

FOOD NETWORK STAR GOES GF

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NUMBER 4/2014

\$8.95

08>



AUGUST 2014

A Food Network Star goes gluten free

MELISSA D'ARABIAN, HOST OF *TEN DOLLAR DINNERS*, ON HOW SHE'S LEARNED TO SWAP INGREDIENTS, TEST RECIPES & SAVE MONEY SINCE FINDING OUT HER DAUGHTER IS GLUTEN SENSITIVE.

By Amy Leger

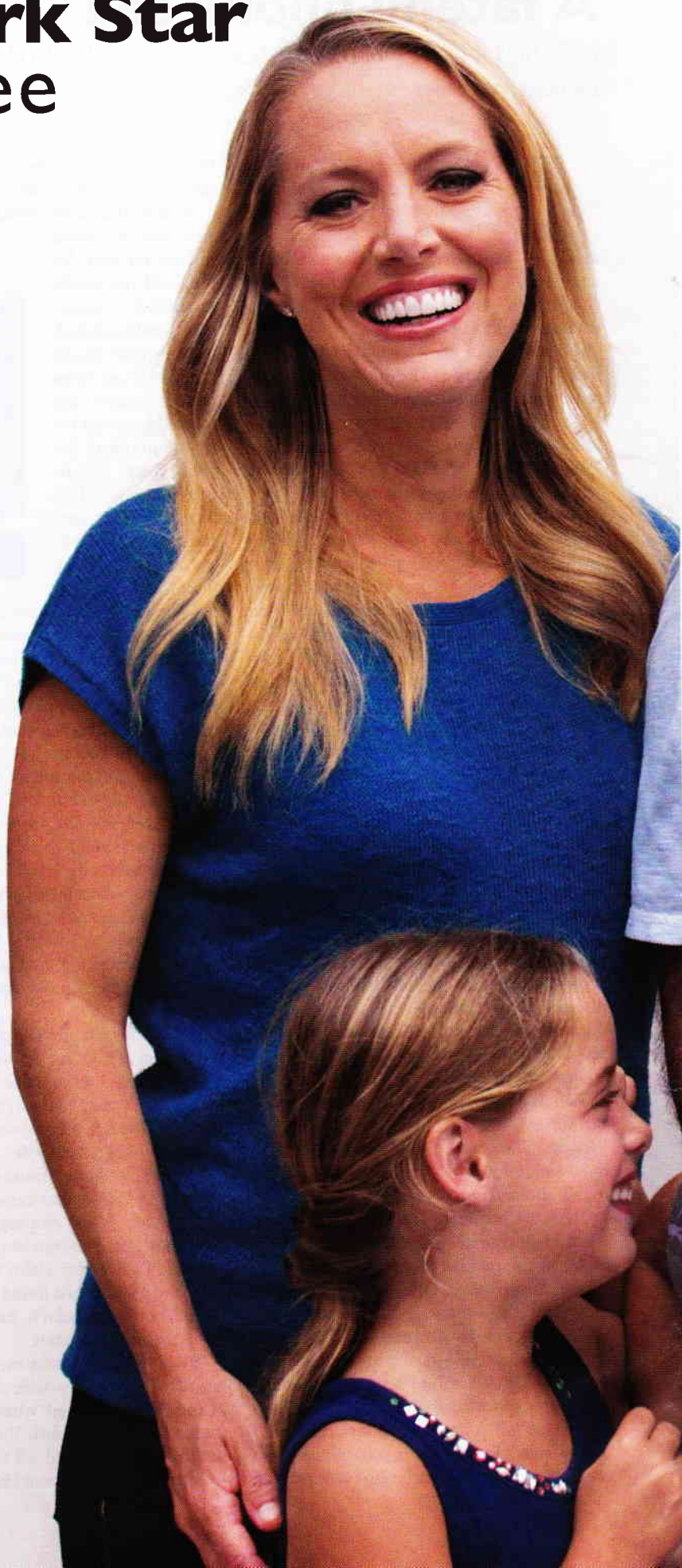
Melissa d'Arabian didn't have "Food Network Star" in her career plans after she had four daughters in three years and became a stay-at-home mom.

She worked hard at stretching her own family dollar and started teaching others to do so online. Eventually a video she posted about how to save \$120 a month by making your own yogurt at home became popular. It helped her land a spot on *The Next Food Network Star* television show, where she won her season in 2009. Her prize was her own series on the network, *Ten Dollar Dinners*. She continues as host, has written a cookbook and makes guest appearances on other Food Network shows.

In her private life, she recently added gluten-free cook to her list of talents. In late 2013, d'Arabian and her husband realized that their 9-year-old daughter, Valentine, is gluten sensitive. It's now a combined household with d'Arabian eating gluten free to support her daughter and other family members eating gluten.

She's written about navigating the gluten-free world on her Food Network blog, describing how she's had to learn how to swap ingredients, test and retest recipes and accept that there are some she can't re-create in "an edible version." But she noted she has mastered gluten-free crepes.

Gluten-Free Living recently talked with d'Arabian for her first interview on her new gluten-free lifestyle. She discussed her daughter's condition, her gluten-free mistakes, how you can make a "ten dollar gluten-free dinner" and how she embraced the gluten-free diet in the same way as she would any new cuisine.





MELISSA D'ARABIAN WITH (CLOCKWISE)
HUSBAND PHILIPPE, AND DAUGHTERS
MARGAUX, 7, CHARLOTTE, 8, VALENTINE,
9, AND OcéANE, 7.

AMY LEGER: How did you find out your daughter had gluten sensitivity?

MELISSA D'ARABIAN: Valentine had a lot of gastrointestinal distress. She was getting sent home from school after lunch because she was in too much pain to be in the classroom.

I remember the first couple of weeks of school in the fall of 2013 she came home one or two days a week. I thought, "She can't miss this much school!" At the same time, I felt for her because I knew that she wasn't faking it or being dramatic. She was really very uncomfortable and in a lot of pain.

We took her to doctors, we had her tested, of course, but the test came back negative for celiac disease.

AL: So how did you figure out it was gluten sensitivity?

MDA: I am a relatively smart person. I thought, "OK, I know what basic foods cause intolerance, and I will remove them. We'll have her go off dairy." She is lactose intolerant, so I knew she was someone who has sensitivities. So we removed all dairy and that didn't change it.

I thought, "We'll remove all eggs and all gluten." But there was a problem with my approach.

I did it for a period of three or four days to see if anything changed and nothing changed. It wasn't until I talked to other folks, and they told me to remove gluten for a few weeks ... that it could take a few weeks for the healing to begin in order to see a difference.

There was no change ... there was no change ... there was no change. And then almost magically at two weeks, suddenly Valentine said, "You know, I haven't had any trouble." We realized she was no longer having diarrhea every time she ate. Then at that point, we slowly added in the other food [eggs, lactose-free dairy and meat], and she was fine.*

AL: How is Valentine with the gluten-free diet?

MDA: She is so diligent. If she has any question, she does not eat it. She's not a kid who's trying to have a bite of cupcake, because a tiny bite won't do anything. She was so miserable before, and she is so much better now that she is her own best advocate.

Just the other day I made gluten-free pasta, and she said, "Mommy, I don't think this is gluten free." I said, "No, it is gluten free." So I pulled the package from the trash and showed it to her.

I said, "You are so smart because if you ever have doubts, you just want to see. Because you know what? Mommy can make a mistake, and it's always worth double checking." She's her own best advocate in this whole thing.

AL: How did you take the news of the new gluten-free diet?

MDA: My husband is somewhat lactose intolerant. I am somewhat lactose intolerant, though much less than my daughter and my husband. I don't want to say I didn't see gluten free as a big deal, but we're mindful about what we eat, and it was sort of, "OK, this will shift how we eat." There was a part of me that thought,

"Oh my gosh, this might be harder than I think." And it actually turned out to be so much easier than I thought.

AL: You're a Food Network star who people look up to. Now you have to figure out how to cook again, in a new way. Right?

MDA: I see it as another kind of cuisine. A few years ago in an attempt to understand the way other people eat, I decided to have my family go vegan for one month. There are too many people in this world who are vegan for me to be a serious home cook and not have some sense for the ingredients they are talking about, what their world is like and try to live in those parameters.

I don't think gluten free is too far off. There are too many people in the gluten-free world for me, as someone who works in food, not to understand what that means. So it was probably an overdue exercise anyway, regardless of my daughter's intolerance.

I also think being gluten free sort of forced us into some more variety that was, gluten issues aside, probably a positive thing. I love whole-wheat pasta, but suddenly I can't use that. Now I've got to bring in brown rice; bring in quinoa. So I think everybody has benefitted in some ways from getting more variety in our diets.

AL: How do you think your cooking background and what you do impacted how you managed this change to gluten free?

MDA: I am embracing it, I love it. I have a million ingredients in my garage, and I keep a notebook in my kitchen drawer. Anytime I use a gluten-free product, whether it's breadcrumbs or flour, I jot down the name of the product, how I use it, what the result was, what I used it

in. Then I also jot down the quick nutritional profile so I have an understanding of the protein versus the starch versus the fiber and how that all fits in.

I also jot down the main ingredients so that I know potato starch acts this way, tapioca starch acts this way. I also note how much I like it, what the flavor and texture is, how heat plays into that. There's a lot of chemistry going on in cooking.

AL: How has gluten free impacted your job at the Food Network?

MDA: I think if anything, it gives me another avenue to speak with people, and I think it gives me another topic to connect with people about. At the end of the day I am in the business of I'm a mom of four kids, and I share your journey with you.

AL: When you're on set, whether doing your own show or participating in another show, do you find yourself thinking "that could be made gluten free" or "they could be doing this to make it gluten free?"

MDA: The assumption behind that thought would be that it is preferable for it to be gluten free. I don't necessarily feel that way. I don't think everybody should be eating gluten free if they don't have issues or intolerance. That's not necessarily my message.

Do I ever see things and think, "Oh, maybe I could make that glu-



ten free for my daughter, for my family?" Sure. But is there any part of me that thinks "Oh, what a shame they missed the gluten-free mark by just a little bit, and they could be eating gluten free, and they don't even know it?" I don't feel that way.

AL: Between the Food Network and cooking gluten free at home, do you feel like you are living in two separate worlds and you have to switch gears between the two?

MDA: No, I don't feel that way. I do think people eat differently around the world. Some people eat more sugar, some people don't. People have different priorities in their diet. So I do not get this sense of I'm in this bubble world of gluten free and they're not. I feel like it's all seamless and fluid. People eat differently.

AL: What are some substitution tips for making a favorite family recipe gluten free?

MDA: The biggest strategy for me is sticking with foods that really didn't have gluten in them to begin with. There are easy swaps like dredging, breadcrumbs, dipping in flour and then sautéing. All of that is really easy because you can go straight to the starches or the gluten-free bread and blend it up in your food processor.

Where it gets trickier is when you're getting into the baking world. The tip I can give is that gluten-free flour is not all the same. Are you dealing with high-protein flour or low-protein flour? Then, is the recipe asking for high-protein or low-protein flour?

When you get into baking, it becomes a science project. It's far more complex than a lot of recipes lead you to believe. I've gotten some gluten-free cookbooks, and it just says, "gluten-free flour". This is not helpful. Some person who just found out they have celiac disease and now they're making this, and they're wondering why their muffins are gummy. It's easier for me to get the cake or brownie mixes because the portions have been figured out, and I don't have to worry about it.

AL: What are some mistakes you can make when it comes to gluten-free cooking?

MDA: Well, number one is not paying attention to the flour.

Second is to think that I can just swap out my gluten ingredients with the gluten-free version. I need to respect that gluten free probably has different properties.

Third is going out to dinner and not asking questions. Before I would just order gluten-free pizza and move on. Now I ask who's providing the crust

AL: What are some of your favorite gluten-free must-haves?

MDA: I am a huge fan of fruit and vegetables. I always have kale and spinach around. They can be tossed into anything.

Brown rice, quinoa and lentils are my go-to starches. To a lesser extent, I have more corn tortillas. We have a lot of taco nights.

AL: Put on your *Ten Dollar Dinner* cap for a minute. How would you apply the *Ten Dollar Dinner* mentality to a gluten-free meal? Can you do a ten dollar gluten-free dinner?

MDA: Of course. *Ten Dollar Dinners* is really a philosophy of mindful eating and mindful spending, and it's about eating in season to lower your grocery bill.

The produce aisle is the one place in the supermarket where the cheapest price indicates the best food. We're trained to think that more money equals something that's better. The produce aisle is the exact opposite. Low prices equal the best food because it is in season.

Now, can you make gluten-free muffins and pancakes every single day and think that you're going to save money in this new gluten-free world? No. Gluten-free flour is more expensive. If you stick to in-season produce it's almost impossible to break the bank.

***Editor's note:** Medical experts recommend that dietary changes to determine food intolerances be conducted under a dietitian's supervision. **GF**

Amy Leger, Gluten-Free Living's family editor, also frequently does Q&A interviews for the magazine. She last spoke with Gary Jones, the culinary dietary specialist at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida, and Disneyland in Anaheim, California.

VERSATILE AND EASY

This naturally gluten-free recipe by Melissa d'Arabian is versatile, protein-rich and easy to make. It can be enjoyed as a hearty side dish, a drive-by snack from the fridge, or even a main dish when used as the perfect canvas to top with grilled fish or chicken. Flavorful and fresh, it's nutrient dense, and quinoa is a great substitute for gluten-containing ingredients when you're craving carbs.

Lentil Quinoa Salad

Serves 4

Ingredients

- ½ cup quinoa
- 1¼ cups water, plus 2 cups
- ½ cup lentils
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 lime, zested
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 green onions, chopped
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro leaves

Directions

Put the quinoa in a sieve and rinse in cold water. In a large microwavable bowl with a cover, add the rinsed quinoa and 1¼ cups water. Cover and microwave on high for 9 minutes. Let sit for 2 minutes then stir. Quinoa should be tender enough to eat, but with a little "pop" upon biting. Set aside.

Put the lentils in a sieve and rinse in cold water. In a saucepan, simmer the lentils in 2 cups of water until tender but not mushy, about 30 minutes. Drain and cool.

In a small bowl, whisk the mustard and vinegar together and drizzle in the oil to make an emulsion. Add the garlic powder, lime zest, salt and pepper, to taste.

To assemble the salad: In a medium salad bowl, mix the quinoa, lentils, green onions and chopped cilantro. Top the salad with the dressing; toss to coat and serve.

Nutrition Analysis: 290 cal, 15 g fat, 0 mg chol, 35 mg sodium, 29 g carbs, 9 g fiber, 1 g sugar, 9 g protein.