

Food connects people through spending time together while eating.  
In the past week have you shared at least once breakfast, lunch, or dinner with someone?

Food connects people through making it for someone or with someone.  
In the past week have you done either?

Food connects people through sharing it with others.  
In the past week has someone offered you something to eat and you shared it together?

For many of you the three examples of connecting with others through food is daily occurrence. It's normal and most of the time easy.

But for me (*hand on chest*), **everything** involving food is difficult. I can't spontaneously go out to eat with friends, or eat something someone has made for me, and I often have to decline the food that's offered because I have coeliac disease.

I can't eat any gluten.

Even the smallest amounts of gluten damage my small intestine. To make matters even more difficult: gluten can **literally hide in any food**. And when cooking, cross contamination with gluten is tricky to watch out for.

I dedicate this text to everyone who has to follow or chooses to follow a certain diet.

**Grey anxiety** feels like butterflies. Butterflies which are caged by the stomach. They dart frantically, trying to escape their cage. They tangle and build a tight knot which eventually bursts into pieces and scatters in the mist around them.

Anxiety is something I experience often around food. **Is it truly gluten free? Was there any cross contamination with gluten? How can I be sure if I didn't make the food myself?** The what if's sometimes drive me crazy and completely take over my mind.

*(a bit louder)*

**Red anger** feels like a storm. Thunder booms through the quiet night, waking people and animals. **Lightening cracks from the sky, illuminating the raging sea. Waves crash against rocks on the shore over and over again,** until the rocks are polished like shiny diamonds.

I feel angry at my body for not being able to digest gluten. But I'm also angry **at not being understood**. It makes me angry that even though I explain to people why I have to follow a gluten free diet, they still think it's appropriate to give unsolicited advice. People tell me to stop being difficult around food, to cheat, or they give me advice like (*mockery*) „you just got to be more positive whenever you're eating gluten, then you won't be coeliac anymore.“

**Blue judgement** feels like a crow. A crow which is put in front of the court of public opinion. It's burnt by the spotlight, **it's blue feathers turn to dust**. It's on trial for it's decisions and it's being **judged by society's norms** while **the jury hides in the safe shade of normality**.

Sometimes I feel judged by others. I feel judged for not eating gluten when **everyone** around me is happily eating it. I feel judged for making decisions for myself (*hand on chest*), for not going to certain places because there's nothing gluten free to eat.

(*quiet and slow*) **Brown exhaustion** feels like a wilted flower. It wants to have colourful leaves like the flowers surrounding it. It wants to be picked up by a human because of its beauty. But it's **too exhausted** to bloom, it's withering away until **---** there's **nothing left**.


Exhaustion is also an emotion I feel occasionally. I feel exhausted of always having to plan ahead. Spontaneously going somewhere to eat is hard, especially if I'm not familiar with the city I'm in. But **standing up and advocating** for myself is even more exhausting.

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(*smile*) **Yellow happiness** feels like a flower which is blooming in colours of the rainbow. The flower is not alone anymore. It's surrounded by flowers just like it. It finally fits in, and it feels **right at home**.

Whenever I find a new product or a new restaurant, (*smile, laugh*) I feel like child in a candy shop, wanting to **try everything**. I still remember the time I ate at a completely gluten free bakery in London. They had **the most amazing** pain au chocolate. *Delicieux!* (*Deliciö*) (*Italian hand thing, look at where the hand goes and wait*)

I have to admit it was one of my highlights during my exchange term in England.

Orange gratitude feels like an anchor. Even if there's a storm raging, with waves crashing,  the anchor holds the boat steady, afloat.

I'm incredibly grateful for my family and friends. For their support and for being all ear if I'm having a bad day or want to talk about new food I found.

*(very slow)* I truly appreciate you. Thank you very much.