



# GLUTEN-FREE

*“Do you have any gluten-free menu options?”*

As a restaurateur, you're no stranger to this question. Today, your answer is more important than ever as the popularity of gluten-free diets is on the rise.

In 2011 the National Restaurant Association surveyed more than 1,500 professional chefs, asking them to identify the top food trends. Gluten-free foods ranked number eight. According to the marketing firm NPD Group's Dieting Monitor, about a quarter of U.S. adults are trying to reduce or eliminate gluten in their diets.

How is this possible when less than 1 percent of the population has celiac disease, the condition that causes an immune reaction when gluten is consumed, and only about 6 percent is gluten sensitive according to the Center for Celiac Research? Why are gluten-free grains making such waves?

In general, thanks partially to the spotlight on American obesity, people are becoming more interested in what they're eating and, therefore, alternative diets are on the rise. Gluten-free diets often get lumped into this alternative category along with vegan and raw food diets, which are also very popular right now.

Gluten-free living is also garnering significant media attention, thanks to celebrity advocates. Actress Gwyneth Paltrow and style icon Victoria Beckham regularly talk up their gluten-free diets online and in interviews, and first daughter Chelsea Clinton made a media splash with her gluten-free wedding cake.

As more and more people go gluten-free, many who try it report increases in energy, weight loss, and an overall improvement in mood. Although there is little medical evidence to suggest that these outcomes are the result of gluten avoidance, an indirect connection is apparent. “People who eliminate gluten-rich foods may eat more produce and, therefore, have a healthier diet overall,” said Dee Sandquist, a spokeswoman for the American Dietetic Association.

But whatever the reason, gluten-free is all the rage right now, so you've got to find ways to connect with those customers who want it. Gluten-free customers are a unique opportunity for positive word-of-mouth advertising. Keep reading for tips on how to incorporate gluten-free cuisine into your menu profitably – and deliciously.





# YOUR GUIDE TO GLUTEN-FREE

Gluten is a kind of protein that tends to exist in wheat, barley, and rye, among other carbohydrates. It is responsible for the elasticity and gas-retention in dough, so cooking without it can be tricky.

## Gluten Substitutes

To replace the gluten and achieve a spongy, desirable texture in breads and other baked goods, use a thickener such as xanthan gum, guar gum, or pre-gel starch, which will keep your goodies from being too crumbly. For every cup of gluten-free flour mix that you use, add at least 1 teaspoon of gluten substitute.

## Some Alternative Flours and Flour Mixes

Your first venture into the world of gluten-free baking can be tricky. Below are the two most highly rated gluten-free flour mixes featured on celiac.com, a great resource for those who suffer from celiac disease, and must therefore constantly seek gluten-free alternatives.

### Rice & Bean Flour Mix

- 1 cup brown rice or white rice flour
- 2/3 cup garbanzo bean/chickpea flour
- 1/3 cup tapioca starch/flour

### Bean & Cornstarch (or Arrowroot) Mix

- 1 part bean flour
- 1 part cornstarch or arrowroot powder
- 1 part tapioca flour

But you're certainly not limited to those simple mixes. There are enough flours and meals to keep you experimenting for years. *Below are just a few:*

- Potato Starch Flour
- Tapioca Flour
- Soy Flour
- Sorghum Flour
- Cornstarch
- Corn Flour
- Corn Meal
- Millet Flour
- Chia Flour
- Buckwheat Flour
- Amaranth Flour
- Hemp Flour
- Chickpea / Garbanzo Bean Flour
- Quinoa Flour
- White Rice Flour
- Brown Rice Flour
- Kamut and Smelt Flours
- Teff Flour
- Coconut Flour
- Almond Meal
- Hazelnut Meal

## Gluten-FREE Menu Options

### Appetizers

**Guacamole with Corn Chips** – Make sure to check the corn chips to ensure that nothing in them contains gluten, but in general tortilla chips are free of gluten.

### Soups

**Pureed Winter Squash Soup** – Soups in general are a good option, though some recipes might call for flour as a thickening agent. Squash soup is a good bet, because once the squash is cooked, you can simply puree the soup for a thick, hearty midwinter dish.

**Chicken Soup with Rice Noodles** – There are some great rice noodles available today. Alternatively, you could try dumplings made with a gluten-free flour mix. Always double-check that there is no gluten in the stock as well.

### Main Dishes

**Pork Tacos** – Substitute any meat or grilled veggies, and just make sure to use corn tortillas. (Check to make sure they contain only corn and no wheat or other gluten-filled flour.)

**Rice Pasta with Red Sauce** – Rice pasta is a surprisingly good substitute for regular wheat or semolina pasta. Red sauce is a good bet because unlike a white sauce, it generally doesn't contain any flour.

### Desserts

**Flourless Chocolate Cake** – Don't knock it until you've tried it. These cakes or tortes are some of the best treats around. While it's also possible to make a gluten-free cake by substituting gluten-free flours, this cake requires no substitutions.

**Crème Brûlée or Flan** – These delicious desserts are typically made with copious amounts of eggs and milk products, but no flour, making them a great treat for those going gluten free.

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## ADDITIONAL TIPS

- Many people with Celiac Disease or gluten sensitivity are also lactose intolerant. To accommodate them, be sure to provide options that are both gluten and dairy free.
- Offer something other than plain vegetable, meat or fruit dishes. Those who truly need to eat gluten-free will appreciate the variety. Because these veggie, meat or fruit dishes are the easiest way to do gluten-free, they are also the most common. Venture into some alternative flour mixes and thrill them with some grains.
- Learn as much as you can. When it comes to accommodating alternative diets, knowledge is power. Some great gluten-free resources are:
  - *The Gluten-Free Gourmet: Living Well without Wheat*  
by Bette Hagman
  - *Wheat-Free, Worry-Free: The Art of Happy, Healthy Gluten-Free Living*  
by Danna Korn
  - *Gluten-Free Diet: A Comprehensive Resource Guide*  
by Shelley Case

*This bread flour mix got rave reviews from gluten-free eaters on celiac.com.*

### Gluten-Free Bread Flour Mix

(makes 9 cups = 3 loaves)

2 cups garfava or garbanzo-bean flour  
1 cup sorghum flour  
2 ¼ cups tapioca flour  
2 ¼ cups arrowroot flour (starch)  
1 cup rice flour

1 tablespoon potato starch  
2 tablespoons potato flour  
2 tablespoons xanthan gum  
2 packages gelatin (unflavored)  
¼ cup sugar  
1 ½ teaspoon salt

