

Restaurant Dining Tips



Celiac Disease is becoming more well known as the disease gets exposure from the press and food labeling laws. Mainstream companies want to spread the word that they are Celiac aware. Restaurants are also becoming more knowledgeable of special dietary needs including Celiac Disease. Some are trying very hard to reach out to individuals with Celiac Disease by providing ingredients and in many cases, special menus. Eating in a restaurant can be a challenge at times, especially if you are newly diagnosed or are trying a restaurant for the first time. It is imperative to ask the right people the right questions. Here are some tips and recommendations:

“Gluten free dining is like learning a new sport; practice, practice, practice — it gets easier every time.”

—New England Celiac Organization member

Gluten-Free Safety Tips	Explanation
<p>Call ahead during an off-peak time and ask to speak to a chef/manager.</p>	<p>Calling ahead between meals gives you the opportunity to speak to knowledgeable individuals (i.e., chefs and/or managers) who may not be available to speak at length on the phone during a lunch or dinner rush.</p>
<p>Tell them the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ You are medically required to follow a gluten-free diet ■ You must avoid food, sauces, marinades, and salad dressings that contain or come in contact (cross contamination) with wheat, rye, barley or oats, even in tiny amounts. ■ Ask about food preparation to avoid cross-contamination issues. ■ Ask them if there is someone special you should ask for when you arrive and if so, check in with them when you arrive. ■ Finally, if you have any doubts, order as simplistically as possible (i.e. plain broiled fish, chicken or steak, plain steamed vegetables and a baked potato). 	<p>If the restaurant doesn't have a specific menu available for individuals with Celiac Disease, ask them to go over some menu choices with you which would be acceptable for your dietary needs.</p> <p>Ask the chef or manager to clean the portion of the grill where your food will be cooking especially well, or maybe they can cook yours in a separate pan.</p> <p>Sometimes they will make a notation in their books about your dietary needs and will send a manager to your table upon your arrival.</p> <p>On the rare occasion, even after going through all of the above precautions you still may feel as though your needs are not being taken seriously. If you are doubtful that your meal will be safe, ask to speak to a chef or manager. If you still don't feel safe, you may need to find another restaurant.</p>



Specific Menu Cautions	Explanation
Tell them that you can't have any croutons on your salad.	If the salad is made beforehand with croutons, they can't just pick them off! Ask for a freshly made salad. Many salad dressings in restaurants are not GF. Instead, ask for olive oil, vinegar (not flavored after the distillation process), and lemon slices.
Soups in restaurants are rarely gluten-free.	Even if a restaurant makes its own stock from scratch, there is still a strong possibility that they will add gluten containing seasoning packets for flavor or thickener.
If ordering meat, be aware that <i>au jus</i> almost always contains gluten.	When restaurants run out of natural cooking juices from meat they resort to canned stock or powdered mixes which usually contain gluten.
Make sure the menu items you're ordering don't have flour added to them.	This can be an unexpected one in that flour can also be used as a fluffing agent. For example, scrambled eggs, omelets and mashed potatoes may have a flour containing batter added to them to make them more substantial. This isn't always the case but it's always a good idea to check.
If you're ordering rice, keep it as plain as possible (plain steamed white or brown rice).	Seasoned rice and rice pilaf generally contains gluten in one form or another, be it seasonings or vermicelli.
Fried potatoes can only be prepared in a dedicated fryer with their own oil and not coated with gluten containing ingredients in order for them to be safe. Fries cooked in the same oil as breaded foods are contaminated.	Also check to see if home fries are made from real potatoes and gluten-free seasonings on a gluten-free cooking surface. Check to see if mashed potatoes are made fresh and from gluten-free ingredients.
Check to see if the restaurant warms up steamed vegetables in pasta water.	When pressed for time during a busy meal, restaurants have numerous time-saving techniques which can be dangerous for individuals with Celiac Disease.