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**NFCA hosts Gluten-Free Educational Session at National Restaurant Association Show 2009**  
*Seminar to increase education and awareness about celiac disease among food service industry professionals*

Ambler, PA (May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2009) National Foundation for Celiac Awareness (NFCA) staff and gluten-free food industry experts will deliver a highly anticipated educational session on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2009 at the National Restaurant Association (NRA) 2009 Hotel-Motel Show. Entitled "Gluten-Free on the Menu: Expanding Your Customer Base", the 10 am presentation will provide education and insight on the rapidly growing U.S. gluten-free market for thousands of food industry professionals and organizations attending the NRA Show 2009.

NFCA representatives and industry partners will utilize this opportunity to raise awareness and education about the special gluten-free dietary needs of those with celiac disease and gluten intolerance, and generate interest and participation in NFCA's Gluten-Free Resource Education Awareness Training (GREAT) Program.

"Gluten-Free on the Menu: Expanding Your Customer Base" will be one of 65 education sessions to be held at the NRA Show 2009, from May 16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> at McCormick Place in Chicago. The annual event attracts attendees and visitors from all 50 states and 100+ countries, and showcases more products, services, innovative ideas and other growth opportunities than any other industry event. For more information visit the Show web site, [www.restaurant.org/show](http://www.restaurant.org/show).

NFCA has partnered with Across the Board Resource Inc., a multi-unit restaurant chain account resource, for its "Gluten-Free on the Menu: Expanding Your Customer Base" presentation. Participating expert panelists include Nancy Baker, Gluten-Free Education Awareness Training (GREAT) program founder and NFCA Director of Education, Cynthia Harriman, director of food and nutrition strategies, The Whole Grains Council; Robert Hapanowicz, chief of operations, GF Naturals, Don Tymchuck, President of Med-Diet Inc., Sharon Fratilla, owner of Across the Board Resources Inc., and special guest Melanie Berkowicz, a Chicago area mother of two celiac children.

"Gluten-Free on the Menu: Expanding Your Customer Base", will report on the exponentially growing gluten-free market, and provide solutions and resources to assist food service professionals and organizations in accessing the population of gluten-free consumers. NFCA representatives and presenters will stress that this steadily growing market presence is not a fad but rather one of permanent loyal consumers, including the millions of Americans who suffer from celiac disease and gluten intolerance, as well as those with wheat and other food allergies.



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According to recent U.S. market reports, the gluten-free food product market is currently experiencing double-digit growth, and is expected to reach \$2.6 billion by 2012. The National Restaurant Association also named 'gluten-free' one of the top trends for 2009.

Created by the NFCA, the **Gluten- Free Resource Education Awareness Training (GREAT)** program is a multimedia, comprehensive educational tool that seeks to inform and educate the entire food service industry on celiac disease, the gluten-free diet, as well as gluten-free cooking and product protocols.

The GREAT Association, an extension of NFCA and the GREAT program, is a national nonprofit trade association of gluten-free businesses and other interested parties. GREAT works to enhance and improve the gluten-free business climate in the nation by promoting quality, tested gluten-free products to the general public, protecting the rights of gluten-free businesses, and assisting businesses to improve their sales and profits. The GREAT Association aims to standardize and equip the entire spectrum of the food industry including manufacturers, vendors, retailers, and both individual and multi-unit chain foodservice establishments.

Across the Board Resource, Inc lends its nineteen years experience in the culinary industry in helping NFCA to develop the "Gluten Free on the Menu: Expanding Your Customer Base" presentation. Across the Board Resource, Inc. is a chain account resource specializing in development, production, packaging, ingredient sourcing and menu roll out. Over the past few years, they have been particularly involved in gluten-free products and menus, assisting clients with assembling gluten-free manufacturers, developing requested products and sourcing safe ingredients, as well as cultivating additional gluten-free manufacturers across the country.

Celiac disease is an autoimmune digestive disease that damages the small intestine and interferes with absorption of nutrients from food. It is triggered by consumption of the protein called gluten, which is found in wheat, barley and rye. Left untreated, people with celiac disease can develop further complications such as other autoimmune diseases, osteoporosis, thyroid disease, and some cancers. The National Institute of Health estimates that 1 in 133 people in the United States have celiac disease, but an astounding 95% live undiagnosed. The only known treatment for celiac disease is a lifelong adherence to a gluten- free diet.

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NFCA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to raising awareness and funding for celiac disease that will advance research, education and screening amongst medical professionals, children and adults. Visit [www.celiaccentral.org](http://www.celiaccentral.org), or call 215-325-1306 ext. 103 for further information.

Founded in 1919, the National Restaurant Association is the leading business association for the restaurant industry, which is comprised of 945,000 restaurant and foodservice outlets and a work force of 13 million employees. Together with the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation, the Association works to lead America's restaurant industry into a new era of prosperity, prominence, and participation, enhancing the quality of life for all we serve. For more information, visit our Web site at [www.restaurant.org](http://www.restaurant.org).



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