

Press Release

Issue date: 4 April 2017

Chris Bavin supports Coeliac UK's campaign to increase Gluten Free Convenience

Following the success of the Gluten free Guarantee campaign for supermarkets, Coeliac UK, the national charity for people with coeliac disease and everyone living without gluten, is launching a specific campaign, supported by TV presenter Chris Bavin, for the convenience retail sector.

Launched in 2014, the Coeliac UK Gluten free Guarantee campaign asked supermarkets to commit to stocking a basket of eight* staple gluten free products across all stores in order to improve access to staple gluten free substitute products.

The charity is now targeting smaller retailers to sign up too to a new and specially designed Gluten free Guarantee basket for convenience stores which includes just four key items for those who need gluten free when they're on the go to be launched at the National Convenience Show at the NEC Birmingham from 24-26 April 2017 (stand U68).

The basket for small local shops of under three thousand square feet in size is made up of:

- Fresh gluten free bread, of any type
- Gluten free breakfast cereal
- Gluten free pasta
- Sandwich, wrap or ready to eat meal on the move, labelled "gluten free"

In a recent survey [1] undertaken by Coeliac UK, 80% of those surveyed said they have to visit more than one retailer to complete their gluten free shopping. Respondents stated they want to see more options for gluten free meals on the go with 50% of those on a gluten free diet stating that they attempt to buy food when they're at work, but more than 75% find it difficult..

Chris Bavin TV presenter said: "I am thrilled to be supporting Coeliac UK's campaign to get smaller retailers to commit to a supply of gluten free food. My wife has coeliac disease and I know how difficult it can be not being able to pick up everyday essentials when out and about or find something to eat on the move. Shopping more frequently for less is common now and people who follow a gluten free diet want the same convenience and choice as everyone else. So we're asking for retailers to sign up to this Gluten free Guarantee campaign and make shopping easier for everyone."

A large number of the 1.3 million Britons now following a gluten free diet do so because it is the only treatment for coeliac disease, an autoimmune disease caused by a reaction to gluten. However, it is also followed by people with other medical conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and non-coeliac gluten sensitivity (NCGS). The diagnosis of these conditions continues to improve, which is resulting in growing numbers of people being placed on a strict gluten free diet, and plenty of people are now just choosing to go gluten free as a lifestyle choice.

Sales of gluten free products have been rising rapidly over a number of years, and Mintel has estimated the gluten free market to be worth in excess of £247 million a year and it has been growing by double digits year on year since 2013. [2]

Sarah Sleet, chief executive of Coeliac UK said: "We believe a basket of gluten free products should be as widely available as their standard equivalents, and that retailers can help make this a reality. As well as everyday essentials, people want to see more options for gluten free on the go, half of our survey respondents say they try to buy food when they're out or at work, but still three quarters of them tell us they find it difficult to buy something safe for them to eat.

"This is a market that is going to keep on growing and we encourage all convenience store retailers to commit to this new Gluten free Guarantee campaign. We want to drive access and choice, but we are also conscious of the need to reduce food waste and the associated costs to businesses. So we're asking convenience retailers to guarantee the listing of a least one product from just four gluten free categories."

Further information can be found at: www.coeliac.org.uk/grocer

Email: campaigns@coeliac.org.uk or visit Coeliac UK at stand U68 at the National Convenience Show. NB Chris Bavin will not be attending the show.

Ends

References

[1] Coeliac UK, Eating Out Survey. Survey of 9,180 people on a gluten free diet and 966 patents of children on a gluten free diet, July 2016

[2] Mintel Free-from Foods, UK, January 2016

* The Gluten free Guarantee for supermarkets asks the larger retailers to commit to having a basket of eight core items of gluten free food in stock across all their stores. The eight gluten-free staple items are: white bread, pasta, cereal, flour, cereal bars, rolls, crackers and one other bread (brown or seeded).

Notes to editor

- Coeliac disease is a serious illness where the body's immune system reacts to gluten found in food, making the body attack itself.
- 1 in 100 people in the UK has coeliac disease
- Average time to diagnosis is 13 years.
- 1 in 4 people diagnosed with coeliac disease had previously been diagnosed with IBS.

- Gluten is a protein found in wheat (including spelt), rye and barley. Some people are also sensitive to oats. Obvious sources of gluten include breads, pastas, flours, cereals, cakes and biscuits. It is often used as an ingredient in many favourite foods such as fish fingers, sausages, gravies, sauces and soy sauce.
- Coeliac UK has a Helpline on 0333 332 2033 and further information can be found at www.coeliac.org.uk