



## THE WELLNESS MAMALAH

BY JENNIFER WISE

Several years back, our pediatrician recommended that one of my children, who at that time was having trouble gaining weight, take a month-long gluten-challenge.

Gluten is delicious. And back then, I was still naive enough to be overjoyed at the prospect of all of us stuffing our faces with everything the bakery offered. After all, I couldn't let this kid do this alone. We would all do it. We'd all have his back, family unity, shared cupcakes and all.

Turns out, my pediatrician used the wrong terminology and a gluten-challenge is when someone who is *already* gluten-free goes back to eating gluten prior to undergoing an endoscopy in order to ascertain if that person has celiac disease. What the doctor really meant, sadly, was that she would like my son to avoid all gluten for 30 days.

Hmmm. The bakery plan sounded way better.

But I had already convinced myself of the whole family unity thing and I was not about to cook numerous different meals several times a day.

*We'll adapt, I thought. It'll be okay, I told myself.*

I thought and wondered a lot of things that month. I kept smiling and nodding my head as the doctor kept talking, but inside, my brain was crying. As a grownup, I can be perfectly happy subsisting on protein and roasted vegetables all the time – in fact, I feel great when I stick to that way of eating, but my kids? I didn't know about that.

Except I did. I knew it was important and my son needed this.

We spent one (admittedly long) month of July performing our gluten-free experiment. It's not always possible to cook or bake by substituting gluten-free ingredients in a one-to-one way that causes people to ask for seconds or even to try a second bite. But, when it did work out, it felt like all the birds were singing together on sunny day, while a rainbow-striped unicorn pranced across my backyard, a backyard which was, suddenly, filled with wild flowers and an organic vegetable garden. In other words, when my children's favorite foods worked well with a gluten-free alternative, all was right in the universe.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner were not that hard to manipulate. I served loads of scrambled eggs – sometimes

with sautéed vegetables, sometimes with cheese and sometimes with both. Other times, I would pre-cook a batch of ground turkey and gluten-free hot-dogs and mix that into scrambled eggs. We ate a lot of meat, chicken, salmon and white fish. Hamburgers were a staple, as were tuna burgers. I don't think I have ever diced and chopped so many vegetables as I did over those 30 days, but it was well-worth it.

There were, though, three recipes that I counted on to get us through that long month.

The first was homemade ice cream. There are hundreds of recipes online, most containing no gluten, as long as you don't choose cookie dough ice cream. The best advice I can share: buy an ice cream maker. A good one. Not the Hello Kitty one I bought on my first go-round. Go with a brand name. Be sure to read all the directions before you start, and then read them again. Follow those directions exactly, and you will be rewarded with ice cream so delicious you might never set foot in a Carvel again. I will say that, as a group, we did prefer a chocolate base to any other flavor, but that's just us. As my father-in-law would say, *I'll take any flavor, as long as it's chocolate.*

The other two recipes were knock-off versions of rice krispie treats and corn flake chicken, which, ironically enough, both contain cereals that are normally gluten-full. And it's not because rice and corn are inherently gluten-containing foods, but because the third or fourth ingredient in these cereals is usually malt flavoring, an ingredient derived from barley and therefore highly glutenous. Gluten is super tricky; manufacturers are not always out to be helpful and package reading can be exceptionally confusing.

Several years ago, when we embarked on our 30-day journey, gluten-free cereals were not that easy to come by. They existed, but it took some detective work to find them. Today, though, they are everywhere and I'd be surprised if your local supermarket did not carry both boxes of gluten-free crisped rice and corn flakes cereals. I have found these boxes of cereal not stocked at eye-level on supermarket shelves, but take a look at the higher and lower shelves, walk down the natural foods aisle and, chances are, you will find them.

## Gluten-Free Crispy Rice Treats



### Ingredients

8 cups gluten-free puffed rice cereal  
½ cup coconut oil  
1 14 oz bag of marshmallows

### Instructions

Start by lining a 9"x13" pan with parchment paper. Measure the cereal into a large bowl.

Cook the marshmallows and coconut oil in a saucepan over low heat, until the marshmallows and oil have melted together. This shouldn't take

longer than four or five minutes, but keep stirring the whole time to prevent any burning on the bottom of the pot.

Pour the melted marshmallow mixture over the rice cereal and mix very well.

With damp hands, press the rice and marshmallow mixture into the pan, making sure to really press down so the ingredients stay together.

Let the pan cool for about an hour and then cut the crispy rice treats into squares.

## Baked Corn Flake Chicken



### Ingredients

4 lbs already cleaned chicken cutlets, quartered  
1 cup mayonnaise  
3 cups corn flake crumbs  
2 teaspoons each salt, garlic powder, onion powder and turmeric  
½ cup melted coconut oil

### Instructions

Preheat oven to 425°F and line a large baking sheet with parchment paper.

In a zip-top bag, mix the corn

flake crumbs and spices. In another bag, place all the chicken and add the mayonnaise. Work the bag to coat the chicken and, one by one, remove each piece of chicken and dredge it into the corn flakes. Next, place each piece of chicken on the baking sheet. And last, drizzle the coconut oil over the chicken.

Cover and bake for 10 minutes. Uncover the pan and continue to bake for another 10 minutes until golden brown and a meat thermometer reads 165 degrees.