

# ELAINE TAYLOR: living gluten-free

By Donna Lynn Rhodes

Elaine Taylor, co-founder and president of The Taylor Family Foundation, was 48 when she was finally diagnosed with celiac disease. She has been gluten-free in the nine years since, and is thriving after suffering for most of her life from “horrendous gastrointestinal issues, skin rashes, migraines, low thyroid, joint pain, severe backaches and monumental fatigue.”

Her experience and subsequent research has made her an advocate for celiac disease education and gluten-free living. She started camps for children with the disease as part of Camp Arroyo, which is run and funded by the foundation. Each summer and about a dozen weekends the rest of the year, more than 3,000 children with life-threatening, chronic illnesses or special needs — such as a gluten-free diet — spend a few days at the camp, south of Livermore, enjoying nature and being kids.

## How did you find out you had celiac disease?

My parents said I had a “nervous stomach,” whatever that is. I had all the classic symptoms, including [being] pale, underweight, sickly, with itchy skin and headaches. I failed to thrive, and my parents and I didn’t know why. None of the medications I tried helped.

## Do you cook gluten-free foods for your family and friends? Or do you cook gluten-free for you and “regular” for everyone else?

My household is now strictly gluten free. Cross-contamination is not a viable option for me. The alternative grains I use are delicious, and after nine years, I work hard at making everything feel and taste like traditional cooking and baking.

## Where do you go to have a fancy meal out, or lunch with friends?

Chef Michael at Yankee Pier, Chef Kevin at Walnut Creek Yacht Club, Chef Peter Chastain at Prima are all caring and creative gluten-free chefs; Jule’s Thin Crust Pizza in Danville; Mariposa Baking in Oakland; and, of course, Miglet’s in Danville [owned and run by Taylor’s daughter Katie Alin].

Esin Restaurant in Danville does an amazing job. Va de Vi for the chocolate soufflé. In and Out’s Protein Wrap. Or Chipotle, where they assign a server to you who washes their hands and puts clean gloves on and walks you through the line.

There are lots of restaurants that offer gluten-free menus, and while the menus look fantastic, the people preparing them do not understand what it really means to be gluten-free. Education and a true understanding of dedicated clean areas are so important. They need to learn what cross-contamination really means. I have been sick six times this month from going out to eat.



Elaine Taylor and her daughter Katie Alin at Miglet’s Gluten-Free Bakery in Danville.

Tom Tomkinson

## Elaine Taylor’s resources:

### Sites

- Celiac Disease Foundation, [celiac.org](http://celiac.org)
- [Theglutenfreelifestyle.com](http://Theglutenfreelifestyle.com)
- Gluten Intolerance Group, [gluten.net](http://gluten.net)
- Jacqueline Mallorca’s blog, The Gluten Free Expert, [glutenfreeexpert.com/blog](http://glutenfreeexpert.com/blog)
- National Foundation for Celiac Awareness, [celiaccentral.org](http://celiaccentral.org)
- R.O.C.K. (Raising our Celiac Kids): [glutenfreedom.net](http://glutenfreedom.net)

### Facebook

“There are three fabulous pages to ‘Like’ so you can get all the updates”:

- Gluten Free Foodies
- The Gluten Free Lab
- Celiac Disease Awareness

### Books

- “Gluten-Free for Dummies,” by Danna Korn, 2006
- “The Living Gluten-Free Answer Book,” Sourcebooks, 2008


## Should people follow a gluten-free diet even if they don’t have to?

This is truly a personal choice. A gluten-free diet is more expensive, and finding alternative products [can be hard]. If you are gluten-sensitive and have no choice, that’s one thing, but if you aren’t affected by it, you may lose out on many nutritious whole grains. That said, however, anyone can substitute wheat products with very nutritious gluten-free alternatives such as millet, quinoa and Teff.

## Do you have a favorite gluten-free cookbook?

I love “The Wheat-Free Cook” and “Gluten-Free Italian” — both by Jacqueline Mallorca. The best thing about Jackie’s books is that the recipes are not ridiculously time-consuming. They are easy to make and can be eaten and enjoyed almost immediately. I also like two magazines: Living Without and Gluten-Free Living.

## Do you carry any “emergency” gluten-free foods with you?

Always. I carry ready-to-use peanut butter packets and Nicole’s Divine Crackers, Zing Bars, Think Thin Bars and Pure bars. There is nothing harder than being hungry — watching everyone eating and you cannot eat. This condition is my problem, not that of the restaurant, banquet manager or airline. ... I must always be prepared. 



Anne Joergler

Barry and Elaine Taylor and campers at Camp Arroyo (which includes Camp Celiac).

## Camp Celiac

Run and funded by The Taylor Family Foundation, its goal is to give children restricted to a gluten-free diet an opportunity to relax and have fun with kids their age (9 through 17), without worrying about social acceptance or what foods they can eat. 2012 dates (each week has a different group of campers):

**Week 1:** Tuesday, July 24, through Saturday, July 28

**Week 2:** Saturday, July 28, through Wednesday, Aug. 1

For details, see [celiaccamp.com](http://celiaccamp.com).