

Gluten-Free Cuisine

by Nancy Berkoff, RD, EdD, CCE

Why eat gluten-free?

Gluten-free foods are developed to meet the needs of people with celiac disease or gluten intolerance. These foods do not contain gluten, the protein in wheat, rye, and barley. In the United States, an estimated 3 million people have celiac disease. When someone with celiac disease eats a food that contains gluten, their immune system damages their small intestine. Symptoms of celiac disease include bloating, stomach cramps, diarrhea, constipation, anemia, weight loss, and fatigue. Blood tests and an intestinal biopsy are used to diagnose celiac disease. A similar condition is called gluten intolerance. In gluten intolerance, symptoms such as stomach pain or diarrhea occur when foods that contain gluten are eaten. When gluten is removed from the diet of people with gluten intolerance, their symptoms improve. Blood tests would not show that they have celiac disease and they don't seem to have the intestinal damage that occurs with celiac disease.

If you don't have celiac disease or gluten intolerance, gluten-free foods do not offer any health benefits for you. These foods are often lower in fiber because they are not commonly based on whole grains. They may contain added sugars and fats to make them taste better. They may be lower in some vitamins and minerals that are found in whole or enriched grains. In addition, gluten-free foods are often more expensive.

Cooking Gluten-Free

For gluten-free baking, you can use flour made from acceptable ground grains, such as corn or rice. You may be able to find flour made from potatoes, sweet potatoes, tapioca, almonds, and lentils. Xanthan and guar gums are specialty ingredients used as thickeners. They can be used for gluten-free baking.

Many recipes can be made gluten-free. These are some helpful guidelines:

- Focus only on the items in the recipe that need to be adapted. In other words, if you have a vegetable, bean, and pasta soup recipe, you only need to focus on an acceptable exchange for the pasta, not the non-wheat products.
- Choose a recipe with very little flour; sometimes, the flour can be omitted. For example, a vegetable stew may call for a small amount of flour to thicken. Prepared mashed potatoes may do the trick.
- Compare proportions. Given the same amount of liquid, it takes less cornstarch to thicken than wheat flour. Corn, nut, and lentil flours should take about the same proportion of wheat flour to liquid.
- For breading vegetables or tofu, try cornmeal, potato flakes, crushed potato chips, gluten-free bread crumbs, or almost any mixture of rice, bean, or sorghum gluten-free flours.
- For gravies and sauces, try rice flour or cornstarch. Read the product instructions for proportions of liquid or thickener and the cooking instructions. Remember that starches break down and thin under high heat or during long cooking or holding times.
- To thicken sauces, try potato flakes or potato or rice flour.
- For puddings and pie fillings, try cornstarch, potato starch, tapioca, or arrowroot.

The contents of this website and our other publications, including *The Vegetarian Journal*, are not intended to provide personal medical advice. Medical advice should be obtained from a qualified health professional.

For more information, visit www.vrg.org

Adapted from: www.vrg.org/journal/vj2006issue4/2006_issue4_gluten.php (gluten-free recipes here)



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Foods That Likely Contain Gluten

- All foods that include wheat in the name, including wheat starch, wheat germ, wheat bran, whole wheat, and cracked wheat
- Cooked or dried cereals made from wheat, rye, oats, and/or barley
- Bread or bread products (crumbs, croutons, breadsticks) made from wheat, rye, oats, and/or barley
- Cooked or dry pasta made with wheat, rye, oats, and/or barley, including macaroni and couscous
- Any matzo product
- Cookies and crackers made with wheat, rye, oats, and/or barley
- Other grains, including spelt, kamut, triticale, semolina (durum wheat), farina, and bulgur
- Tempeh, which may be combined with wheat
- Vegan meat alternatives, which may have wheat or flour added
- Convenience items, such as soups or soup mixes, cake mixes, pudding mixes, snack foods, and frozen entrées that may have wheat, rye, oats, barley, and/or other grains as ingredients
- Bouillon, commercial vinegars, salad dressings, some soy sauces, and condiments, such as ketchup and vegan mayonnaise
- Blended soy beverages, which may have added wheat products
- Commercial chocolate beverage mixes and other drink mixes
- Malt powder
- Beer and ale, cereal beverages (such as Postum, rice milk, and oat milk), and root beer

Foods That Are Likely Gluten-Free

- Arrowroot
- Baking soda
- Fresh fruit and fruit juices
- Fresh and frozen vegetables and vegetable juices
- Beans and legumes
- Amaranth
- Some tofu and soymilk (Read the label, especially if flavored.)
- Some rice and almond milks (Read the label.)
- Nuts and seeds and flours made from them, such as almond flour
- Corn products, such as cornstarch, corn flour, cornmeal, corn grits, corn bran, and hominy
- Rice, including white, brown, basmati, jasmine, and Arborio varieties, and rice products, such as rice bran, polished rice, enriched rice, and rice flour. Wild rice is gluten-free, but it is difficult to find a commercial variety that does not contain some form of gluten in the ingredients list.
- Millet, quinoa, flax, sorghum, and soy items and flours made from these ingredients
- Buckwheat and kasha (Read the label.)
- Carob
- Tapioca
- Tea and coffee