

# Gluten-Free: Its Importance on the Menu

Gluten-free is a situation where you can't eat any products with gluten. It's important to utilize if you're restricted by a gluten-free diet. Sadly, studies have found that roughly 21% of people with celiac disease avoid social events so that they can stick to their gluten-free diet.



Zoe's Crush Cookie

## What is Gluten?

Gluten is a protein found in wheat, barley and rye. It's responsible for the elastic texture of dough, acting as a glue to hold food together and maintain their shape.

## Celiac Disease and Gluten Intolerance

Celiac disease is an autoimmune disease in which eating gluten proteins prompts the immune system to attack the small intestine, leading to digestive complaints. Those with gluten intolerance might not test positive for celiac disease, but still feel discomfort when in contact with gluten products.



The researchers estimated that 1.76 million people in the U.S. have celiac disease, but an estimated 2.7 million people in the U.S. have eliminated or reduced their consumption of gluten despite never having been diagnosed with the condition, according to the findings, published in the journal JAMA Internal Medicine.



Honduran Chocolate Manifesto Brownie, CGF

### **Put it on the Menu!**

Celiacs may have spurred the demand for gluten-free menu options, but many consumers believe that gluten-free diets are healthier, which increasingly promotes menus that highlight GF items. While some of these consumers may be gluten intolerant, research shows that about 29% simply perceive gluten-free as a healthier way to eat. This confirms a trend with staying power. "Gluten-free is not going away anytime soon," dietitian Michelle Dudash declared during the Restaurant Leadership Conference.

Restaurants would be smart to expand their gluten-free offerings, she added. Studies show that 92% of customers with food allergies will return to a restaurant where they have appropriate offerings and have a positive experience. Datassentials's SNAP tool tells us that 32.2% of U.S. restaurant menus featured GF options in 2019 compared to 4.8% in 2012. The gluten-free market is estimated to be as large as \$12 billion by 2020, perhaps even as larger. Furthermore, restaurants that offer gluten-free menu items see up to an 8% increase in sales because of an increase in diners, not due to more expensive items on the menu.

The National Restaurant Association also has multiple resources for managing a gluten-free menu, from ingredient selection to back of house operations and front of house training. <https://bit.ly/2IbIBAX>

Sweet Street has desserts to add gluten free options to your menu!

### **Sources:**

<https://www.restaurantbusinessonline.com/food/understanding-gluten-free-customer>

<https://apps.datassential.com/snap/food?q=gluten%20free>

<https://www.foodabletv.com/blog/2016/5/12/3-reasons-to-go-gluten-free-on-your-menu>