

***The Celiac Project with Beckee Moreland, Director of GREAT Kitchens***  
July 2016

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This is the Celiac Project - two guys talking gluten-free. Just wanted to give a little disclaimer – we are not medical experts, doctors, dieticians, nurses, bone experts, surgeons – we’re only experts at being celiac patients. So enjoy the show and if you're going to do any changes to your diet or need real medical advice, please go to the medical professionals, that’s what they're there for.

**Mike:** You found the Celiac Project Podcast - two guys talking gluten-free. I am Mike.

**Cam:** And I am Cam.

**Mike:** Who do we have on the show today, Cam?

**Cam:** Beckee Moreland, Director of GREAT Kitchens.

**Mike:** They are a part of Beyond Celiac and Beckee is going to tell us everything that goes into going into a kitchen. And they have a process of accreditation where they help kitchens really understand what it means to be gluten-free. So let's get to the show.

**Cam:** All right, keep our food safe!

**Mike:** So welcome to the Celiac Project Podcast. We have a special guest today, Beckee Moreland, the Director of GREAT Kitchens. Hi Beckee. How are you today?

**Beckee:** I'm fabulous. How are you?

**Mike:** We're good. How are you Cam?

**Cam:** I'm doing good.

**Mike:** What's going on today, Cam?

**Cam:** Yeah, I just made my way -- mosey on over to your place like I always do to record today. It's a beautiful day outside and things are going well.

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- Mike:** Good, a nice day and you said Beckee you're in Lincoln, Nebraska; correct?
- Beckee:** I am and it's a beautiful day here as well. A nice sunny day and not too hot.
- Mike:** Good to have you here today and really it's interesting; when I put out that we were doing this topic on an upcoming podcast and I think some of the people who listen to the show and some of the people in the community don't even know that GREAT Kitchens exists or what you do. So can you just I guess start off - why don't you tell us a little bit about your background first.
- Beckee:** My personal background is that I was diagnosed with celiac in 1992. So that's a long time ago and I was 34 at the time. I just had a baby and I had pretty classic symptoms. However, I was very, very sick and was hospitalized. Thank God for my physician because I think had I not receive my diagnosis at that time I don't think I'd be here. He pretty much saved my life. It changed my life dramatically I felt normal for the first time which was a wonderful thing to happen and had a brand-new baby. And it was also a pretty interesting year because it was the year my husband and I – I was a schoolteacher at the time and had taken some time off. My husband and I closed the business, built and opened a restaurant and then we had our baby is so it was a big time for us.

And so here I was a newly diagnosed celiac and my husband was in the restaurant business and I'm trying to support him and help him with that and I struggled because I couldn't even eat in the restaurant and that was way back in 92. So we taught the cook how to prepare food for me and we kept thinking that this was a good idea to provide gluten-free options in restaurants, but at that time there really was no availability for product and so there weren't gluten-free hamburger buns that were edible or that you didn't have to purchase from Canada.

So it was a struggle and so eventually we started to really consider it and I created a training curriculum on my own for our staff as well as a menu and ingredients and it was through that experience that I decided when my son went off to college that I wanted to become a consultant and I wanted to teach other restaurants how to serve gluten-free safely. So that's how I got to know at the time NFCA which is now Beyond Celiac and I met the director of education through the Internet and she and I

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worked together on some projects. I became a consultant for the National Foundation for Celiac Awareness at the time and I did presentations for food industry. So I would speak at local and regional food service shows and I would do some training. So it was through that that I became really comfortable with the training. The training that (NFCA's) Nancy Baker at the time had developed and mine were very similar. So he went online and did an online training which was great which was call GREAT at the time; and GREAT is an acronym it stands for gluten-free resource education awareness training.

And so this particular online course was very, very simple. It was a concise, very simplistic introduction to what is gluten-free, what restaurants need to know. It covered some of the very simple things like... I know, Mike I listen to your recent podcast about your restaurant experience and that was why GREAT was developed for those situations where we don't want to have our community eat without - we want them to eat without fear. And that is a big problem for our community and that's why GREAT was developed. T was back in 2008 when it was developed and then Nancy actually became very ill and could not continue with her position she also had celiac disease and also has lupus. And so I became the director and we decided through surveys and responses and interviews from some of the operators that we were working with that the program needed to be updated and to be more comprehensive. We were getting questions about specific situations, catering situations. What do you do with schools? There is more to gluten-free than taking the bread off the plate, so what are some of the things? And even at that time cross contact wasn't even thought of. It was not something that people even were aware that it was an issue; not only as an operator which we still find can still be a problem, but even in our community people didn't realize that they had to use a separate toaster or they needed to have a separate colander -- things like that.

So we thought that because our role is to provide educational resources that this was a much-needed resource for our community as well as for the industry. So GREAT Kitchens was then revamped and it became a multimedia training course. It went from a small 50 slide presentation to a 2 1/2 hour management course. And so for the development of that course a team of people got together, myself, and we had a culinary chef, we had registered dietitians, we had reviews by our medical advisory board to actually create GREAT and it has become, I believe, best standards in the food-service world. It is very comprehensive and basically it breaks the whole process for serving gluten-free from the moment that

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call comes in to the restaurant and the host answers that phone all the way to the presentation of the plate. And so we wanted it to be from the beginning to the end of the process. So it's a great resource for communication, great resource for sourcing ingredients and we feel it's a full package.

**Mike:** That's very cool. Thank you for - you gave such a great overview of the program. Something that struck me that I think is really cool they say "necessity is the mother of invention" and I didn't know anything about your history and that's really amazing as you said some years ago you were diagnosed and happened to be really sick and have started this restaurant with your husband. Did you ever think back then what this would turn into as far as trying to find ways so you could be safe in your own restaurant's kitchen? Did you ever have a vision of what this could become?

**Beckee:** I don't think I did originally -- initially I don't think I did, but as I got involved in it I got really focused on the project and making the curriculum and working on that. I am an educator by trade and I taught school for many years and so I love that process of teaching and learning and I also love the food-service world and so it was a good match for me; a good mix. I also was a big supporter of our local support group and so I did a lot of education and helped in that way. But over time people would say, "you know, you really should do this for a living; you've got things to tell people that need to hear this," and so I think sometimes you just have to take a leap of faith and take a risk. Sometimes it becomes bigger than yourself. And I always thought you know I could keep myself safe, but wow, wouldn't it be great to create something that can help so many people and can touched so many lives? I might be able to help all the people in our little restaurant eat safely, but if the same tools and the same resources can help people across the country, why not?

**Cam:** That's great. What is the process of how -- do the restaurants come to you? Do you seek out restaurants? How do you usually find the restaurants that you work with to get them certified?

**Beckee:** We do it in a multitude of ways. Of course we have referrals; we have people in the community that will refer them to our GREAT program. Anybody that wants to find out about GREAT can go to [greatkitGFkitchens.org](http://greatkitGFkitchens.org). We have a separate website that talks all about our training program, so that's one way through referrals from our community. We also do go to regional service shows and I will do

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educational presentations speaking on specific topics and get them interested. A lot of times I think what happens is that with the lack of education and understanding of what goes into doing the training, people just think it's too overwhelming, "It's too much to do. I don't think I can do it right." There is a lot of, as you know, mental confusion about gluten-free diet and who it needs to serve, so those are the kinds of things that we do in the presentations.

I also like to work with other people in the industry. Recently we spoke at the National Restaurant Association show and I think that we were trying to get together during that time to talk to you but it didn't work out because of our schedules; but it was a great opportunity because we brought together representation from FARE – Food Allergy Research Education organization and from a local shop and CEO of Burgoffs Restaurant in Chicago and she has been an ambassador for us for many, many years. And so it was good to have a mix of education for both celiac disease, food allergies and an operator can say, "hey, you can do this; it's not difficult. You just need the tools."

**Mike:** And is the process -- do you always have to go to the kitchen? You said that there is online support, but do you always have to be at the specific kitchen that you're working with to do this process?

**Beckee:** Absolutely not; most of our training is done online with the actual operator taking the course. We do do on-site training and we are starting to do more regional training. We just finished a training in Denver and that's a really cool concept; it's an opportunity for people to come to one location. We do a morning training that's for kitchens which includes restaurants and hospitals, we do an afternoon session that's for college, universities and K-12 schools. So the focus is a little bit different because of the, you know, the students as opposed to diners, a school setting/cafeteria setting is a little bit different than a restaurant setting.

So we talk about the differences and some of the commonalities, but most of our training is online and the course is divided into segments, little modules. We have a module that's strictly about explaining who we are and why people eat gluten-free and it talks about the severity the seriousness of celiac disease and why it needs to be taken seriously. We talk about the big picture as the majority of the people that eat gluten-free. And I was really interested when you were talking in your podcast about the various people that are eating gluten-free and you talked about the Anthony Bordain comment that he made and I agree with you totally

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about that, but I've talked to other operators in the industry and some of them say, "hey, we're in the hospitality industry. It doesn't matter, it doesn't matter who eats gluten-free and why." We are in a situation where unfortunately we have to say, "I have celiac disease." I think that hopefully that will not be the case in the future or there might be a segmented menu that is celiac friendly, gluten-free; there might be different variations of that and I don't know where that's going to go, but we've obviously evolved. We've evolved over the years; it used to be there were no gluten-free menus and I think because of the demand and interest I never would've seen this fad diet happen if you would tell me that 24 years ago I would've said you're nuts, but whatever. If you're in the hospitality industry and someone orders gluten-free, there should be a standard for that, what does that mean? That standard shouldn't change, because if you can make it a gluten-free dish that is safe for people with celiac disease anybody else could eat. It doesn't matter. At that point if that standard is there maybe they don't want to share with you that they have celiac disease, maybe they're in a business lunch, maybe they're not comfortable explaining their medical history to someone at the table. So I think we have a long way to go, but I think we've come a long way.

**Mike:** Yeah and your process is so streamlined too. I really almost sound a silly asking this question, but are there any hiccups or roadblocks or hurdles in getting a restaurant through the certification process? Are there any times when you have to not convinced but like explain - you made such good points about how to get the big picture and how they have to understand the severity of it. Is there anything within there that you have to fight on sort of? Do you get what I'm saying?

**Beckee:** Yeah. It does get frustrating, but I have to say we - our program is divided into 2 segments so I should probably clarify. So the training is for everyone to take. Our goal is to have every food servant professional/person in the food service business take this course. We think it is very valuable. It's also includes some information about food allergies, so the education has to be first. There is no way that you can just determine whether you are able to implement that training in your restaurant or in your school if you haven't taken the training first. So we want everybody to take the training whether they decide to have a gluten-free menu or provide gluten-free options --get educated first. So that's the first step.

When they take the course there is an exam that goes with the course and if they pass it with an 80% or above they get a certificate. That's step 1. Now, if they decide, hey, I think my restaurant can do this, I think we have

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the capability, I think we can be consistent, we're *committed* to doing it. And I think the commitment is a huge step and committed for the right reasons. But your committed, you want to do it there is an application process. So they have to submit an application. They have to submit their menu or options that are to be reviewed. They have to commit to the standards that are outlined in the course and there is an audit or a checklist of implementation on that goes through everything from: How do you store the ingredients? Where do you have your prep station? Are you committed to training your staff over and over and making sure the new staff, new hires are trained? Are you committed to making sure that your distributor understands that you need to have gluten-free options for these particular dishes? Can they help you with that? So there's a lot to the application process, but there are 2 steps the training is for everyone, the commitment to accreditation is for those who really want to take that step.

**Mike:** I was going to jump in too because that kind of led me to the next thing and I think you sort of answered it but how long does a certification last and is there like a check-up process or is all just based on the commitment?

**Beckee:** There is a check-up process. We do a variety of things to check up, but the commitment lasts for 2 years; there is a two-year renewal period. And we're very fortunate that many of the restaurants and schools that committed the first round -- this program basically started in 2012, but really didn't kick in until about 2014. We started seeing more and more accreditations coming but we're seeing renewal which we think is really positive. So they're seeing value to having this process. And I think eventually it ends up saving; it saves time and it can generate income. A lot of the restaurants they can't guarantee this percentage, but many of them say that they are getting a 20% increase in business because of their commitment to gluten-free.

**Mike:** Wow. It's a great idea to have this. Cam and I have talked to so many people with the celiac, we get a lot of emails and everything and I think the main, I would say, if not the main issue certainly one of the main issues we both have; but the main issue other people with celiac have that I talk to is that they know if you know you buy a certain product and it says certified GF and you feel safe and the restaurant it's because of the nature of celiac and because it's invisible and we don't know if there is gluten. Finding those restaurants that really treat us right and so having a certification – it's not exactly like the certification when you get a bar, but

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it seems like you guys really are doing things the right way and really making sure that the restaurants as you say have the best practices. And that will make I think the world so much better for those of us who really have to eat this way. Because all we really want is to be safe and have that level where we don't have to go into a place ask thousands of questions and feel like we're putting them out when you have that seal on your menu that says we've been certified you know that the care about you and that they're not just giving lip service to having a gluten-free menu or having gluten-free options. So I'm very thankful that you started this; it's really cool.

**Beckee:** Thank you.

**Cam:** I wanted to jump in because I feel the same way when I hear the gluten-free certification. I feel like I am safe and I have less reason to feel paranoid and question things. But what are the chances that a certified kitchen can make a mistake and should a celiac - and this is like speaking to all celiacs - should a celiac feel absolutely safe in designated kitchen like that?

**Beckee:** Well, that's a really good question and we don't use the term "certified" for our program. This is an accreditation and I'll tell you why. When you talk about a certified product remember what that's like and what that environment is like that that's prepared in. It's a very controlled environment and it's like thinking, okay when you open that package that packet is either cryovaced or sealed, you know, it's perfectly sealed. There is a lot of care that goes into the process of packaging that product to make sure that it's certified. The reason we "accredited" is because in the restaurant world nothing is 100%. You walk out of your house and you're taking a risk. Anytime you eat outside of your home you're taking a risk, but I would much rather eat in a restaurant that a had been through the training, has sourced there ingredients, has made a commitment to keep standards and use separate equipment and understand the communication process of what needs to be done and can execute that consistently than one that says, "well, yeah, we think we can accommodate."

It's not perfect and we have had -- there have been hiccups of course we do try to track those and if we get calls we're on that phone immediately with the operator. We want to find out what happened and we want to know how to fix it. And I think that that is a really good message to the community. A lot of times people think "I'm not going to tell them or what

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happened what went wrong because either I don't want to limit my choices or I'm just going to tell people not to eat there or I'm going to say something bad on Facebook" or whatever but it's really, really important to let the restaurant know where there was a mistake or when there was a mistake because they can't fix it if they don't know. We have done that investigative work with restaurants and it's really interesting sometimes where we find those problems. We work with barbecue place and we got the call, a guy got sick, he was very upset, understandably so, and so we called the restaurant right away to find out what happened and he said, "you know I'll take care of it. I'll get back to you soon as we can. Let me check things out." What he found out was that there was a new cook in the kitchen that hadn't been through the training yet and he decided to put his own spin on the barbecue recipe. He decided to add beer to the barbecue sauce. That's a big problem, so a part of the training is make sure that your staff are following the recipes as they understand why it's important to follow the recipes.

**Mike:** That is the most key components

**Beckee:** Absolutely.

**Mike:** And it's nice that you have this accountability that someone knew to reach out to you and then you can communicate with the restaurant and the restaurant then goes to finding the answers because more than 9 times out of 10 when we have an experience where we get contamination at a restaurant, you know, you can call up and -- it's hard to have that moment to be able to trace back and it's nice that you're doing that; not just saying this has been through this process but actually following up when something happens that isn't the desired outcome.

**Beckee:** Well, you know, the businesses that we work with they don't want to make anybody sick; it's just like food safety. They don't want to serve somebody raw chicken and they don't want to make people sick and what I found is most likely it's not intentional it's some error that's happened. It's either part of communication process from the server to the kitchen, it might be the, like I said, there is a recipe that wasn't followed, it might be a substitution that happened from the distributor, sometimes if you order a particular item and they don't have it in stock they'll just sub-out another product. Well, if you are in communication with your distributor, you say hey we can't have that happen with these items because these are part of our gluten-free menu and if you do stop it we need to have it flagged, we need to check the ingredients. So a lot of it is just communication;

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communication and confirmation and I think that's the other part that we forget about is communicate, confirm, communicate, confirm and that communication and confirmation is where -- the confirmation is where you prevent mistakes from happening.

**Mike:** You're saying the program is nationalized; just United States, right?

**Beckee:** No, it's actually international. We have people that use it all over. Right now we're working with a resort in Costa Rica so that's kind of fun. They're going through our training. We do have Spanish materials and I'm excited to be working with them. They are very, very interested in our course. They are on around 2 with their staff; training their staff with our materials.

**Mike:** That's great and can you give us an idea of how many kitchens you've worked with and also to tell the listeners where can they find - is there a place to find like a list of those restaurants?

**Beckee:** Yes, we have -- now, we only promote the restaurants that are accredited with us and that's because we feel we have a good understanding of their ability and what they're doing. So they have received our accreditation approval. They're able to use our logo and we feel comfortable with that communication process that they're using as well as their protocols. So that list is found on our website [beyondceliac.org](http://beyondceliac.org). If you are interested in promoting the training, we do have flyers that can be downloaded from our [www.greatgfkitchens.org](http://www.greatgfkitchens.org) website and you can also communicate to me if you have someone that's interested or you want to just refer them directly to me at [bmoreland@beyondceliac.org](mailto:bmoreland@beyondceliac.org).

**Mike:** That's a great, and Cam was going to ask -- I think we've got like a listener question; we want to get one of those.

**Cam:** Yeah, the listeners said they were looking forward to this topic and they didn't know that restaurants needed to get certified, but now we're looking back they should have said accredited that we've learned in this podcast. Why don't they market this more?

**Beckee:** Why don't to the market this more?

**Cam:** Yeah, I think they mean...

**Mike:** I don't know if they mean why is the service market more but...

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- Cam:** Both ways think. I think it would be a good question both ways; why don't restaurants that have the accreditation market that they have the accreditation more and then also...
- Beckee:** Just to say, the restaurants that we work with do market it, it's on their website, it's on their menu. We also mention that course on our website. We like to promote them through our Facebook and our Instagram and we only have about 100 locations that are accredited. Some of those are college and universities, which I think is an excellent program. The schools program to me is a huge benefit because as you know with restaurants you can go with restaurant A, B or C and if A is not doing a good job you can go to B or hopefully you have at least some options. If you are in a school environment you eat their breakfast, lunch, dinner every day and if you get sick it's going to affect your academic and your athletics, it's going to affect your social life. So there's all kinds of problems with that. We're really working hard with institutions, because we feel that there really are so many more limited choices and you at some point maybe have no control of what you're eating.
- Mike:** We're really happy that you're working with institutions and we talked to a lot of college students who have been on both sides where they had no choices and now one of the colleges, I can't remember, but they have a whole dining hall now. So it's a great, we hope you really grow this program both with the restaurants and with institutions. Is there anything before we wrap up that we haven't hit on today that you would like to add?
- Cam:** I actually want to jump in too real quick. You had mentioned earlier I believe about other allergens. That was my only question. I just wanted to know with the process that's so good about gluten what about other allergens that a celiac may or may not have?
- Beckee:** Well the course helps you to identify the top 8 allergens as well as gluten, but the process that's used in the back of the house modules; all of the protocols and the separation of ingredients and preparation techniques that you would use can be used for any food allergy. So it could be used either way. We also work with certain restaurants that maybe have a particular product that they're interested in and they want to go to a free-from product rather than just a gluten-free product because it's going to reach more of their customers.

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A perfect example would be like a pizza crust. We have restaurants that we work with and they'd say, "hey I'd really like to have a gluten-free, dairy free pizza crust and I also want to know what do you think are the best choices for a dairy free cheese because we want to make sure that we have all of the options available to our customers." Because that market is really growing and people if they see that you offer gluten-free sometimes they may without asking questions, unfortunately, think that you get it and we know that in the real world you still have to be part of that conversation and that's a whole another podcast talking about what do we do to be part of that conversation as a guest, as a diner, as a student what do we need to do to make sure that we're not getting sick? What can we do to be part of that conversation?

**Mike:** Yeah, that's perfect.

**Cam:** Yeah and I think there is a bunch of other podcast in this. In fact, we're hoping to have someone from the Bergoff on very soon, maybe the next podcast and we can get the restaurants' point of view. So inclosing anything that you wanted to add? I'm sorry, my doorbell just rang.

**Mike:** Probably the mail.

**Beckee:** I bet it's that gluten-free pizza you ordered.

**Cam:** Yes, it's that gluten-free pizza we ordered. Anyway, is there anything before we wrap up that you wanted to add, Beckee?

**Beckee:** Well I just want to thank you for having me and really if you are interested in learning more about the GREAT Kitchens. Go to [www.greatGFkitchens.org](http://www.greatGFkitchens.org) and shoot me an email. I'm always happy to answer questions. Really love to have help and support to promote our program. We are a non-profit organization with a very limited marketing budget so anything you can do to help us promote it we would love it. It's to help us eat without fear and that's the whole point of this program.

**Mike:** We will be getting out the word and I'm sure our audience will too and thanks again Beckee for being a part of the show. Appreciate it.

**Beckee:** Absolute pleasure.

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**Mike and Cam:**

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