

# What Does Glue Have to Do With It?

*by Linda Fiveson*

If you spent any time in elementary school making papier-mâché houses, tunnels, marionettes, and the like, you probably never thought about the flour and water composition that made it stick and harden into the sculptures that you were so very proud to paint and present at “show & tell.” But, think about the flour and water now... as in pretzels, bread, cereal, pasta, pizza, bagels, crackers... Add some sugar and eggs and voilà...you have cake!!! That’s something to think about, isn’t it?

Papier-mâché has been around since ancient times. It was used to make coffins and death masks in Egypt and armor and shields in the Middle and Far East. It was used to manufacture chairs and structural panels in Europe and perhaps most remarkably, it was used to make paper boats in the United States. Don’t let the word *paper* before boats deceive you; the boats were put on water and although few survived, the Maria Teresa is famous for making a trip from New York to Florida!!!

Did you ever imagine that flour and water could form an adhesive strong enough to bear human weight or withhold the elements? If that is true (and it’s been documented), what can it possibly be doing to us when we ingest it? In much the same way that papier-mâché glue adheres to paper and bonds it to other materials, the flour and water mixture in offending foods sticks to our insides when we eat it. It solidifies as it clings to our stomachs, forming the same strong, cement-like bond as in the papier-mâché projects. It’s called “glue of the gut.” It turns to glue in the intestines; it is without fiber, it slows down digestion creating a sluggish metabolism, and can often be the cause of migraines.

If you think about it, some of the hot cereals out there, such as oatmeal, can probably be used for papier-mâché too. As you cook it (or add hot water in instant versions), starch is released and the mixture becomes gooey and glue-like. It sticks to pots and dishes too making them difficult to clean... You might think a little differently about all the bread, pasta, and other products made with white flour that you eat now...

What if the flour is enriched, you might ask? The word *enriched* sounds healthy but it’s deceptive. White flour is stripped of many of its natural nutrients during processing. Enriched flour means some nutrients have been returned but they are ingredients that are synthetically produced and not the healthier, original ones. Most of the fiber, minerals, healthy fats, protein and antioxidants are gone. After the word *enriched* on a product, you might see a long list of ingredients that seem to be nutritionally sound. One example is thiamin mononitrate which is often listed with Vitamin B1 in parentheses following it. Seeing (Vitamin B1) makes you think it’s wholesome since it contains B vitamins but it’s misleading. How would you feel if you knew it was synthesized from petroleum and comes from coal tar in China? It doesn’t sound so healthy now, does it? Maybe not so yummy either? Refined foods lose many nutrients during processing and although enriched products have some of them added back they are still the equivalent of empty calories and they are not nutritionally sound. Refined and enriched foods are GLUE!

Flour is also chemically bleached. Eating “white” carbohydrates means you are eating residual bleach. Here are a few of their names: oxide of nitrogen, nitrogen, chlorine, nitrosyl and benzoyl peroxide mixed with various chemical salts. UGH!

I think I have made some good points about why flour is not good for any of us but in truth it actually makes some people very sick. As it turns to glue in our intestines it slows our metabolism and can easily cause digestive problems. Flour is particularly harmful to those with Celiac disease and other gluten intolerances. And... guess what? The term gluten comes from the Latin word for glue just like it sounds! The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary defined gluten as “a tough elastic protein substance in flour especially from wheat that holds together dough and makes it sticky.” Gluten is not soluble in water and it is the element that gives dough its elastic texture. We digest it rapidly, it turns to glucose (sticky syrup) and it’s absorbed by our bodies as a layer of insoluble glue. Doesn’t it make you feel stuffed and uncomfortable just hearing that? I am sure you have noticed an increase in supermarket products and restaurant selections proclaiming they don’t contain gluten. As a nutritionist, I have been promoting gluten-free eating for years and have no doubt that it’s the best choice for everyone! Don’t forget: Gluten is in essence GLUE!

Another detriment of white flour and processed foods are that they cause our bodies’ blood sugar to rise very quickly. This stimulates our insulin levels and raises our triglyceride levels, leading to obesity and diabetes. Insulin promotes the storage of fat, which encourages the body to gain weight.

When we think of flour and gluten, we most often think of foods like bread, pasta, cookies and snacks like pretzels and crackers. We forget that flour is also used as a thickener and it can be present in a variety of foods including gravies, soups, sauces, and puddings. It is also in beverages that are malt and barley based such as beer. I can’t stress the importance of reading the “ingredients” portion of the label enough. You should know what you are looking for and be able to understand what you are reading. Unfortunately, things are not always as clear as they might seem.

As you walk up and down the aisles in the supermarket, it is easy to become confused. There are so many categories of food and within each one, so many choices. That is why it is important to be informed and aware. As you shop, remember that foods with the least amount of ingredients are the healthiest ones and those with no labels, like fruits and vegetables, the best yet. Let this be what sticks in your mind along with the pointers I’ve given you about flour and gluten. It will help you stay away from the foods that stick to your gut! Papier-mâché will always be good for arts and crafts projects but it isn’t good for people. In answer to the question in this article’s title, “What Does Glue Have to Do With It?,” I would say, “Everything.” Glue has everything to do with it!

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