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SUSTAINING MEMORIES, NOURISHING THE FUTURE

By Barbara McBreen

Mixing, kneading and smelling the aroma of baking bread in the farm home where she grew up is a special memory for Krista McCarty.

It's how she remembers her mom, who died of cancer when McCarty was just 11 years old.

"We would spend Saturday mornings baking bread, just the two of us," McCarty says.

In part, those memories inspired McCarty, a senior, to pursue a major in food science. She thought about becoming a nurse, but discovered food science after taking a tour of General Mills when she was 13 years old.

She's continued her focus on grains into her college career. This spring McCarty and the Iowa State University Food Product Development Team entered a gluten-free item into a national product development competition to be held in June.

McCarty came up with the idea, which must be kept top secret until after the competition, after taking a gluten-free cooking class. She says people with Celiac disease, also known as gluten intolerance, don't have as many choices in the marketplace so products like this could have a competitive advantage.


"Our challenge is finding the right formula of flours and leavening agents to replicate the properties of gluten," McCarty says.

Last fall, she and another product development team took a probiotic gum product to the American Association of Cereal Chemists competition. The team took fourth place in the final round and gained the interest of several companies. The gum was developed with a corn zein, a protein found in maize, which is environmentally friendly and promotes oral health.

"I love going to the grocery store to find the latest products," says McCarty. "I can't resist buying those products because I want to know what's in them."

She monitors the latest twitters on new food products, intellectual property, recalls and industry news. To satisfy her insatiable appetite to understand food product development, she's planning to attend graduate school.

Next year McCarty will serve as co-president of the Iowa State University Colleges Against Cancer Organization. This year she led the advocacy and education committee for the Relay For Life in March. McCarty worked on displays for the event and one display included a paragraph from committee members about why they participate. McCarty posted this:

"I Relay for my mom. She passed away from her three and a half year battle with cancer when I was 11. I Relay for all children, so they may never experience the loss of a parent to cancer. I Relay for all families who must go through the fight of having a family member with cancer. I support the fight against cancer because I do not want anyone to go through the struggle of being told, 'You have cancer.' I Relay to encourage everyone to have hope because one day we will find a cure!" 

Krista McCarty learned to love baking at an early age, making bread each Saturday with her mom. McCarty honors her mother's memory through her service in the ISU Colleges Against Cancer organization while she pursues a major in food science.



Photo: Bob Elbert