

*a lifestyle resource from Food Equality Initiative*

# Free-From MAGAZINE



BBQ Sauce recipes  
from across the USA

## FOOD ALLERGY VS. INTOLERANCE

What is the difference?

## THE ALL-AMERICAN FOOD ALLERGY EXPERIENCE

How Americans navigate  
food differently

## TRYING NEW CUISINES

How to safely diversify  
your palate

## 8 GREAT SUMMER READS

FEI Staff share our favorite  
food-related books



## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

On the 4th of this month, the United States marks its 245th year of independence from England, which started on July 4, 1776. But, not everyone in the United States has experienced freedom for that long.

As has been made abundantly clear throughout the pandemic, we still have so much to learn and improve upon. But as we continue to age as a country, we can only hope that we also grow and mature as a free nation.

In this magazine, we want to celebrate how diverse America is, for that certainly is only a strength. Founded as a nation of immigrants from cultures across the globe, we have only grown in that regard. We get more diverse each year. [According to Brookings](#), “new estimates [from the 2020 census] show that nearly four of 10 Americans identify with a race or ethnic group other than white,” and that “the

nation is diversifying even faster than predicted.”

Here are some fun facts from the CIA World Factbook about this land we call home:

### Ethnicity

White 72.4%, Black 12.6%, Asian 4.8%, Amerindian and Alaska native 0.9%, native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander 0.2%, other 6.2%, two or more races 2.9% (2010 est.) \*An estimated 16.3% of the total US population is Hispanic.

### Language

English only 78.2%, Spanish 13.4%, Chinese 1.1%, other 7.3%

### Time

The 50 United States covers six time zones.

[For more information, check out census.gov.](#)

Our July issue is designed to represent the diversity of the United States of America. We have articles from people of different ethnicities, cultures, and dietary restrictions. We discuss what the differences are between food allergy, celiac disease, and food intolerance. We also talk about what it means to different people to be an American with food allergies.

With that, happy reading and happy summer! Time to celebrate!

Sofia Gillespie  
Editor in Chief,  
Free-From Magazine



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#FFMARKETPLACE

# Free-From MAGAZINE

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## In This Issue

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\*Disclaimer: The recipes included in the Free-From Magazine are suggestions. They may not be free-from all Top 9 allergens. Please read carefully and make any substitutions that are necessary for your diet. Consult your doctor if you have questions or concerns. NOTE: Cooking is a science experiment and some ingredient substitutions may not produce the same results.

## BRAND SPOTLIGHT

### Jessica's Natural Foods

Good Food Naturally!

## They say necessity is the mother of invention.

**A**nd that certainly has been true for all Jessica's Natural Foods products. Jessica created her granola when her husband discovered he was gluten intolerant and missed oat-based granola. There were not a lot of good tasting gluten-free products on the market back then, so Jessica decided to create her own. Throughout her start-up journey, she faced a lot of obstacles but she persevered. She was finally able to launch her granola, and in the spring of 2009 Jessica's Natural Foods was born.

**“Finding gluten-free oats was difficult and finding a certified gluten-free facility was even more challenging. Once we got established though, we moved forward quickly.”**



Natural Foods  
  
**Jessica's**

Jessica's granola comes in 6 delicious flavors:

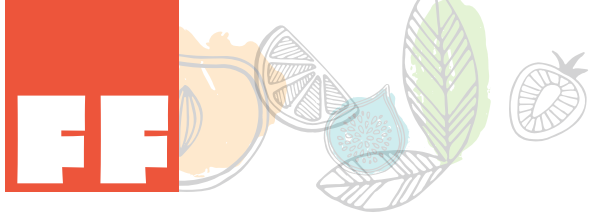
- Chocolate Chip
- Vanilla Maple
- Almond Cherry
- Pecan Almond
- Cherry & Berry
- Chocolate Hazelnut

It is gluten-free certified and non-GMO verified and is loaded with healthy, all-natural ingredients like ground flax, coconut, organic honey, and pure maple syrup. It is handmade artisan style in small batches and baked at a low temperature which brings out its natural flavor and crunch. Jessica's Granola is well-known for its crispy clusters which make it great for snacking right out of the bag!

When Jessica was looking for healthier gluten-free options for baked goods she also saw a need and expanded her product line to include gluten-free baking mixes. The product line includes cookie, muffin, and cake mixes as well as an all-purpose flour blend. Looking for an alternative to the rice-based gluten-free products already on the market, Jessica uses teff flour, which is full of nutrients.

Teff is an ancient grain and considered by many to be a superfood because it is high in protein, fiber, and calcium and rich in amino acids. In 2017, she launched her mixes and flour line to rave reviews!

“I developed our gluten-free flour blend and mixes as a healthier alternative to the starch-filled products on the market. Our kids are gluten-free and I found that most of the gluten-free products contain rice flour and/or a lot of refined starches. We were concerned about them eating too much rice and were inspired to create our own.”



Jessica's also offers an organic strawberry syrup that was launched in 2015. As far as future product launches go, Jessica is always ready to create and innovate to fill the next market need so stay tuned!

Jessica's Natural Foods is a Michigan-based, woman-owned business and has been growing steadily over the past 12 years. Jessica's granola is currently sold at Whole Foods, Wegmans, TOPS, Heinen's, Natural Grocers, Bartell Drugs, and various independent stores.

All products are also sold online through Jessica's Natural Foods website and on Amazon. For more information, visit [www.jessicasnaturalfoods.com](http://www.jessicasnaturalfoods.com).

For More Information, Interviews, Images, and Product Samples Contact: Jessica Mindell, President/Founder, 248-723-7118, [jessicam@jessicasnaturalfoods.com](mailto:jessicam@jessicasnaturalfoods.com). Jessica's Natural Foods is certified gluten-free, non-GMO verified and uses only wholesome, all-natural ingredients, and never uses any artificial preservatives, flavors, or colors.



# Perseverance:

## A Food Intolerance Story

Sarah Guthrie



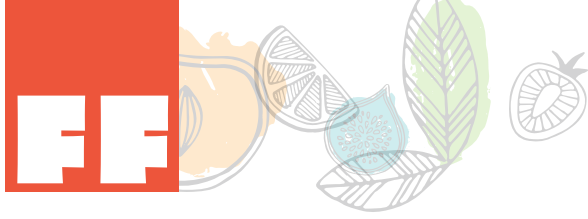
**“I pray for people with food allergies,”**

**S**ays Michelle Michaels, “that they don’t encounter situations where they will be tempted to eat things they should not. But, if they do, that they get help as soon as they can. And that there is always something they can eat.” (Michelle Michaels is not her real name, but her story reflects a common story many face when trying to get an accurate diagnosis.)

The 74-year-old grandmother of six has struggled with gluten intolerance all of her life, although it was only after her retirement that she had a conclusive diagnosis. Michelle knows first-hand the physical, emotional, and financial challenges of dietary restrictions.

Growing up in Sinai, South Dakota, population 140-150, she had no idea why she always felt sick.

“I remember my mom getting so frustrated,” she says. “But at that time, in the ‘50s and ‘60s, no one knew what was going on with gluten intolerance.”



Although the diagnosis of food allergy, food intolerance, and celiac disease has improved, it can still be difficult to understand the differences.

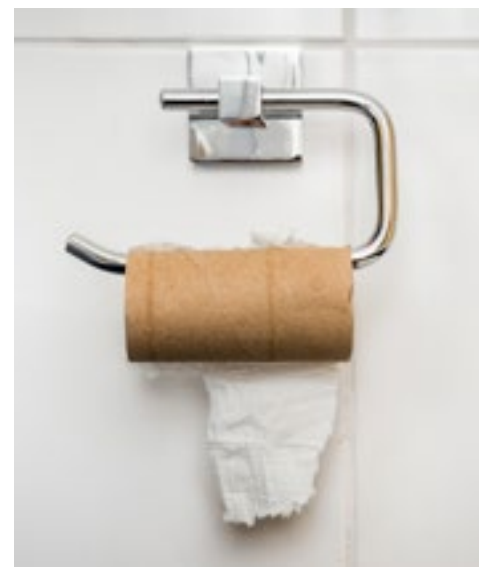
### Food Allergy vs. Celiac Disease vs. Intolerance

**Food allergy** specifically refers to an IgE mediated food allergy, meaning the IgE antibody triggers an immune system response after a person is exposed to an allergen by touch, consumption, or breathing it in through the air. For example, a wheat allergy is IgE driven. This means that the allergy fighters in the immune system react every time they are exposed to wheat flour protein. This can lead to life-threatening symptoms such as anaphylaxis. Constipation is never a symptom of IgE mediated reaction, in fact the opposite occurs -- such as diarrhea and vomiting -- because the body is trying to get the allergen out as fast as possible.

**“...in the ‘50s and ‘60s, no one knew what was going on with gluten intolerance”**

**Celiac disease** - also driven by the immune system - is where the body reacts to gluten that is found in many grains. Those with celiac disease have trouble with absorption of nutrients. Symptoms of celiac disease include stomach aches, abdominal pain, diarrhea, constipation, trouble gaining weight, or weight loss, but do NOT include anaphylaxis. Technically, celiac disease is not IgE mediated, but it is still driven by the immune system.

**Food intolerance** on the other hand, is not driven by the immune system, so you could say not immune mediated. Those with gluten intolerance have a harder time digesting gluten which can also lead to the same symptoms as celiac disease, but does not cause intestinal damage. Nor are food intolerant individuals at risk for anaphylaxis. Those with gluten intolerance may be able to tolerate gluten in small quantities, but those with immune driven disease (like celiac or food allergy) cannot.



### Back to the Story

Because no one understood how gluten was affecting her body, Michelle’s family was not always sympathetic.

“We only had one bathroom in the house and I spent a lot of time there with diarrhea,” she says. “I remember my mom saying ‘what are you doing in that bathroom that is taking so long?’”

At home, her two sisters would boast that they were healthy and she was not – and would make sure their parents knew if she avoided certain foods at the dinner table. Even now, they still make a big deal about Michelle’s different health needs.

“Sometimes I think they still feel like I am pretending that I have something wrong with me,” Michelle says.

Michelle, however, knew something was wrong. Yet, the doctors she consulted gave her results that were not conclusive. Her diagnoses included lupus and rheumatoid arthritis.

Because her career managing the circulation departments of small newspapers took her across the United States – from South Dakota to Missouri and eventually to Florida – she saw a variety of doctors.

“In 1994 I got really sick and my doctor at the time sent me to a gastroenterologist (a doctor who specializes in the digestive system) who did a colonoscopy and biopsy (examinations) of my colon. He said I had celiac disease. He explained what it

was and said that if I kept eating things with gluten that I would get cancer – lymphoma,” Michelle remembers. “I was really scared.”

About that time, her husband was diagnosed with emphysema, so she was trying to take care of him as well as herself. It was really difficult because although there were health food stores in Florida, the few gluten-free items were very expensive.

“I did not have bread for more than 10 years because I did not know where to get it. The [gluten-free] recipes I tried were not good either,” she says.

Michelle’s husband passed away in 2004. That same year deadly hurricanes in Florida convinced her to move back to her daughters in Missouri. But she continued to have health problems.

**“Because no one understood how gluten was affecting her body, Michelle’s family was not always sympathetic.”**

After she retired in 2012, she went to a gastroenterologist at Truman Medical Center in Kansas City who reviewed her case and determined that she did NOT have celiac disease. She also did not have lupus or rheumatoid arthritis.

Instead, the doctor found Michelle was gluten intolerant. Michelle still maintains a strict gluten-free diet to feel her best.



Although having a dietary restriction has made Michelle’s life difficult, she believes it’s made her more resilient. Her gluten intolerance has also taught her adult children and grandchildren to be patient and understanding of people with food allergies. It isn’t easy to navigate the social world with a dietary restriction.



**ABOUT SARAH**  
Sarah Guthrie is an award-winning writer and seasoned development professional. She began volunteering for FEI in 2019, where she helps with fundraising and communications. Sarah is also a dedicated food allergy mom.

# How People With Food Allergies

## Try Unfamiliar Cuisines

Sharon Wong

NUT FREE WOK

### The United States is known as being the great “Melting Pot” due to the diversity of cultures

A common American experience is “Let’s eat out here! I haven’t tried (fill in the blank) food before!” For most people that sounds like fun, and they might look forward to an adventurous meal. But, for an estimated 32 million Americans with food allergies in the United States, trying an unfamiliar restaurant or cuisine might bring out feelings of concern about how to manage their food allergies safely when trying something new.

**A**nd backgrounds living in such close proximity to one another. One prominent way this is expressed is through the abundance of [restaurants featuring cuisine from cultures across the globe](#), the best of which are owned and operated by families of immigrants, with a direct connection to the source.

My family has been living with food allergies for over 15 years, and during those years we have avoided peanuts, tree nuts, shellfish, egg, sesame, and some fruits and vegetables. Even with such a long list of off-limit foods, we still manage to eat out and travel. We do so thanks to careful planning and strategies that we would love to share with you.

### CUISINE: a manner of preparing food, a style of cooking especially as characteristic of a particular country, region, or establishment

#### How to Learn About an Unfamiliar Cuisine

When we want to try an unfamiliar cuisine, most people want to try that culture’s most well known or tastiest dishes. I suggest starting with some

background research. You will likely find a lot of information about those dishes by reading a cookbook or a food blog written by someone who is personally connected to the culture and the cuisine you want to try.

When you are reading a cookbook or a blog, look for details about specific ingredients and cooking methods traditionally used. How are the recipes cooked in the home country/culture? Is it prepared the same way in the United States or have adaptations been made? Recipes that are more traditional help you understand how someone from that culture would prepare the food in their native country, but methods and ingredients may be different in a restaurant located in the United States.



After you feel comfortable with your beginning background research, the next step is to read a restaurant menu. Take the time to look up recipes for unfamiliar dishes or ingredients so you know what the potential allergens and cooking methods are. Note: The way a restaurant actually cooks a dish may be different from the recipes you read, but at least you will have some background knowledge.

- Pay attention to potential hidden allergens in marinades, oils, spices, and sauces.
- Are there foods which are wrapped or filled? How do they make the wrapper? What’s in the filling?
- Are there dishes that can’t be modified because they are already marinated or prepared in advance, such as soups and stews?
- Are there dishes which are prepared with shared equipment such as grills, brick ovens, or deep fryers?
- Are there dishes that are cooked on demand and can be customized or prepared separately?
- Are there dishes that don’t contain your allergens that you can look for on a restaurant menu?

[Talk with your foodie friends who are more familiar with the cuisine you want to learn more about.](#) Ask them for their recommendations on what to try and which dishes to be careful not to eat.

### “look for details about specific ingredients and cooking methods traditionally used”

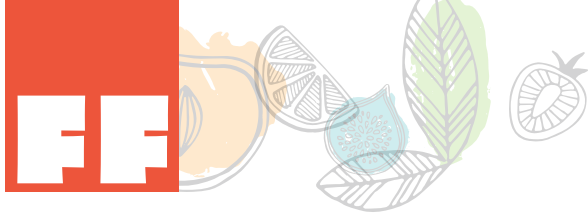
#### What to Look for on Restaurant Review Sites

Restaurant review sites such as Yelp or Allergy Eats are great resources. Whenever we go to a restaurant that is new to us, regardless of whether we are going out for pizza, steaks, or something else, we check the “health score” on Yelp. If a restaurant isn’t meticulous about cleanliness, they’re not likely to understand allergen cross-contact. If a health score is not available, you can find restaurant safety inspection reports online.

I also read the user reviews and type in “allergy” in the search bar to read any reviews that specifically mention food allergies. Even if a reviewer has different food allergies than my family, I still want to know how the restaurant staff manages food allergy related issues in general.

Look up the restaurant’s menu in the photos on Yelp or on the restaurant’s website. Is there a statement to notify them about food allergies? Does the restaurant have an allergen menu so you can check if a dish contains your allergen or not? Are there some dishes on the menu that seem free of your allergens?





## Call or Visit to Double Check for Allergen Safety

Call a restaurant with your questions during non-peak hours. I like to scout out a restaurant with a friend before I bring my children. Can they handle simple requests such as a glass of water or salad dressing on the side? Does the restaurant staff pay attention to details and communicate well?

Look for an opportunity to talk with the restaurant owner or manager. It's surprising how often they understand food allergies because they love someone with food allergies. Even if you end up not feeling comfortable about dining at that restaurant, sometimes you have opportunities to teach them something about food allergies that helps the next food allergy customer.

## How Do You Discern Food Allergy Safety Before You Take a Bite?

**Ask simple, open ended questions.** Before we order, I will ask, "My children have nut allergies, which dishes should I avoid ordering?" If someone has multiple food allergies, I would ask a manager for their recommendations for dishes that do not contain their allergens. A good manager would make some suggestions, we narrow down the choices together, and then the manager checks with the chef to be sure.

**Food allergy "rules" may vary by region and cuisine.** I live in the San Francisco Bay Area and it is uncommon for restaurants to use peanut oil. However when we visited Southern California, I was surprised by how many restaurants I called before finding one that doesn't use peanut oil or peanut salad dressing. Don't assume anything when trying something new or when traveling.

**Is it safe to share family style?** That depends on the family or friends eating with you. If you go to a restaurant where the food is served family style or all the food is prepared in front of you on shared equipment, then everyone in your party needs to order foods free-from your allergens. If someone wants to eat something that you are allergic to, then order a separate entree to minimize the risk of cross-contact.

**Know your own limits,** some people can tolerate being around their allergens as long as they don't eat it. Some people are more sensitive to being around their allergens, especially if the food is prepared in front of them or if there is a lot of steam or cooking smells in the restaurant.

**Use a paper "Chef Card"** that lists your allergens. When we travel, I print my sons' allergens on a half sheet of paper so that a waiter can communicate the information to the kitchen staff. I also add photos of my sons to help ensure that the correct entree is served to the right person.

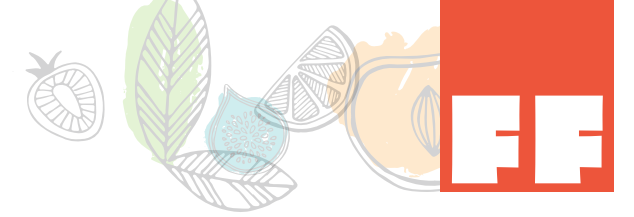
**Always bring an epinephrine auto-injector and know when and how to use it.** We can plan and prepare as best as we can whether we are eating at home, at a familiar restaurant, or when we travel, but it's vitally important to have an epinephrine auto-injector nearby. We keep ours in a pocket or a bag/purse for easy accessibility.

I hope some of these strategies will be helpful to you when you dine out and enjoy new experiences with friends and family or when you need to travel for work or school.



### ABOUT SHARON

Sharon Wong lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with her husband and two teenaged sons. She blogs about food allergies, Asian food, and her food allergy mom experiences at [www.nutfreewok.com](http://www.nutfreewok.com).



## Surely your summer reading list is well underway,

**B**ut the team at Food Equality Initiative thought we would share some of our favorite books about food (or at least they have a food item in the title)! We have a mixture of fiction and nonfiction book recommendations for you to browse through. Hopefully you find something that catches your eye and takes you to the library to learn more.

Send us your recommendations too! We are a team of hungry readers and would love to hear what you are reading.

Summaries provided by [goodreads.com](http://goodreads.com).



### AMELIA RICHARD

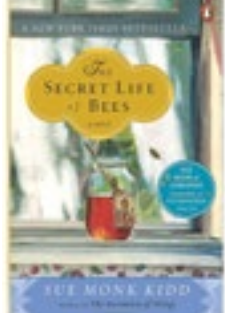
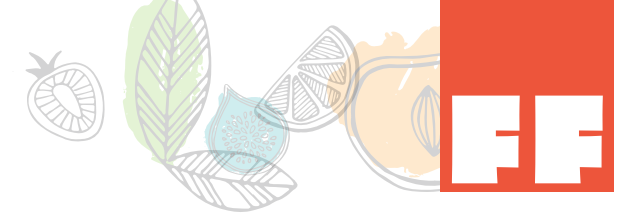
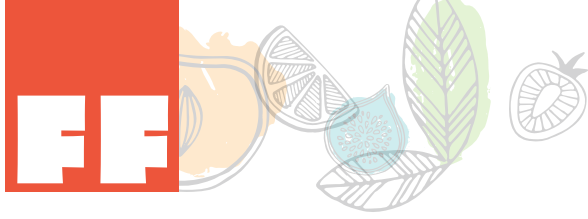
Marketing & Creative Director

### Franklin Barbecue: A Meat-Smoking Manifesto

by Aaron Franklin, Jordan Mackay

"When Aaron Franklin and his wife, Stacy, opened up a small barbecue trailer on the side of an Austin, Texas, interstate in 2009, they had no idea what they'd gotten themselves into. Today, Franklin Barbecue has grown into the most popular, critically lauded, and obsessed-over barbecue joint in the country (if not the world)—and Franklin is the winner of every major barbecue award there is."

*Amelia says, "I got my husband this book and a smoker/grill for a Father's Day gift and he LOVES it. The author is so passionate and nerdy, which makes for a fun and educational read. Plus, I have already gotten an amazing smoked chicken and pork butt out of the deal, so we are both satisfied."*



**ANNA STOVER**

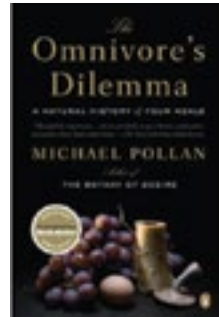
Teen Advisory Intern

**The Secret Life of Bees**

by Sue Monk Kidd

“Set in South Carolina in 1964, The Secret Life of Bees tells the story of Lily Owens, whose life has been shaped around the blurred memory of the afternoon her mother was killed. Lily escapes to Tiburon, South Carolina--a town that holds the secret to her mother’s past. Taken in by an eccentric trio of black beekeeping sisters, Lily is introduced to their mesmerizing world of bees and honey, and the Black Madonna. This is a remarkable novel about divine female power, a story women will share and pass on to their daughters for years to come.”

Anna says, “I love this book because it is a powerful story of a young girl in South Carolina, trying to learn the truth about the death of her mother. She learns about the importance of honey and what family truly means.”



**INDRANI MAITRA**

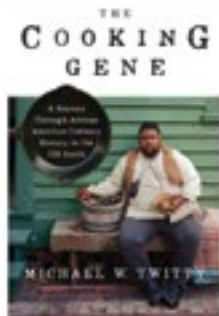
Summer Intern

**The Omnivore’s Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals**

by Michael Pollan

“What should we have for dinner? For omnivores like ourselves, this simple question has always posed a dilemma: When you can eat just about anything nature (or the supermarket) has to offer, deciding what you should eat will inevitably stir anxiety, especially when some of the foods offered might shorten your life. Pollan contends that, when it comes to food, doing the right thing often turns out to be the tastiest thing. Beautifully written and thrillingly argued, The Omnivore’s Dilemma promises to change the way we think about the politics and pleasure of eating.”

Indrani says, “It is the only food book I have read. :)”



**EMILY BROWN**

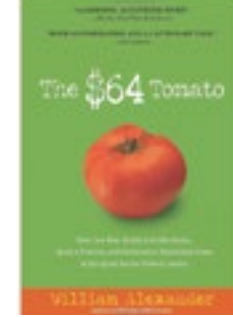
Founder & CEO

**The Cooking Gene: A Journey Through African American Culinary History in the Old South**

by Michael Twitty

“Southern food is integral to the American culinary tradition, yet the question of who “owns” it is one of the most provocative touchpoints in our ongoing struggles over race. Culinary historian Michael W. Twitty takes listeners to the white-hot center of this fight, tracing the roots of his own family and the charged politics surrounding the origins of soul food. Along the way, he reveals a truth that is more than skin deep - the power of food to bring the kin of the enslaved and their former slaveholders to the table, where they can discover the real America together.”

Emily says, “The Cooking Gene is a wonderful exploration of the contributions of enslaved Africans to American cuisine. It is the culinary history of my ancestors.”



**ERIN MARTINEZ**

Director of Operations

**The \$64 Tomato: How One Man Nearly Lost His Sanity, Spent a Fortune, and Endured an Existential Crisis in the Quest for the Perfect Garden**

by William Alexander

“Bill Alexander had no idea that his simple dream of having a vegetable garden and small orchard in his backyard would lead him into life-and-death battles with groundhogs, weeds, and weather. Not to mention the vacations that had to be planned around the harvest, the limitations of his own middle-aged body, and the pity of his wife and kids. When Alexander runs (just for fun!) a cost benefit analysis, it comes as quite a shock to learn that it cost him a staggering \$64 to grow each one of his beloved Brandywine tomatoes.”

Erin says, “\$64 Tomato by William Alexander is a laugh out loud book about gardening. I found it amusing because I could relate to some of his gardening troubles and successes.”



**SOFIA GILLESPIE**

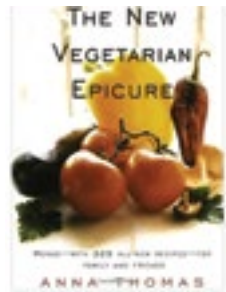
Education Coordinator

**Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe**

by Fannie Flagg

“It’s first the story of two women in the 1980s, of gray-headed Mrs. Threadgoode telling her life story to Evelyn, who is in the sad slump of middle age. The tale she tells is also of two women-of the irrepressibly daredevilish tomboy Idgie and her friend Ruth, who back in the thirties ran a little place in Whistle Stop, Alabama, a Southern kind of Cafe Wobegon offering good barbecue and good coffee and all kinds of love and laughter, even an occasional murder.”

Sofia says, “This story makes me cry every time. It is all about friendship and loss in the South, with issues of race relations, sexuality, and aging with a little bit of murder thrown in. It is a great book that gets you thinking and feeling feelings.”



**KATHY DOWNING**

Development Coordinator

**The Vegetarian Epicure**

by Anna Thomas

“262 recipes that bring vegetarian cooking to new gastronomic heights with talk about good food, the art of making fine breads, and menus designed to make every meal a delight and a celebration of life.”

Kathy says, “To cook, I need an appealing recipe along with inspiration. Almost unbelievably, this book provided both! Thomas’s spicy refried beans recipe is by far the tastiest take on refried beans I’ve ever tried! While my beans simmered and the aromas of garlic and cloves filled my kitchen, I would thumb through the pages, thinking about what I could make next. The delicate illustrations by Julie Maas add to the overall joyfulness of this cookbook! 5 stars!”



**KEN JOHNSON**

Digital Marketing Manager

**Don’t Eat This Book**

by Morgan Spurlock

“For thirty days, Morgan Spurlock ate nothing but McDonald’s as part of an investigation into the effects of fast food on American health. The resulting documentary earned him an Academy Award nomination and broke box-office records worldwide. But there’s more to the story, and in Don’t Eat This Book, Spurlock examines everything from school lunch programs and the marketing of fast food to the decline of physical education. He looks at why fast food is so tasty, cheap, and ultimately seductive.”

Ken says, “The author is the star of the CLASSIC food documentary/movie ‘Supersize ME’ which is one of my faves, and this documents it as well.”



# The All-American

## Food Allergy Experience

Kamisha York

PEYTON'S ALLERGY SHIELD OF HOPE



## Eleven years ago,

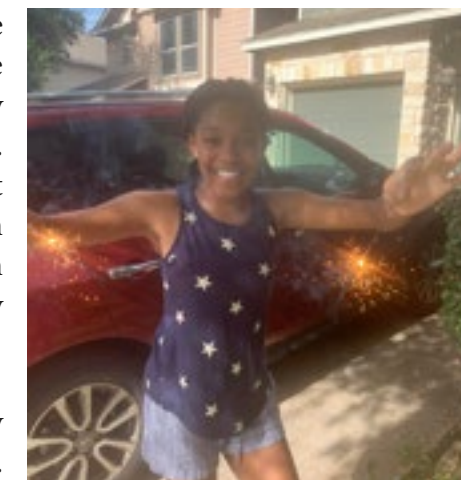
**W**hen Peyton was rushed to the emergency room after eating a cashew, our lifestyle as we knew it changed forever. Gone were the days where my family could carelessly eat wherever and whatever we wanted. Gone were the days where I could eat a peanut butter and jelly sandwich (my favorite when I was pregnant with Peyton). Our new reality was only beginning.

You may think that the food allergy experience is fairly straight-forward. You have an allergic reaction, you get diagnosed with a food allergy by an allergist, you avoid the food allergen, and you carry epinephrine in case of emergencies. While that is not completely incorrect, it leaves out a whole lot of steps that quickly add up.

### Step 1

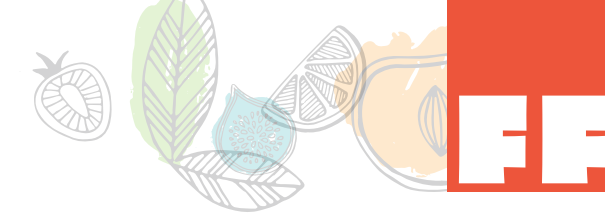
Imagine going to a foreign country not knowing the language and needing help with directions. This is what it felt

like for my husband and I in April of 2010 when we walked into our local grocery store, standing there clueless not knowing where to begin. Being told that our daughter has a severe food allergy to peanuts, tree nuts, and a mild allergy to egg yolk and dairy, we were overwhelmed with figuring out how to feed her. The doctor told us we needed to avoid these foods but did not tell us how! How does one shop for safe foods? Where are they in the store? What foods have hidden allergens in them?



### Plus Step 2

The doctor also told us that Peyton must always carry an EpiPen (name brand for epinephrine auto-injector, used for treating anaphylaxis), and preferably have one for use both at home and at school. (Medical professionals recommend carrying 2 EpiPens at a time, because one dose may not be enough to stop a severe reaction.) That meant that she would need at least 3 to 4 EpiPens in order to cover each location where she spends extended time.

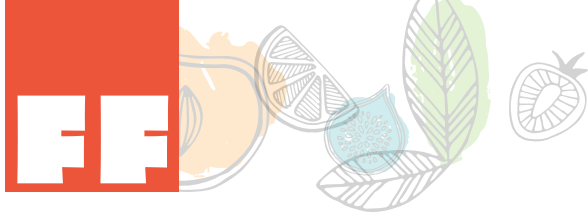


Eleven years ago, my insurance company did not cover the cost of EpiPens, and my family's finances were not in a place where we could easily afford unexpected expenses out of pocket. To think about shelling out at least \$400 for EpiPens (an emergency medication, not even a day-to-day treatment) was mind blowing!

### Equals Step 3

As a mother, I had to take a step back and reflect. Purchasing safe, free-from foods added an awfully high expense to our family's budget. My husband and I knew that this was going to be a challenge for us. I asked myself how we would be able to afford Peyton's food, not to mention her EpiPen! The expenses kept adding up with no end in sight. We struggled to afford it.

Not only did we sometimes have only one EpiPen, sometimes we went without being able to afford one at all, and that was terrifying. The next year in 2011, Peyton's brother was diagnosed with a fire ant allergy that required him to need an EpiPen as well. This meant \$800 a month for life saving, emergency medication for my children. Not to mention, all three of my children and myself all have asthma, our insurance charged out of pocket \$50 for each inhaler. We did not realize this would become our reality that fateful day eleven years ago with a 'simple' food allergy diagnosis.



## What is the All-American Food Allergy Experience?

I say all of this to express that not every American's Food Allergy Experience starts out with the proper guidance, knowledge, and help that one might expect. After leaving the emergency room that day, my husband and I were left alone to figure out how to read ingredient labels for allergens, navigate the grocery store, find the right allergist for Peyton, and access affordable medication. There were no support groups offered, no pamphlets, nothing to help support me through this life changing process. Often, I felt alone, and I still feel alone as a parent trying to do my best for my daughter.

Black, Hispanic, other minority groups, and children are more likely to have food allergies and asthma than white Americans. Often, as you can see in my personal story, visits to the ER are higher for minorities. This is due to a combination of the lack of access to: free-from foods, insurance coverage of life-saving medications, and professional healthcare.

These circumstances are not unfamiliar to people living in economically disadvantaged communities of minorities. These are problems that we are faced with every day. This was my family's All American Food Allergy Experience for many years. Even though the cost of medication has decreased

and we have found an affordable allergist for Peyton, we are still facing disparities and discrimination in healthcare even now, eleven years later.



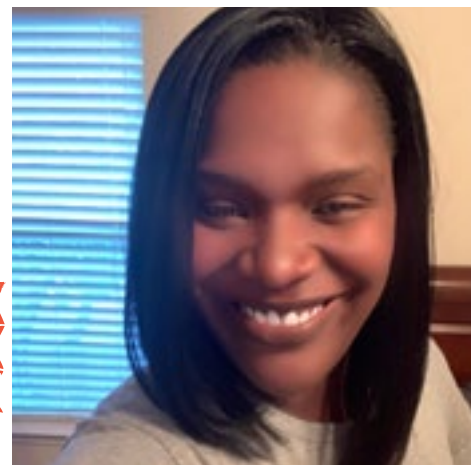
## The Future of Food Allergies in America

Eleven years ago, I wished there were resources around like FEI that could help me with accessing safe foods for my daughter. Not only that, there is a critical need for advocacy and support groups to help educate families about how to live a life free-from common foods. I had no one to walk with me, and show me how and what to look for, which is why I am using my voice now.

I have made it a point to educate myself as much as I can. I learned how to be an advocate for my daughter and, best of all, I have taught her how to advocate for herself! This was the driving force behind my initiative to start Peyton's Allergy Shield of Hope.

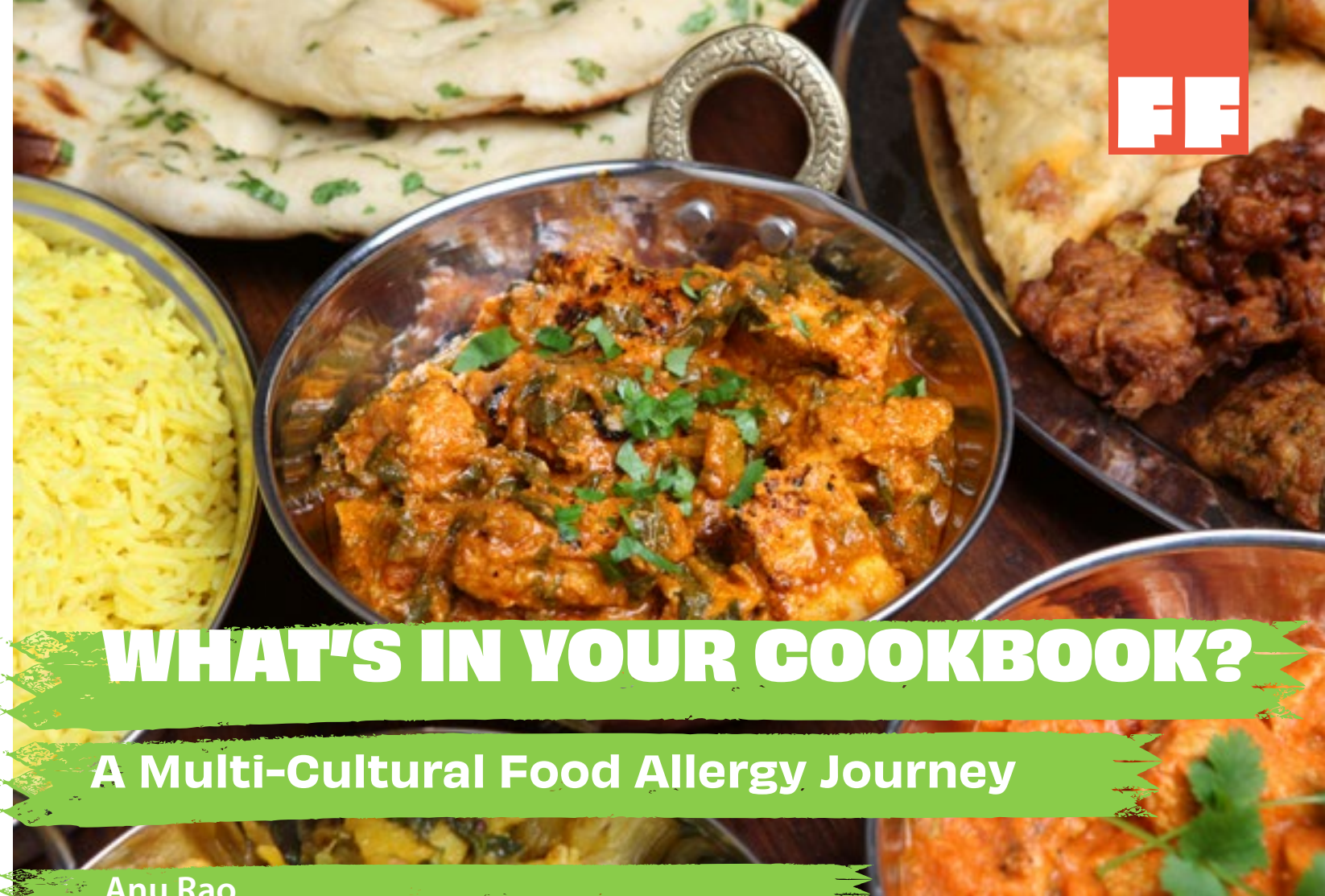
Everyone should have the same attentive, affordable, and accessible experience with healthcare. Every adult and child regardless of race and

economic status should have the same access to resources to help manage food allergies. We should all feel accepted in the food allergy community, not because we have means to afford the costs, but because we share a common need to live an allergy-safe lifestyle.



### ABOUT KAMISHA

I am Kamisha York (Misha for short). I am the Executive Director of Peyton's Allergy Shield of Hope, a 501 © (3) that my husband and I started in honor of our 13-year-old daughter Peyton. Peyton's Allergy Shield of Hope is a non-profit that is here to advocate and educate for those living with food allergies. In my free time I love to relax and listen to a good audible book, bake, and blog about how my husband and I navigate our crazy life with 3 kids and managing Peyton's food allergies at [www.foodallergyjourney.com](http://www.foodallergyjourney.com)



## WHAT'S IN YOUR COOKBOOK?

### A Multi-Cultural Food Allergy Journey

Anu Rao

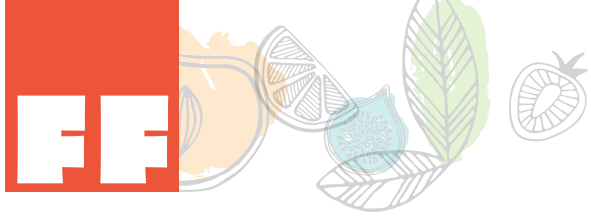
### My son was just 4 months old when his whole body broke out into hives

**A**nd his breathing became labored after ingesting less than 2 ounces of Enfamil (a dairy based baby formula). Seeing him squirm in pain, his face swollen and his tiny hands reaching out unsuccessfully to relieve himself from the itchy hives was heart-rending. I did not need to be a doctor to know he was having an allergic reaction.

I was born and raised in India. My son Arj was born and is being raised in the United States, although we frequently travel to India to visit my family. A common misconception in the Western world, particularly the United States, is that other (read Eastern) countries and cuisines are 'not as accommodating' or 'not as safe' for food allergy sufferers. However, can that not be said for American and European food as well? Every culture's cuisine presents its own unique set of challenges for food allergic individuals, but there is always room for tweaks to make a food-allergy safe dish. With care and knowledge, any cuisine can be made available for everyone. And for Arj and I, the only saving grace during those early months

of food struggles was my knowledge of Indian cuisine.

Subsequent blood work showed that Arj was allergic to all the top 8 allergens (peanuts, tree nuts, soy, egg, milk, wheat, fish, and shellfish). He also tested positive for a few more foods like peas, poppy, and chickpeas. That did not leave much, but he could eat rice and that was something I knew a lot about. I was raised in a South Indian household where rice is the staple diet. So, I knew how to prepare many a tasty dish that was rice-based like dosa (a savory rice flour pancake) and akki roti (rice flour tortilla). However, rice alone cannot provide the complete nutrition that a baby needs, but I could not give



him anything new without the doc's permission and even then, it had to be introduced very gradually.

Once the doctor gave a go ahead I carefully introduced a fruit or a vegetable every 6-8 weeks. At age 1 – he was less than 20 pounds despite his healthy birth weight. I knew that he desperately needed a larger variety of foods in his diet. However, his allergist at that point of time had scant knowledge about alternatives and was unable to help me.

Adding complexity to the situation, I have been a strict vegetarian all my life and had no clue about how to cook meat, nor did I really want my son to eat meat. Since Arj had tested positive to some beans and a generic lentil, both of which are good sources of vegetable protein, I felt I was left with no choice but to slowly introduce meat to him. It took me years before I could bring myself to cook meat at home. Meanwhile, friends sent meat dishes for him once in a while and I figured out a few frozen products that he could eat. However – I had to carefully manage the fiber in his diet. His hypoallergenic formula, Neocate was extremely constipating as are all the meats and rice. This struggle continued till Arj was 1.5 years old.

## “Finally, Arj caught a break!”

We found a very experienced allergist who also had a good understanding of Indian cuisine, particularly vegetarian

proteins. Under his care, Arj started eating a variety of lentils. Lentils are a wonderful way of including proteins, carbs, and fiber in the diet. A common misconception is that there is just one item called ‘lentils’ when in reality there are a variety of lentils. Hence, when the allergy blood work came back positive for ‘lentils’ a whole class of nutritious foods was unnecessarily eliminated. Thankfully, Arj’s new allergist knew better and by the time Arj was 2.5 years old, he was eating 3 of the most common type of lentils used in vegetarian cuisine – Moong (Mung bean), Toor (Pigeon peas), and Urad (Matpe bean). In Arj’s 3rd year, the allergist slowly added the most common types of beans in an American diet – black beans, kidney beans, pinto beans, white beans, lima beans, etc. Now, a good source of vegetable protein

in Indian AND American cuisine was no longer a challenge.

All these protein additions were very encouraging but did not help me much once we stepped out of the house. American food culture is extremely wheat based – even a seemingly harmless french fry often has wheat in it – go figure!!! Again, I leaned into my Indian vegetarian background to make my own flour blends to make dishes which called for wheat, like waffles, pancakes, and bread. Using alternatives like buckwheat, white and brown rice flour, mung bean flour, matpe bean flour, corn flour, sorghum flour, and different types of millet flours I was able to recreate some American classics for Arj, with an Indian flair. I was not always successful, but some of those experiments yielded surprisingly good results!



Crepes made with rice flour instead of all purpose flour and eggs.

## “he could eat rice and that was something I knew a lot about”

Finally, after almost 4 loooooong years... Arj’s annual blood work showed that his allergy numbers for wheat had dropped significantly and he was ready for a challenge. By that time, Arj was well-trained to ask whether the food offered to him had any allergens, so it took the allergist a while to convince him that he could have a bite of the wheat cracker. (That made me cry and laugh at the same time.) The challenge was successful and now with wheat in his food arsenal it seemed like the world had opened up for Arj.

A happy by-product of Arj’s allergy-friendly journey – he loves vegetables! Having grown up vegetarian in a tropical

country, a wide variety of vegetables are an intrinsic part of my everyday cooking. Since I was concerned about his nutrition, I made a conscious effort to introduce him to as many vegetables as the allergist would allow from a very early age. Today, adults and youngsters marvel at my young teen’s sophisticated palate.

Arj has continued to make progress and he can now eat quite a few of the top 8 allergens. My knowledge of Indian cuisine has helped make this journey far less arduous (exhausting) than it otherwise would have been. It has further opened up my mind to other world cuisines in my constant quest to find nutritious alternatives which led me to culinary gems like quinoa and teff. (Teff is a main ingredient in Jessica’s Natural Foods.)

We still have a very long way to go and he can never carelessly pop something in his mouth, but we have also overcome quite a few hurdles. Yes,

there is hope, that one day food allergy sufferers will overcome at least some of their allergies and, with that, be able to appreciate food far more than those without allergies can ever imagine.

After all the trials and errors Arj and I have experienced in this food allergy journey so far, my main takeaway is when choosing an allergist, pick someone who understands your food-culture background. Also, the more cuisines you know, the more food options you have to choose from. On a severely restricted diet, this can only be a positive thing.



### ABOUT ANU

Anu Rao is the principal blogger at AllergyFoodie.org. She has an undergraduate degree in Food & Nutrition and two graduate degrees - in Marketing and Strategy. Currently, she also works as a Business Development & Marketing professional.



On one of our India trips, my aunt taught me to make sun baked fry-ums of different types (rice, tapioca) which are later deep fried to yield a yummy allergy friendly snack!

# KITCHEN CRAFT!

## Fruit Popsicles



How to make healthy homemade popsicles from A to Z, including how to make fruity, creamy, and even hidden veggie popsicles! From Live Eat Learn by Sarah Bond.

### INGREDIENTS

#### Berry Lemon

½ cup orange juice  
1 ½ cup fresh berries  
2 Tbsp lemon juice  
1 Tbsp lemon zest  
2 to 4 Tbsp honey or sugar



#### Rainbow Fruit

1 cup sliced fruit  
1 ½ cups coconut water  
2 to 4 Tbsp honey or sugar



#### Berries and Cream

1 ½ cups fresh berries  
2 Tbsp honey or sugar  
1 cup full-fat plain Greek yogurt  
½ tsp vanilla extract



#### Coconut Lime

1 14-oz can full-fat coconut milk  
¼ cup lime juice  
2 Tbsp lime zest  
¼ cup honey



#### Sneaky Spinach

1 ½ cups milk  
1 cup fresh spinach  
¼ cup honey  
2 bananas



### DIRECTIONS

**Mix your ingredients and pour into molds according to the popsicle you want to make:**

**Berry Lemon:** Combine all ingredients in a blender until smooth. Pour into molds.

**Rainbow Fruit:** Distribute fruit into molds. Combine coconut water and honey, then pour into molds, tapping on the counter to remove air pockets.

**Berries and Cream:** Puree berries until smooth (add a touch of water or juice if needed to get things moving). Stir together yogurt, honey, and vanilla. Spoon berries and

yogurt into molds in alternating layers.

**Coconut Lime:** Stir together all ingredients. Pour into molds.

**Sneaky Spinach:** Combine all ingredients in a blender until smooth. Pour into molds.

#### FOR ALL POPSICLES

**Freeze:** Insert popsicle sticks and freeze until hard, at least 4 hours.

**Unmold:** Run mold under warm water for a few seconds to loosen, then remove pops from the molds.



## BBQ SAUCES

### A road trip for your tastebuds

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### KANSAS CITY

#### INGREDIENTS

- 2-1/2 cups ketchup
- 2/3 cup white vinegar
- 2/3 cup honey
- 1/2 cup molasses
- 2 to 3 tablespoons hot pepper sauce
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon onion powder
- 1/2 to 1 teaspoon liquid smoke, optional

#### DIRECTIONS

In a large saucepan, combine all ingredients; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.



Remember to check all ingredient labels for your allergens. Some brands of sauces may have allergens while others do not.

### TEXAS

#### INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 cup ketchup
- 1/4 cup packed brown sugar
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon yellow mustard
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 2 teaspoons chili powder

#### DIRECTIONS

In a large saucepan, heat butter over medium heat. Add onion; cook and stir 2-3 minutes or until tender. Add garlic; cook 1 minute longer. Stir in remaining ingredients; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, 15-20 minutes to allow flavors to blend.

#### DIRECTIONS

In a medium saucepan, saute onion in butter until tender. Stir in the mustard, salt and cayenne pepper; cook 1 minute longer.

### MEMPHIS

#### INGREDIENTS

- 1/3 cup finely chopped onion
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1 teaspoon ground mustard
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 cup ketchup
- 1/3 cup white or cider vinegar
- 3 tablespoons packed brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon yellow mustard

Stir in the ketchup, vinegar, sugar, Worcestershire sauce and mustard. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, until desired consistency, 10-15 minutes. Cool.

Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator up to 1 month. Use as a basting sauce for grilled meats.

### EAST CAROLINA

#### INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup cider vinegar
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons coarsely ground pepper
- 2 to 3 teaspoons hot pepper sauce
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 to 1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes

#### DIRECTIONS

Combine all ingredients in a jar or shaker. Seal and shake until sugar has completely dissolved. Use or store at room-temperature for up to 2 weeks.



## FAJITA TACO SALAD

### With Cilantro Lime Dressing



## INGREDIENTS

### SALAD

1 head of Romaine lettuce  
 2 medium bell peppers  
 1 red onion  
 1 medium tomato  
 1 cup shredded cheese  
 1 cup crushed tortilla chips  
 1 lb ground beef (or grilled chicken)  
 1 package of taco seasoning

### DRESSING

1 bunch of cilantro  
 4 cloves of garlic- peeled  
 1/4 cup olive oil  
 1/4 tsp salt  
 1/4 tsp pepper  
 2 limes

## DIRECTIONS

Mince garlic and chop cilantro leaves. Then add garlic and cilantro and the olive oil into a small bowl. Squeeze lime juice into a the bowl, then add salt and pepper and stir. Set aside.

Slice bell peppers and onions into strips and then saute in a 12 inch skillet with about 1 tablespoon of oil for about 5 minutes over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Then, place in a small bowl off to the side.

Dice tomato and set aside.

**Optional:** can also add avocado or salsa for more flavor. Salsa can also replace the dressing.

In the same pan, place ground beef (or chicken) and cook over medium heat for 5-7 minutes or until you can no longer see any pink and it is cooked thoroughly. Drain meat, and then add taco seasoning and water per directions on the packet.

Get 4 bowls or plates for salad and place 1.5 cups of lettuce in each one. Then, divide up and add tomato, ground beef, peppers, onions, and cheese to each one. Top with crushed tortilla chips and the cilantro lime dressing.



\*Disclaimer: The recipes included in the Free-From Magazine are suggestions. They may not be free-from all Top 9 allergens. Please read carefully and make any substitutions that are necessary for your diet. Consult your doctor if you have questions or concerns. NOTE: Cooking is a science experiment and some ingredient substitutions may not produce the same results.

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