

Gluten-free Guide

The essentials to kickstarting your new diet

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So you're curious about the gluten-free diet. You've seen the GF logo on packages of processed foods in the market. Perhaps you've seen gluten-free listed on menus at your favorite restaurant. Or you've read about a celebrity making the change while touting numerous health and wellness benefits. Perhaps like me, you were instructed by a doctor to be on a strict gluten-free diet.

I've learned a few things after 5 years of being 100% gluten-free. I've written this guide based on my own experience and struggles to help kickstart your transition. I'm not a medical professional (just a passionate GF foodie) so please talk to your doctor before embarking on a huge life-style change.

What's your reasoning for going gluten-free? If it's to lose weight, I should tell you right now that you will need to shift your priorities. The purpose of eliminating gluten from your diet is about getting you on track to feel your best. After going gluten-free many people have told me the change has given them an immense amount of

energy and mental clarity. If you have an auto-immune disorder like Celiac, which requires a very strict gluten-free diet, I can tell you from my own experience that going gluten-free has completely changed my life for the better.

What is Gluten? It's a name for proteins found in wheat, rye, and barley (and many other grains). Gluten helps foods maintain their shape, acting as a glue that holds food together. 1 It's important to note here that gluten can be found in many types of foods that might not be expected. -> Here's a growing and evolving list of non GF items that must be avoided.

So what can I eat? You can find many lists on the internet describing what you can and cannot eat while on a gluten-free diet. You may find these lists to be overwhelming at first. Especially because some lists contradict one another. If you stick to the basics: fruits, vegetables, meats, seafood, dairy, beans, nuts and legumes (which are naturally gluten free) then you can gradually move into preparing more elaborate meals.

Grains allowed: Rice, Corn (Maize), Soy, Potato, Tapioca, Beans, Garfava, Sorghum, Quinoa, Millet, Buckwheat, Arrowroot, Amaranth, Teff, Montina, Flax and Nut Flours. Grains not allowed in any form: Wheat (Einkorn, Durum, Faro, Graham, Kamut, Semolina, Spelt), Rye, Barley and Triticale.

Foods/products that may contain gluten: Beers, Ales, Lager, Breeding & Coating Mixes, Brown Rice Syrup, Communion Wafers, Croutons, Dressings, Drugs & Over-the-Counter Medications, Energy Bars, Flour & Cereal Products, Herbal Supplements, Imitation Bacon, Imitation Seafood, Marinades, Nutritional Supplements, Pastas, Processed Luncheon Meats, Sauces & Gravies, Self-basting Poultry, Soy Sauce or Soy Sauce Solids, Soup Bases, Stuffings, Dressings, Thickeners (Roux), Vitamins & Mineral Supplements

For a detailed list, head over to [celiac.org \(https://celiac.org/live-gluten-free/glutenfreediet/sources-of-gluten/\)](https://celiac.org/live-gluten-free/glutenfreediet/sources-of-gluten/).

A note about dining out: Dining out can be very tedious so I suggest preparing meals yourself for the first 2 weeks. That way you can be sure there will be no contamination in your diet and you can really start to feel the positive effects of the change. After the 2 weeks, do some research to find a spot that will accommodate your dietary restriction. More on that below.

Here we go...

1. Talk to your friends and family about your change. “Dear , I’m really excited to let you know that from now on I will be on a gluten-free diet for this reason . When we eat together you may notice that I will not consume certain items like breads, pastas, or sauces. Thanks for your support and understanding” You may live with gluten lovers, so kindly let them know they

are not required to make the same diet changes but that you ask for support and understanding. Be clear about your intentions. It's a good idea to find separate cupboards and areas in the fridge for their food to avoid cross-contamination. This goes for cooking surfaces and pans too.

2. It's time to clean out your kitchen. You will need to become a label inspector. Every single package of food and supplements (like multi-vitamins) will need to be closely examined, if it has gluten, you **MUST** throw it out. Yes, this is difficult because we spend time and resources building up a pantry but you are making a life-style change here and you need to commit. If you live with someone that cannot give up gluten (understandably so) make a space on a separate shelf and go-ahead label it—"My (insert name here) Gluten-free shelf"!
3. For the first 2 weeks, which are the most difficult when making a major change like this, decide to prepare your own food. This may seem like a lot of work but I promise it will become easier. —> We've made it super easy with our meal planning guide which includes a weekly shopping list and some simple recipes to kick-start your change. Plan ahead for brown-bag work lunches.
4. As you make this transition, you may find that hunger creeps up more quickly in between meal time. It's important to have balanced, healthy, whole meals to avoid this but, there are a lot of great snack ideas that we've compiled into our —> gluten free snacking guide.

5. Keep a food journal and record how you feel over the 2 weeks. Are you seeing any changes in your energy level, your skin, your digestion? We've created a template to help get you started with this. As you expand your diet into more adventurous recipes, add ingredients one at a time and closely monitor how you react to it.
6. When you're invited over to a friends for dinner, politely let them know about your gluten-free diet. Tell the host YOU will bring along a pot-luck style GF dish to share. This way you know exactly what goes into your dish. -> Here's a list of great potluck style dishes to share.

After the 2 weeks of prepping your own food, you're likely itching to go out. Where to go? The best way to find gluten-free restaurants is to first search on Yelp (<http://www.yelp.com/>) or Find Me Gluten Free (<http://www.findmeglutenfree.com/>). Even if a restaurant doesn't have "gluten-free" in the description, I'll do a search on the restaurant page for "gluten" to see what people have to say or if any dishes pop up. It takes some effort but it's worth while. When I find a good spot, I'll add it to my growing list-check out the GF food map for Los Angeles. Before going out, give the restaurant a call during non-busy hours and ask to speak to the manager. Tell them that you're super excited to dine with them but you'd like to know what options you have. They may have to talk with the chef after you briefly describe your food restriction.

Make a dining card. I have a pack of dining cards in pretty much every language. These are great (but have also gotten me kicked out of my favorite thai restaurant). -> I've made a simple card that you can print out and laminate. Keep this in your wallet for dining.

I wish you the best of luck with this transition. It can be tough at times, but stick with it and I think you'll find numerous wonderful benefits. Know that we will continually bring you delicious gluten free recipes, restaurants and ideas to live a healthy full life.

xoxo Laurel

As always, talk to your doctor about making changes to your diet/lifestyle. I've compiled this list from my own personal experiences and what works perfectly for me might be another story for you. That said, I'm open to chat-head over to my contact page.

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