Free Get Togethers](#), and I called it Gluten Free Get Togethers because basically any time you have any kind of a get together the first thing you think about is food.



**Shannon:** Right, we gather around food.

**Mary:** Yes. Once you're diagnosed with gluten intolerance or Celiac Disease that's it, you think that your time and having picnics and parties is over.

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**Shannon:** Much less holidays.

**Mary:** You can't even have a beer, although there is now [gluten free beer](#). So, I just wanted to put together some recipes that are helpful with holidays. There's a gluten free stuffing in there, there are pumpkin muffins, apple cinnamon muffins, there is a gluten free granola type bar made with gluten free oats and the whole entire recipes only has a half cup of oatmeal in it.

**Shannon:** So, it adheres to that guideline then.

**Mary:** Yes. There's casseroles in there for potlucks at church or whatever. There's also tips on how to go to a party and not worry about being cross-contaminated with other gluten foods.

**Shannon:** Oh, I didn't think about that.

**Mary:** It's got four different rice flour recipes.

**Shannon:** Your special flour recipes that you use.

**Mary:** Yes, so that you can make up your own breads and things. There's a bread recipe in there that I think is a lot better than anything that you can buy out there.

It's recipes that I've done over the years that have just from when I was diagnosed and there really wasn't anything out there, recipes that I've converted that were favorites of my family that it was just easier to make them gluten free than trying to make two separate things. That's basically what it's about.

**Shannon:** Great. That sounds wonderful. Something that the non-gluten intolerants can appreciate and not even know, like your son-in-law who won't eat gluten free stuff if he knows it's gluten free. You can just run those things by him and he won't even know. I like that.

Especially as I go to visit my mom that's going to be a very helpful thing. I can't wait until it comes out. So, that's [Gluten Free Get Togethers](#) and when it comes out, then I'll have a link to that of course on the podcast page when it comes out. I'm really excited about that.

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Mary, thank you so very much for sharing so much information here with us and demystifying this for those of us who have gluten free friends and for those who are just starting their gluten free journey. It's just really been wonderful to pick your brain and I appreciate that.

I really want to thank you also for your patience, it's taken us awhile. We've tried for several months now to do this interview and that's taken patience and then we've had some technical challenges during the interview itself. So, thank you so much, you've been so gracious and wonderful.

**Mary:** You're very welcome. I enjoyed it.

**Shannon:** Good. This is Shannon from [Living Life at Home](#), wishing you a well and blessed week. For those of you who are gluten free or have gluten free family members, I hope this recording has blessed you as it as me.

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