



THE ABLE DIABETIC

Able Guide No. 6

T1D and Food: Eating Without Restriction, Managing Without Apology

The real picture, from someone who has been doing this for over 30 years

Why this guide exists

One of the most persistent myths about Type 1 diabetes is that you cannot eat normally. People assume restriction. They scan your plate. They question your choices. They say - with the best of intentions - “should you be eating that?”.

The answer, in almost every case, is yes.

This guide is about what food and t1d actually looks like in practice - not the fearful version, and not the reckless version. The informed, intentional, thoroughly enjoyable version.

1. The myth of the restricted diet

Type 1 diabetics can eat anything. There are no forbidden foods. No permanent ban on cake, bread, pasta, chocolate, or anything else. The condition does not work that way.

What t1d requires is management, not elimination. If I decide to have dessert, I calculate the carbohydrate involved and adjust my insulin accordingly. It is not effortless - there is a calculation to make, and the timing matters - but it is absolutely possible. I have been doing it for over 30 years.

The confusion arises partly from confusing t1d with Type 2, where dietary changes play a more central management role. For t1d insulin is standard. Knowledge and control about food are important, but food is not the enemy.

2. What management actually looks like

Every meal involves a calculation. The carbohydrate content of what I am eating, my current blood glucose level, what I am planning to do afterwards, and how recently I last dosed all factor into how much insulin I take before I eat.

That calculation becomes second nature over time. It does not make eating joyless. It becomes as automatic as checking the time before leaving the house.

Some foods are more challenging than others. Carbs are critical. But also, high-fat meals slow carb absorption, and change the glucose rise. High glycaemic index foods spike faster. Alcohol behaves differently. These are things you learn through experience, and they affect your choices and management.

3. Health plus enjoyment

My food philosophy has always been health plus enjoyment. Not health instead of enjoyment, and not enjoyment at the expense of health. Both, together.

I gravitate towards food that has nutritional value as well as pleasure. Pulses, vegetables, fruit, good quality protein. I am careful about waste and practical about budget. When we eat as a family in the evenings, the food is real, varied, and cooked from scratch. And when there is cake, I eat the cake.

A little of what you like is good for you - for your soul if not always your blood glucose. Soul is health. The version of managing t1d which strips all pleasure from food is not a version I recognise, and it is not one I would recommend.

4. Food as evidence

Every time I post a recipe, share a meal, or write about food, I am making an argument as much as I am sharing content. The argument is this: a t1d diagnosis does not mean a smaller life. It does not mean eating separately, apologising for your choices, or refusing birthday cake while everyone else celebrates.

It means understanding your body, developing good instincts, and making informed decisions. That is true for everyone, with or without diabetes.

The goal is not perfect blood glucose at every moment. The goal is a full life, well managed, including your blood glucose - and food is a central part of that.

Based on Sarah's lived experience of over 30 years with t1d, not medical advice. Always talk to your healthcare team about the dietary approach that is right for you.

Want to go deeper?

LIFE FOOD is Sarah's cookbook - recipes developed over decades of cooking for a family while managing t1d. Health, enjoyment, and real life, on every page.

Visit www.theablediabetic.com or contact Sarah at sarah@theablediabetic.com

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