



THE PROS AND CONS OF GLUTEN FREE

(A YUMMY RECIPE IS ON THE LAST PAGE)

In the past few years there has been a boom in gluten free products and people cutting out gluten in an attempt to feel better and be healthier. Why are people so set on going gluten free? Is it always the most healthy thing to do? I have a few thoughts on the matter.

First we need to understand what gluten is and where we find it.

Gluten refers to a group of proteins found in wheat, barley, rye, spelt, some oats and products made from these ingredients. When a gluten containing flour is mixed with water it forms a glue like substance which gives dough its elasticity. This is why if you have ever baked any gluten free product, you would have noticed a very inelastic dough is used.

Gluten is also used for other products that you wouldn't immediately think of, like soya sauce, ice cream and other sauces, they are usually added to these foods as a stabilizer. Gluten can also be found in cosmetics, hair products, skin products and some medications. This is why it can be important to read your food and product labels if you suspect an allergy or intolerance.

When talking to people who have tummy issues, as soon as they bloat from eating bread, they assume that they have a gluten intolerance, but when asking them whether they have issues with other foods that contain gluten, they realise they don't have problems with other foods. So is the culprit actually gluten? Probably not.

People with Coeliac Disease do need to avoid gluten, but is there reason for other people who have bloating and other IBS symptoms to avoid Gluten? The answer is yes, and no. When you have problems with your tummy it is important to identify which foods are actually causing issues for you and what the common link is in these foods. This isn't always easy to do, but when it comes to grains, don't always jump to gluten being the issue. It could be wheat itself that you have a problem with or an ingredient in the bread (if bread is the thing that is bloating you). There are also instances where your gut is inflamed where cutting out gluten can help your gut to heal. In this case you can probably add it back into your diet when the gut is healed.



THE PROS AND CONS OF GLUTEN FREE (ALMOST THERE)

If you have no tummy issues it is unnecessary to cut out gluten. At this stage there are no studies proving that gluten is in fact bad for our bodies.

If you do want to go gluten free, here are so pros of a gluten free diet:

If your gut is aggravated by gluten, you will feel much better and have a lot more energy.

- It can make you cut back on carbs and give a good opportunity to add more vegetables into your diet
- Trying new gluten free foods can be exciting!

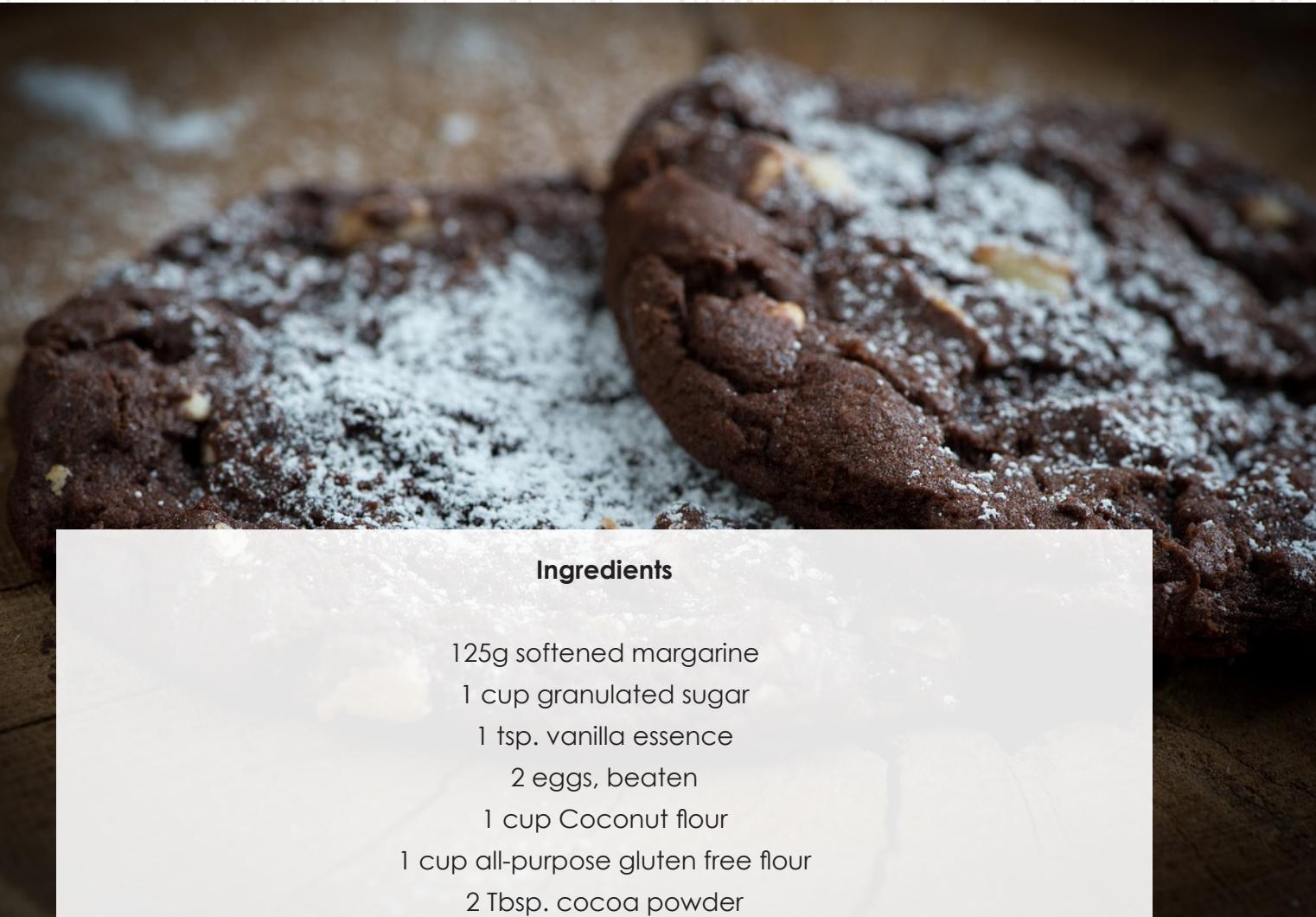
The cons of a gluten free diet:

- It can be very expensive.
- Eating out can be tricky
- Variety is limited when it comes to convenience foods
- Gluten free Alternatives (breads, crackers, and baked goods) can be higher in calories, lower in fibre and have a high GI which may not be ideal if you are trying to manage your weight.

I decide to try some gluten free biscuit recipes to see if they are as nice as gluten containing recipes, and I must say, they aren't bad at all! Here is one that you can give a try.



GLUTEN FREE CHOCOLATE COOKIES



Ingredients

125g softened margarine
1 cup granulated sugar
1 tsp. vanilla essence
2 eggs, beaten
1 cup Coconut flour
1 cup all-purpose gluten free flour
2 Tbsp. cocoa powder

Method

Preheat the oven to 180°C and grease 2 large baking trays
(you can also use wax paper if you prefer)

In a large bowl, mix together the margarine and sugar until light and fluffy.

Add the vanilla and eggs to the mixture and blend well.

Add the rest of the dry ingredients and mix well until a stiff dough forms.

Roll the dough into walnut sized balls and place on the baking trays with about 3cm spaces between the balls. Flatten the balls with the back of a teaspoon or fork.

Bake the cookies for 15mins, try not to overdo them as they can burn quite quickly. Cool on a cooling rack, and enjoy!