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Food Intolerance

by Janie Reynolds

Bit of a bombshell today. I'd had my eye on that up-market Gastropub in Sandbanks as the place to go for Sunday roast when friends come to stay. But it was embarrassing, in front of Jude who came all the way down from Harley Street and Sarah, my fashion designer friend.

We went to the bar and asked for the wine list. It was busy - always a good sign, you'd think. We tasted all the organic whites, but none were nice, so we ended up settling on a red. There wasn't enough room for Sarah to swing a cat at the table, so we had to move it forwards. But then it was rocking on the uneven floorboards, so we called to one of the waiters, "this table's really annoying, we're going to spill our drinks all over it," but he took forever, so both Jude and I deliberately spilled some of our wine to make it look genuine.

Anyway, both Jude and Sarah were starving but we couldn't get any crisps because they weren't gluten free. So we asked for bread, gluten free if they had it, which they brought, but it was disgusting so we had to send it back.

When we looked at the menu we couldn't believe it. There was no chicken roast! Jude looked like a bulldog chewing a wasp. So we explained to the waiter that we only eat white meat.

While he was gone, I said to both ladies, if they haven't got any, what about salmon or the nut roast? And they looked at me as if I was siding with the enemy, but in the end Sarah said she'd have to go for the nut roast, then, if it was gluten free, and Jude the salmon, if it was wild-caught and the lemon butter sauce wasn't dairy.

So when the waiter came, turned out the nut roast was dairy free, but not gluten free! And worse still, the salmon wasn't wild. So Sarah asked if the chef could do her a nut roast that was gluten free and dairy free. And Jude said she'd have to have meat then, as she was allergic to peanuts and didn't want farmed fish. So she asked if the pork was kosher - she's recently converted to Judaism - and asked the boy to check if the beef was suitable for Buddhists, as she's recently become interested in that too and knows that cows are sacred in India.

So we asked if the sides - roast potatoes, a parsnip puree, kale and Yorkshire pudding - were all dairy free and gluten free and whether we could have sweet potato instead of normal because of the histamine. But the waiter just wasn't up to it. He was sweating, and said he'd have to go back to the kitchen again. And he took ages! Eventually, a vile, older woman came up, apologised for the delay but then bore the news that the roast potatoes were normal, the Yorkshires were made of wheat flour, the cauliflower cheese had cheese in it and the puree had butter in it. She said they had got sweet potato fries, but when we got her to check in the kitchen, it turned out they were coated in wheat as we'd suspected.

Well, who knows what was in our lunch but we were absolutely starving by the time it came. Wasn't very big. And when the waiter asked if we wanted any sauces they didn't do gluten-free mustard and the horseradish was made of cream. But we ate it anyway. It was delicious to be honest.

We were all still ravenous at the end of the meal, which you wouldn't expect from a Michelin starred place. Jude was so hungry she finished both mine and Sarah's plates. I told her, mine isn't dairy free or gluten free and the potatoes are normal, but she said, "Oh, never mind, I'll have it anyway."

For dessert, I had the ice cream, but dairy-free - I'd picked up the idea from the others. Jude asked for the blackberry crumble but gluten free, with dairy-free custard and Sarah asked for the chocolate brownie but with dairy free cream if they had it.

Well, I don't know what they brought out but it wasn't at all what we'd ordered. Tiny portions. The staff were intolerable. In fact the whole place was intolerable. I won't be going back there. And shall write them a terrible review.