

How to confidently order at restaurants

Eating out at restaurants is an enjoyable, sociable thing to do. However it can become a logistical nightmare when faced with a condition like Celiac Disease. Here are my top tips for eating out:

- Immediately inform the waiter that you have a condition called Celiac Disease and cannot consume gluten. Be careful about saying "gluten allergy or intolerance. Unfortunately due to the prevalence of gluten-free fad diets, just about everyone is or has tried to go gluten-free because they think it is a cool thing to do and normally the waiter won't take you seriously.
- You have every right to ask the waiter to check with the chef if the meal you are interested in has gluten in it. Normally they are quick to oblige.
- Be wary of ordering anything that has a sauce or gravy, or if it is marinated. Always ask if unsure.
- Avoid deep fried or crumbed foods as they certainly contain gluten.
- When you order make sure to stress it again, "Please remember no gluten, no wheat and no flour".
- Sticking to natural wholefoods is always best.
- Look for foods labelled gluten-free on the menu.

How to confidently order at restaurants

Tips

- Call the restaurant to discuss your dietary requirements and if they can meet them.
- Phone ahead and make sure sure that, not only are there gluten-free options, but that the chef is aware of celiac and the possible risks associated.

Eating out is not only about safe gluten-free options. It is also about avoiding cross contamination. Most Celiac's get sick more from cross contamination than they do from from any other reason.

This is what you need to find out from a restaurant before eating there (phone if need be or pop them an email).

- Do you have a **dedicated area** where you prepare gluten-free food?
- Do you use **dedicated utensils and cooking equipment?**
- Do you have a **dedicated fryer** for gluten-free food?
- Can you assure me that I will not experience cross contamination by eating in your restaurant?
- Do you cater for people with Celiac Disease?

Making sure your experience is going to be an enjoyable one starts with you. You need to do your homework and ask the right questions. If you cannot get any direct answers or they seem unsure, it may be best to look elsewhere.

I have designed **celiac-safe dinning out card** for you. Print it out and have it laminated and keep it in your purse. At the restaurant when you order, present it to your wait person along with saying " Please give this to the Chef. It informs them of my Celiac Disease condition so that I can eat safely".

How to confidently order at restaurants

We need to remember as Celiac's that it is not just about gluten-free food. It is about the way the **food is prepared, cooked, handled and stored.**

It is important the food is **prepared** in an area that is dedicated to gluten-free food only. This reduces the risk of cross contamination.

Next the food needs to be **handled** by someone who is not also handling gluten food at the same time.

The food needs to be **cooked** in dedicated fryers, pots, pans, bowls etc. This includes never using the same utensils to stir food with or the same water (like for cooking pasta).

If you are not sure how they prepare and handle gluten-free food, **just ask.** Asking also brings to their attention that you require more than your food just being gluten-free.

"Is it possible to inform the kitchen staff that my food needs to be prepared and cooked separately to avoid cross contamination. Otherwise I will be be very ill. "

Most of the time, just you saying that, they will either tell you it is not possible, in which case you will have to go somewhere else, or they will take every precaution.