

Dining Out with Celiac Disease

Helpful tips from the Celiac Disease Program
at Children's National

Dining out when you have celiac disease can be both challenging and risky. Fortunately, the trend for restaurants to cater to gluten-free and other special diets is strengthening. Not only is the number of gluten-free eateries expanding, so are the options within the menus. Restaurants are serving a broader selection, often including staples like gluten-free breads, pasta, and pizza, and they're showing a higher level of understanding of special dietary needs. **Below are some steps you can take to ensure that your dining experience is safe and gluten-free:**

- Be familiar with and have a full understanding of the gluten-free diet.
- Call ahead to ask questions and let them know when you are coming.
- Check out the menu on the restaurant's website ahead of time for nutritional information and to search for possible food selections.
- Don't go on days or evenings that may be busy, if possible. Mistakes are more likely to be made during peak hours, on holidays, or weekends.
- Pick a few items on the menu and then ask questions (see suggested questions below).
- Be assertive about your needs. Use a dining card to help the staff understand your special diet if necessary. These can be obtained in multiple languages at www.celiactravel.com.
- Caution the staff regarding cross contamination.
- Beware of sauces, gravies, and soups. They may contain gluten, so ask for an ingredients list or avoid them altogether.
- Choose grilled rather than fried food, and ask about marinades as they may contain gluten.
- Be prepared to leave the restaurant if your needs are not taken seriously by the staff.
- Thank your server, chef, and manager, and to be sure to leave a generous tip for good service.
- Be a repeat customer. Restaurants work hard to please regular guests.

Questions to ask at a restaurant:

- Are there croutons on the salad?
- Do you make the salad dressing from scratch? What is in it?
- Do you make the soup from scratch, or does it come from a can? May I see the label?
- Has the food been marinated in any sauce?
- Do you make the sauce yourself, or is it canned?
- Has the food been dusted with flour before being sautéed or fried?
- Is the oil used for the French fries also used to make the other breaded food products?
- Are artificial bacon bits or other meat substitutes used on potato skins and salads?
- Are your mashed potatoes from a mix or from real potatoes?
- Do you use imitation crabmeat or seafood?
- Will the ice cream come with a cookie in it?

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Menu terms that may mean wheat is present:

- **Au Gratin**- French term referring to a browned topping of bread crumbs and/or grated cheese
- **Bechamel**- white sauce made by thickening milk with a roux
- **Beurre Manie**- butter and flour mixture used to thicken sauces
- **Cordon bleu**- dish including chicken or veal and ham and cheese that is breaded and sautéed
- **Encrusted**- may use flour or bread crumbs to bind ingredients to food item
- **Dust lightly**- sprinkled with dry ingredient such as flour
- **Fricassee**- a stew of meat or poultry in gravy, usually thicken with flour
- **Fritter**- food dipped into or combined with batter and fried
- **Gnocchi**- dumplings made from a paste of flour or potatoes and egg (“pillow” shaped)
- **Pan Gravy**- sauce made from meat juices, often thickened with flour
- **Marinade**- may contain soy sauce
- **Meuniere**- dusted with flour and sautéed in butter
- **Roux**- paste of butter and flour that is used to thicken sauces and soups
- **Scallopini**- thin sliced meat cooked in small amount of fat until tender or coated with flour and fried
- **Soy sauce**- a sauce made from fermented soybeans and sometimes roasted wheat or barley
- **Teriyaki sauce**- contains soy sauce
- **Tempura**- shrimp, seafood, and vegetables battered and fried in a flour-based batter
- **Veloute sauce**- thickened with flour (roux) often used as a base for soups, stews, and fricassee

Remember, a gluten-free meal at a restaurant can be as simple and delicious as a salad without croutons, a juicy steak, hot baked potato, and a side of broccoli. There’s no need to avoid dessert — simply ask for a scoop of ice cream or sorbet!

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