

## Thriving Through The Holidays

### HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

It has been a busy holiday season, but a great one!

From Thanksgiving to now I have been able to spend lots of time with family and friends. I want to share some highlights about thriving peanut and gluten free through the holidays.

Starting with **Thanksgiving**. We hosted this year and wow was that a lot of cooking and preparation! Of course a few days before I would come down with pink eye and my toddler with a double ear infection. Somehow, we were able to get the cleaning and cooking done and not get any of our guests sick! Our Thanksgiving menu included appetizers of mini chicken tacos (Trader Joe's), [crabbies](#) (with gluten free English muffin for me), veggies and dip, and other finger snacks. The main meal was all gluten and peanut free and consisted of artichokes with a pimento vinaigrette topped with chopped egg to start, followed by a local free-range turkey, gravy, [cornbread stuffing](#) (used gluten free pantry cornbread mix), [sharp cheddar and Dijon mustard mashed potatoes](#), cranberry sauce, arugula/spring mix salad with pears, cranberries, gorgonzola cheese, and blue diamond almonds. For dessert I had a few traditional pies from [MANNA's Pie In The Sky Fundraiser](#) (not safe for me), ice cream and I made [individual cheese cakes](#) with fruit topping (using gluten free honey gram and chocolate sandwich creme cookies on the bottom that I was sent from [Schar](#) to try; they were great). There were plenty of leftovers to share with the guests and they stated they loved the food! Since a few items I was making for the first time I was a little worried, but it all turned out great! I even used my crock pot to keep the mashed potatoes warm so I could use the oven for other items.

The first weekend in December I had a **girls weekend** for a late birthday celebration with my good friends Rebecca & Melanie. We went to Rehoboth, DE and stayed at one of my favorite places, [The Bellmoor Inn & Spa](#). I have been there many times before. We went to dinner at [Fin's Fish House & Raw bar](#) and our waiter also worked in the kitchen so he was able to easily help me pick a safe meal. The Bellmoor Inn has a great complimentary breakfast that has yogurt, fresh fruit, and an omelet station.

Mid-December, I attended an annual **cookie exchange** that my childhood friend Margo hosts every year in my hometown of Severna Park, Maryland. I have been friends with many of these woman for over 30 years- yikes it is hard for me to think that I am old enough to say that. I haven't been able to attend every year, but this year I could and it is a blast for me to see good friends all together at the same time. I am grateful for Margo to have this tradition. Cookie exchanges are a stressful situation for someone with a deadly peanut allergy and a gluten intolerance.



Crabbie



Gluten free cornbread stuffing

All baked items are high risk so I am used to not being able to eat anything that others make. However, I decided I would participate and make something I could eat, [peppermint chocolate chex mix "bark"](#).

I did not take any peanut containing items and gave away the other exchanged baked goods. I have had my allergy all my life so my friends know about it, however when I was a kid we didn't have the same attention to food allergies therefore I don't think it stands out in their mind as much as some of my friends I met as an adult. A few of my friends said they tried to pick ingredients that were safe, but without proper training and experience reading labels it is hard to do. My friend Jen actually emailed me before the party to ask me about safe ingredients and brands. She made me my own special chocolate with safe ingredients including blue diamond almonds. This was a very sweet thing to do at a busy time of year and I will always remember it. When you have a deadly food allergy and a food intolerance the holidays are not all about the food, but about getting together with friends and family.

My **strategies** for other **holiday celebrations** with friends include suggesting a few restaurants that I know have safe options for me and bringing food that I can eat. After going to the [holiday hayride](#) with friends, Dave, Katie, and Greta we went for pizza at [Pappone's](#) which now has gluten free pizza. I find that adding more toppings makes the gluten free crust more bearable. Another favorite holiday activity this year was going to [Longwood Gardens](#) to see the Christmas lights with my friend Jen. They have a cafe and a restaurant and I was able to find safe options. Even a holiday craft show at the [Kimberton School](#) where our friend Justin was exhibiting had gluten free items in the foods they offered.

For **Christmas** eve I went to my in-laws for dinner. I made the appetizers (veggies/dip and artichoke dip/tortilla chips) and brought a safe dessert to share, gluten free [black-bottoms](#) adapting the recipe using [Better Batter](#) and making them cupcake size. We had Chiles Rellenos (not fried) for dinner which is my favorite dish that my mother in-law makes! For Christmas day we went to my mom's in Maryland. She served turkey, ham, veggies, sweet potatoes, and more. I brought some of the peppermint chocolate chex mix to share for dessert. The next day we were supposed to go to Annapolis for lunch, but the weather was terrible so we went to a local Italian restaurant that I have been to many times with success, [Mamma Roma](#), in Odenton, MD. It is quite easy, there is a grocery store in the same shopping center where I buy the gluten free pasta and then the restaurant cooks it for me in a new pot of water and adds the sauce I want! Being a Maryland girl at heart, one thing that is hard to find is a gluten free crab cake so instead when we went to [G&M's](#) another night while in Maryland I ordered lump crab meat.

For a football inspired **holiday get together** later today with friends I will be bringing veggies/dip, [buffalo chicken dip](#), and a [7-layer dip](#) that I made so I



Pre-baking



Potatoes



Artichoke



Me, Rebecca, &amp; Melanie

will have safe options, serving with corn chips and tortilla chips. Angie, the host also emailed me to get input on other foods for my food allergy/intolerance which is MUCH appreciated!

What are your favorite holiday treats?

I wish you each a wonderful, happy, and healthy 2013!

**Safe eating,**

***Lori***

Lori Enriquez, MPH, RD, CHES, LDN  
[www.peanutfreerd.org](http://www.peanutfreerd.org)





Artichoke dip



Black bottoms



Buffalo Chicken Dip



Longwood Gardens