

## Dietary Requests Frequently Encountered

There are often special dietary requests presented to the Camp Chef and cooking helpers during a Mobile Skills Crew (MSC) event. These have to be considered when planning the meals and snacks, certainly, but also have to be thoughtfully managed during food preparation. Careful separation and sanitizing of prep surfaces, cutting boards and knives have to be maintained by everyone to avoid cross-contamination with allergens or food groups.

We have our limitations in the Camp Kitchen when it comes to meeting specific requests! We create menus with careful thought given to a good and healthy protein source for each person. Sometimes our choices of ingredients are dictated by generous and welcomed food donations. We manage dietary requests by clearly understanding and labelling ingredients when serving our food. Be prepared to answer questions about our food. When people have specific dietary needs, we may ask them to carry their own food.

### COMMON FOOD (true) ALLERGIES:

*It's important to understand whether you are dealing with true "allergies" or just "individual preferences, perceived sensitivities, or digestive intolerances." A true allergy involves the immune system with a release of chemicals that cause reactions within the WHOLE body, even death. An intolerance describes a person's individual way of digesting the product, producing gassiness or digestive discomfort.*

*This is rather common. You will encounter this in camp cooking work.*

### THREE COMMON ALLERGIES:

1. PEANUTS: Read labels! This is an ingredient in a surprising variety of prepared foods. This is a "ground nut."
2. TREE NUTS (10 kinds): Walnuts, pecans, cashews, almonds, pine nuts (pignola), pistachios, chestnuts, hazelnuts, hickory, Brazil nuts.
  - a. A person may be allergic to just one kind of nut, but because of the possibility of cross-contamination in a processing plant, they are warned to stay away from all nuts.
  - b. Myth-buster: Coconut, nutmeg and sesame seeds are NOT nuts OR tree nuts, and are not considered in nut allergy management. That's not to say that a tree-nut allergic person might individually ALSO be allergic to one of these things---several food allergies can sometimes crop up.
3. SHELLFISH: Shrimp/prawns, lobster, crab, crawfish. We don't serve much of these, but they can be a hidden ingredient in Asian pre-packaged foods. Read labels.

### HOW TO MANAGE:

1. Must use separate food preparation areas, cutting boards, and freshly cleaned utensils to start each step of the food prep and serving process. Clean utensils immediately after preparing a common allergen food to prevent mistakes. Even a little bit of the allergen in a large quantity of food can be dangerous for a person with a true allergy.

2. Foods containing common allergens (like nuts) must be clearly labelled. Keep in original labelled containers, when possible.
3. **Be on alert!** Food allergens come in many forms, i.e. Peanuts, peanut butter and peanut oil. Pine nuts are in basil pesto. Hazelnuts are in Nutella. Shrimp can be in Asian flavoring pastes. Almond “milk” dairy substitute is made from nuts.

### **DAIRY INTOLERANCE AND TRUE MILK ALLERGY**

*True cow’s milk dairy allergy is rare, but adult gastrointestinal digestive intolerance to dairy is rather common. You will encounter “intolerance” in camp cooking work.*

#### **INFORMATION:**

1. Lactose intolerance: Digestive intolerance is managed with reduced exposure to dairy products. For example, a person can eat a cookie made with butter, enjoy some parmesan cheese sprinkled on spaghetti, and a dash of cream in their coffee, but choose not to eat cereal with milk or have a bowl of ice cream. Use of lactose-free dairy products can be helpful to purchase if we happen to have several volunteers.
2. Milk (protein) allergy: As with nut allergies, above, any contact with dairy products can induce the immune system to react in the whole body.
  - a. **Be on alert!** Dairy is in butter, cheese, cream & sour cream, milk, yogurt, ice cream, puddings & custards.
  - b. Most of our donated sweets, bars and cookies will have dairy in them.

### **VEGAN AND VEGETARIAN**

*This is common. You will definitely encounter this in camp cooking.*

#### **INFORMATION:**

1. **VEGAN:** Only plant-based products are eaten. “If it has eyes or eggs, avoid it.” Proteins come from legumes, whole grains (quinoa), soy (tofu).
  - i. An easy way of thinking of this is no meat or fish, no eggs or dairy products (no butter or cheese).
  - ii. *However, it’s more than that!* It’s better to think of it as a **BALANCED** diet including protein, carbohydrates, and healthy nutrition.
2. **VEGETARIAN:** Plant-based diet that expands from Vegan to incorporate more proteins in the following ways:
  - a. Ovo-lacto vegetarian: add eggs and dairy
  - b. Ovo-lacto pescatarian: add eggs, dairy and fish
  - c. There are other permutations of vegetarianism.

#### **HOW TO MANAGE:**

1. **PROTEIN:** This is a very important dietary requirement for our hard-laboring volunteers, and as camp chefs, we have to take this very seriously. Daily requirement for adults is 50-60 grams per day.

- a. Minimum protein in any one meal is >10 g.
- b. Typical 3-4 oz lean meat = 25 g protein
- c. Typical 1 cup cooked chickpeas = 12 g protein
- d. Typical 3 oz baked tofu = 13 g protein
- e. Soy (tofu, edamame) and Quinoa are the only “complete” proteins.
- f. Legumes and whole grains COMBINED make the whole protein.

## 2. DIETARY BALANCE

- a. Remember that lettuce has almost no nutritional value---it’s what you combine it with that is important. Lettuce is great for weight loss and deliciousness but not for body-building. Salad alone doesn’t address a vegetarian diet.
- b. Remember to combine beans with rice (or other grain).
- c. Use whole grains, like brown rice, whenever possible.
- d. In every vegetarian meal, offer the complete plate concept: 50% vegetables + 25% carbs/starches + 25% protein *separate from the vegetables*.
- e. Read labels and calculate the protein grams per serving.

### **CELIAC DIET AND GLUTEN-FREE (wheat)**

*Unusual, but you will deal with this from time-to-time and have to be ready to field concerns.*

#### INFORMATION:

1. These two conditions relate to the way the digestive tract handles the protein from wheat known as gluten. Gluten (comes from the Latin root word for “glue”) is the elastic substance that makes wheat flour so wonderful for providing a nice structure for the leavening of bread and baked goods.
2. Gluten-containing foods are GRAINS: wheat, barley, and rye.
3. CELIAC DISEASE: These folks have an autoimmune disease in which eating gluten causes the body to attack and kill the cells lining the small intestine. This results in an inability to absorb and process not just gluten, but *any* nutrients. Severe malnutrition and anemia can result, in addition to a lot of abdominal discomfort. *Even a tiny trace of gluten* can trigger the immune system to do this. While not an allergy per se, people with celiac disease have to be respected with the strictest food allergy food prep precautions.
4. GLUTEN INTOLERANT: Some people believe their bodies feel better without gluten products in their diets. They develop gassiness or bloated abdominal feelings when they eat gluten products, but do not have celiac disease or a true food allergy.

#### HOW TO MANAGE:

1. Avoid wheat (spelt, farro, durum, bulgar, semolina), rye, barley. 1 in 5 celiac patients are also reactive to the specialized avenin protein in oats---we have to trust that these people know who they are.

2. Replace with: Rice, corn, quinoa, millet, sorghum. Oats processed in a gluten-free plant are usually okay (see note above).
3. Be a label reader. Remember that most soy sauce contains wheat. Replace with "tamari."
4. We do not maintain a gluten-free cooking environment in our camp kitchen at the present time. In my opinion, we can manage people who feel they are gluten-intolerant, but people with celiac disease should be managed with a one-on-one conference with the camp chef.

### **DIABETIC DIET. THINK OF THIS AS PLAIN OLD HEALTHY EATING!**

*Quite honestly, this is easy! People with diabetes simply need to follow healthy, balanced meals and snacks that are rich in vegetables and whole grains, balanced in protein, and careful in carbohydrates. To understand the diabetic diet, one has to have a basic understanding of carbohydrates.*

#### **INFORMATION:**

1. People with diabetes have problems with their insulin processing the carbohydrates they eat into simple sugars the body can use. People with Type 1 Diabetes have little or no effective insulin, and people with Type 2 Diabetes have insulin that works very slowly or poorly.
2. *Simple carbohydrates* are plant-based foods, and include all sweets and sugars, as well as fruits and honey. They also include foods that don't seem sweet, but break down easily and quickly into sugars, like white rice and white flour.
3. Consider *complex carbohydrates* as the original form of the plant-based carbohydrate, the *whole* grain. They are rich in fiber, and fiber helps slow down the breakdown of that carbohydrate at a rate that the body can handle easily. This is the preferred type of carbohydrate we all should be eating.
4. Animal based proteins like meats, fish and eggs of any kind have NO carbohydrates. Milk is the exception to this, because, as "baby-food," milk does contain quickly-absorbed sugars for nutrition.
5. Dieticians teach us to understand the rate at which carbohydrates are processed into sugar in the presence of insulin. Leaving the original hull on any grain will raise its fiber content and that slows its breakdown into sugar---makes sense, huh?

#### **HOW TO MANAGE:**

1. As much as possible, stock only whole grain products and use them for all our eaters. Avoid any grain or baked product that has "zero" fiber. White rice, literally, goes immediately into a blood sugar "spike," just like a teaspoon of white sugar!
2. When providing "snacks" remember that we need to provide low-carbohydrate choices, like smoked salmon or vegetables or nuts.

3. Read food labels. A person with diabetes (and anybody hoping to keep their weight under control) should aim for the following carbohydrate goals:
  - a. 45-60 grams carbs per meal
  - b. 15-20 grams carbs per snack
  - c. Easy reference: 15 grams is about ONE SERVING of carbs. This is equivalent to 1 slice bread, or 1/3 cup cooked pasta, or 4-6 saltine crackers.
  - d. Always consider the WHOLE meal when counting carbohydrates---include drinks and dessert.
  - e. Always offer carbohydrate-free drinks at meals: water, plain coffee, plain tea, sugar-free beverages.

Always offer whole or cut-up fruit as a “sweet” option. Yes, fruit contains sugar, but the skins and structure are rich in fiber, which slows its processing