

Tech start up develops solution helping food allergy sufferers during lockdown.

Submitted by: LiberEat

Tuesday, 5 May 2020

LiberEat offers app making it easier for people with food allergies find food in wake of coronavirus stockpiling.

“You might have the choice to eat gluten or dairy, but not everyone does,” says coeliac sufferer, Kirsty.

Aberdeen-based start-up LiberEat says its platform could help ease challenges for people with food allergies.

As the Covid-19 lockdown continues with currently no clear plans of when things will get back to normal, for food allergy sufferers one of the biggest concerns even before the lockdown has been to find safe products for them and their family due to dietary restrictions and allergies. The rush to stock up on food has put an extra strain on those with food allergies who rely on particular products, where exposure to the wrong foods could literally mean life or death, sending the sufferer into anaphylactic shock.

“I was doing my weekly shopping at ASDA and the entire baking section was empty. This meant I had to re-plan my cooking for the entire week. At the moment I am having a mild allergy episode and such change in plans stress me out which worsens my allergies,” says Malavika who is highly allergic and has to rely on steroids.

Malavika and Kirsty are not the only cases, with the Food Standards Agency estimating there are 2 million people in the UK living with a diagnosed food allergy and 600,000 (1 in 10 people) with coeliac disease. Despite supermarkets warning against people panic-buying and stockpiling, shelves of the safe products allergy sufferers need are regularly empty.

This could be particularly challenging for people who are now doing shopping for their friends, family or vulnerable neighbours who may have allergies, as they may not as familiar with deciding which products are safe.

The growing economic strain has also worsened the situation. With many people facing furlough or losing their jobs, the household income has gone down. However, the alternatives and allergy friendly food are very expensive in comparison to their regular counterparts.

While the difficulty of finding allergy friendly alternatives and suitable options is a concern for many, Founder Barry Leaper explained that his free LiberEat app could help allergy sufferers, and those who shop for them, easily see which products are safe to eat.

He said, “Finding suitable products for your allergies is hard enough, but with the current situation it causes even more stress and anxiety.”

“With the additional fear of needing to go to hospital due to a reaction at this time, we see more

people with allergies restricting which products they buy. But if the supermarkets do not have these products available or in short supply then this causes additional worry. This is even more distressing if you have to self isolate and rely on home deliveries, or others to do your shopping for you and not fully understand the implications or severity of substituting similar products that might have an ingredient you are allergic to.”

“Our technology in the LiberEat app, is designed to make it easy to find food you can eat safely, by selecting the ingredients you or your family members need to avoid in your profile, our system allows you to search and it quickly filters products to show you what each person can and can’t eat. The app also allows you to scan barcodes so you can quickly check if the product is suitable, helping you to find safe alternatives you might not have known about.”

The LiberEat app was developed with nutrition experts from The Rowett Institute and Robert Gordon University. It is free for users and checks for 14 major allergens and also filters results for vegetarian and vegan options for over 100,000 food products.

Malavika says, “Knowing that I could go to a supermarket and after lockdown, restaurants, without worrying if I can get food that is safe for me to eat, would greatly reduce my anxiety and help improve my symptoms as a result.”

ENDS

Contact Details:

Nicole Blyth, Marketing Manager

nicole@libereat.com