

**Judy Goodzek, Judy G Foods Inc.
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When she was a little girl, Judy Goodzek wanted to be a doctor. When she was a teenager, she wanted to be an Olympic biathlete. Now she wants everyone to be able to share a pizza. As a girl, Judy always excelled at sports and showed particular promise in biathlon. She moved from her home in Hay River, NWT to Canmore where she skied and target-shot her way onto the national team. She could see an Olympic Games in her future. But Judy's body rebelled after she turned 19 and a serious illness pulled her off her skis and out of the sport altogether. She enrolled in a food science program at McGill – the campus stood beside an arboretum where Judy hoped to do some cross-country skiing when she felt up to it. She never did, instead her health worsened. She suffered weakness, profound fatigue, and morning paralysis. It took eight years for doctors to diagnose and treat her. A special diet helped alleviate her suffering, but by then she had already quit her studies. "I lost my twenties to illness," she says.

In 2005, with time on her hands and inborn entrepreneurial muscles waiting to be flexed, Judy began working as a kind of volunteer business consultant for Earth's Oven, a bakery in Calgary. One of her ideas was to produce a gluten-free pizza. She already had a basic recipe in mind, and for two months she and the baker developed it into something that could be prepared on a professional, retail scale.

Eventually, Judy decided she wanted the pizza business for herself. The baker had no qualms about this and agreed to produce the pizzas at Earth's Oven. She had a recipe and a production 'facility.' Then she came up with a name – "Judy G Gluten-Free" was born. Her pizzas first started appearing in the freezers at Calgary's Community Natural Foods in 2006. Now they are available from retailers throughout Alberta.

Judy's pizzas are more than just gluten-free; they are also a low-allergen product. Judy explains that one in four people have a food sensitivity, and 10 foods account for 90 per cent of all allergies. So, Judy produces pizza without these 10 ingredients. Judy knows the challenges of food sensitivities as well as anyone. She knows what it means to crave a food so badly that you are willing to put up with the stomach pains just to bite into something you know you shouldn't. "I think you shouldn't have to compromise," she says. "You should be able to indulge in what you really want to eat and not suffer because of that."

Judy understands, too, that pizza holds an honoured place in our culinary culture. Pizza, more than most foods, is a shared dish. It is associated with festivity and community. "If you go to a birthday party and Johnny can't eat the pizza then you are losing something of your society," Judy says. "Enjoying food together is essential to our celebrations, and to who we are. And pizza is *that* food."

Judy credits Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) for opening her eyes to the world of food processing. A few years back, she attended an ARD led mission to the Netherlands to survey their processing technology. Along with other Alberta food producers, Judy toured the high-tech factories that represent the cutting edge of automation. She remembers staring wide-eyed at a bread factory that turned out 2.2 million loaves a week with only three employees on the factory floor. As a tiny producer, Judy has no need for such technology, but the trip opened her eyes to what was possible. "It was like taking a 10 year-old to the Olympics," she says.

Hearing Judy make Olympic metaphors makes it easy to suggest her athletic career prepared her for business success. But while Judy concedes that sport taught her perseverance, goal-setting and determination, her most important lessons came from her illness. "Where you really learn and gain the most is through utter weakness," she says. "Through lying in the bed unable to feed yourself and not knowing if you are going to wake up again – Perseverance and determination mean nothing at that point. They aren't going to help you in any way. You come entirely to the end of who you are and you say 'What is it? There is something more.'"

For Judy G, the something more happened to be pizza.