

Gluten Free Blessings,

I'm convinced that we miss a great many blessings because our feelings are hurt over our foiled plans and expectations not met. We get stuck in the puddle of our tears over what we thought we should have, and can't see the bright sunny day and the rainbow. G-d always has something better than I ever imagined in His plan. I just gotta get with it...

All of our kids are adopted, some from foster care. Some have prenatal alcohol issues. These are usually associated with brain function, and it meant a whole lot of study for us to understand what little we do about it. One of the eye-openers is that the alcohol not only disrupts development of the brain, but also the digestive tract. One common effect is not classic Celiac, but difficulty processing gluten none-the-less. A couple of our kiddos have pretty noticeable psychological reactions to gluten, another gets indigestion and gas from wheat flour, and yet another (a non-prenatal-alcohol child) gets the runs from it after a week or so gluten-free.

Our 9-yr-old was struggling to read, having trouble remembering phonics rules and even letter sounds. Two weeks after going GF, he remarked to Wifey how easy his reading had become. "All the words stay in order now!" He went from kindergarten to 2nd Grade.

Our little girl is five and was looking forward to a visit to the dermatologist's office one morning. We'd found some disturbance on a birth mark on the girl's shoulder and wanted it looked at for cancer screening. This is a doctor this girl had never met; a very pleasant young woman. Our girl spent the whole trip there happily babbling on with Wifey. She was going to tell the doctor all about how her birth mark got scraped while she played with her brothers, and she didn't need to worry. When the doctor arrived, our princess spun around like something out of Poltergeist, screaming, "You can't touch me! I don't want you to come near me!" Just before leaving the house, the two had eaten a bowl of cereal. Arriving home, Wifey checked the package. It was corn flakes and contained no wheat in the ingredients, but it had been processed in a plant that also prepared glutinous foods.

There are a quite a few good sources for recipes and cooking tips. I'll try to focus on what we've done to feed our kids in our transition. We're still learning, having only been doing this for a few months. In general, if you go buy pre-packaged GF ready-made breads and cookies, you'll spend double to four times the cost of normal wheat products. Mostly that is because of the huge availability of wheat and the relatively few GF producers. Welcome to the cost of being weird. If there is a Trader Joe's near you, they have, hands-down, the best prices on things like pastas (and theirs don't get clammy and bond into a gooey morass like most GF noodles we've tried), selections of bread mixes, and even ready-to-eat GF baked goods.

We use some white rice flour, a lot of brown rice flour, soy flour, much potato starch (also called flour – same stuff), corn meal, corn massa (tortilla flour), tapioca starch or flour, sweet sorghum flour, quinoa flour, teff flour, and garbanzo flour. I like to have a bin made up of generic mix for pancakes, biscuits & gravy, crêpes, and whatever else we decide we need for a meal at the last minute. You'll find they have different textures and flavors that will serve for different things, but none is a direct

replacement for wheat flour in and of itself. Be ready to experiment and you'll be blessed with the new flavors and textures you'll add to what used to be common things.

Gluten is the long, stringy stuff in wheat and other flours, and that is one of the things that make it such a pleasure to bake with. You need to replace that function in GF flour mixes for many uses. You can do that with eggs, but that precludes loftiness in baked goods. The common solution is either guar gum or xantham gum. We use the xantham because it is more effective. It is dubbed "the precious" in our kitchen, as I think powdered gold is cheaper by the troy ounce. The good thing is you don't need much, but unless you like crummy biscuits, you need a binder.

Here (<http://www.wisebread.com/frugal-gluten-free-living-delicious-homemade-gluten-free-bread>) is a link to a pretty common-sense baker who seems to have a good grip on this stuff. I like that she has a working pasta recipe. Below is a pretty good AP GF flour mix she recommends. I've also used Bette Hagman's rice/potato/tapioca flour mix with some good results, but this one should prove less gritty. Hagman also lacks the art of simple math. Multiplying her mixes for normal-sized (in our wonderful world) families involve complex fractions. I like this one because it uses parts – you choose the sizes; Hin, Omer, Hod, Measure, etc.

(By the way, we have not gone Jewish, though Wifey may be one based on the names in her Transylvanian/Saxon family. But we do worship with them as part of [Ohev Yisrael Messianic Jewish Congregation](#), and are more blessed the more we get ourselves Torah-compliant. After all, Messiah, our savior was/is Torah compliant – as a matter of fact, in a way, He is Torah. Shouldn't we be in Him? The Hebrew word for savior is yahushua; or in Aramaic, the lingua-franca of His day, He was called Yeshua. The same is the name of Moses' successor, known now as Joshua, but there is no letter J in Hebrew. Jesus' is the same Hebrew name as Joshua and there are some wonderful insights in that correlation, as well as the high priest of the same name in Ezra 3:2 and Zechariah 6:11. Jesus is a mis-transliteration of a mis-transliteration of Yahushua – Salvation. Sorry, I ramble. The important thing is, He is our savior.)

Gluten-Free All-Purpose Flour Mix

(This mix can be substituted for traditional recipes, cup for cup. Just remember to add xanthan gum to your mixture. The xanthan gum works as a gluten substitute, webbing the dough together, working as a binding agent. Traditionally, it's 2 teaspoons for bread recipes, 1 for cakes and 1 ½ for cookies.)

- 3 parts brown rice flour (or white, which has a more subtle taste).
- 3 parts cornstarch
- 2 parts soy flour (or sorghum if someone has a soy allergy)
- 1 part masa flour

You'll probably have to mortgage the vacation home to pay for some of the flours if you buy them at your local market. We didn't have that option, so I've found some bulk sellers over the internet who ship from the Midwest and don't charge me extra for slinky avant-garde-yet-homey-looking packages the size of modern bikinis. Our flours come in flour sacks, though they don't make very good

swimwear, either. We found some nice NSF approved bins at our local restaurant supply store that come in very handy.

Here are some links. I've used Barry Farm and Honeyville, both of whom shipped quickly and inexpensively; and I will probably patronize Domata soon just to give them a run. Gluten Free Mall is a pretty good website for bread, cake and cookie mixes and other minutia as well as links to advice.

<http://www.barryfarm.com/flours.htm>

<http://www.domatalivingflour.com/index.html>

<http://store.honeyvillegrain.com/>

<http://www.glutenfreemall.com/>

Some of our greatest culinary Gluten Free joys have been:

1. Re-acquainting ourselves with **corn bread** – minced onion and jalapeño is my favorite, and most of the kids eat it too. I make a 9X13 pan of normal corn bread and then mix in the good stuff to the remaining batter for a couple tins of spank-ye-taste-buds muffins.
2. **Corn Dodgers** (Pareve – kosher for Passover) – I was proud of these – I invented 'em one morning last week. I made a tortilla mix in a paste consistency with chopped onions mixed in, shaped with a spoon in ½" thick 3" round biscuits, baked at 425F 'til golden on a lightly greased cookie sheet. We use these for breakfast sandwiches; one on top and one on the bottom of a cheese and turkey bacon omelet. These are super tasting and super filling. I was surprised at how well the massa flour stays together. I fed one of these to each kid at 7:00 one morning and didn't hear a peep about food 'til after noon! Then they came back and asked for more corn biscuits!!!
3. **Sweet Sorghum biscuits** – these are great for biscuits & hamburger gravy. Make the gravy with teff flour or garbanzo flour if you want to add yet another interesting flavor.
4. **Buckwheat Pancakes** – I used Bette Hagman's AP mix but replace the rice flour with buckwheat. The kids ate 'em up! These were FLUFFY, wonderful tasting and also wonderfully filling.
5. **Crêpes** using Bette Hagman's cake flour mix. These came off the pan better than wheat flour! We use pie fillings, peanut butter, and Nutella, but you can fill 'em with whatever you like.
6. **Clean-out-the-refrigerator-soup**. Use garbanzo flour or quinoa flour to thicken your favorite base with an interesting added flavor and nutrition source that shames wheat flour.

Non-Flour staples:

Italian Roast Rosemary Potatoes for dinner – Spanish Omelets for breakfast

Make too many of these on purpose. Slice potatoes to 1" wedges. Add beef kielbasa, off-color peppers and sweet Vidalia onions sliced in big chunks. Put it all in a big bin or a big baggie, pour olive oil in and shake it up to coat all. Spread in an open baking pan. (We use three round pizza tins 'cause that's how many racks are in the oven.) Throw some sprigs of fresh rosemary on top and sprinkle with garlic

powder and sea salt, then roast (this is a great thing to use the convection feature for, if ya got it) until golden brown. Enjoy!

Spanish Tortilla (Omelet)

This, not a burrito wrap, is what the Spaniards call a "Tortilla". A Spaniard's tortilla is normally an omelet with once-cooked potatoes, onion, and lots of garlic, but I feel free to add whatever seems tasty!

Save the left-over roast rosemary potatoes, if there are any, and get some feta cheese and eggs ready. For breakfast, beat the eggs for omelets. I use a matched pair of 10" sauté pans to speed production. Toss a handful of the potatoes on the hot griddle in some olive oil and let 'em sizzle a bit. Push 'em to one side of the pan and pour the eggs over to make an omelet, sprinkling some feta cheese in just before folding the non-potato side over the top of the potato side. I slice 'em down the middle, leaving me two quarter-pan omelets that handle well on the spatula.

3M (Mediterranean Meets Minnesota) Salad

2 cups wild rice cooked to chewy but not crunchy, rinsed and cooled to room temp
16oz. green Manzanilla olives with pimientos
1 sweet onion chopped (sauteed, if you like, but I like 'em to crunch)
1 can artichoke hearts
1 4oz. bottle of pimientos
4oz extra virgin olive oil
4oz white balsamic vinegar
Sea salt & pepper to taste
If desired:
2 chicken breasts, lemon-pepper broiled, cooled, & diced..
8oz mushroom bits

Mix ingredients in a large bowl and toss to coat all with oil, vinegar, salt & pepper.

Greek Salad (Quantities are relative to your desire and/or availability.):

Sweet Vidalia Onions (Or use red onions if all six or so of your kids'll tolerate the flavor.) - diced to 1" or bigger to taste
Cucumbers - diced to 1" or bigger to taste
Cherry Tomatoes
Kalamata Olives - pitted
Feta Cheese - crumbled

White Balsamic Vinegar
Extra Virgin Olive Oil
Sea Salt

I make the bulk of the salad with cukes & onions, with tomatoes in third by volume and olives & feta for flavor. Pour a few ounces of olive oil & balsamic vinegar & a bit of salt over the top and turn over a few times with your salad fork & spoon to coat all. Then muse over what the rest of the family will be eating...