

# goodbye, gluten

We won't miss you! Why the wheat- and gluten-free lifestyle is more than a trend, and two delicious recipes everyone can enjoy by [Marygrace Taylor](#)

Five years ago, most of us would've shrugged and shaken our heads if asked whether we'd heard of "gluten-free." Today, everyone seems to be buzzing about it. Behind all the chatter stand the facts: 1 in every 133 Americans is diagnosed with celiac disease, and millions more are allergic to wheat. Here's what to know about eating a wheat- or gluten-free diet.

## Celiac disease vs. a wheat allergy

**Celiac disease** is a digestive condition triggered by the protein gluten. (Some food science 101: Foods are made up of three macronutrients—protein, carbohydrates, and fat. Gluten is the protein part of wheat, barley, and rye.) When a person with celiac disease consumes gluten, the immune system reacts by damaging (sometimes permanently) parts of the small intestine that work to absorb nutrients—often resulting in severe abdominal pain, bloating, and diarrhea. But gastrointestinal symptoms don't always occur: "People can also experience weight loss, since the nutrients in the gluten-containing foods aren't getting absorbed, and people aren't absorbing other foods well, either, as a result of damaged intestines. They can feel sluggish, and kids can suffer from poor growth," says Marion Groetch,

R.D., who works at the Jaffe Food Allergy Institute at Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City. Celiac disease is diagnosed after a gastroenterologist takes a biopsy of a tiny piece of the small intestine. The only treatment is strict avoidance of foods containing gluten.

**Wheat allergy** means a person has an immune-system response to wheat only (as opposed to the gluten protein, found in wheat, barley, and rye). When a wheat-allergic person eats the offending food, he experiences symptoms that are more broadly associated with other food allergies—hives, eczema, swelling, and breathing difficulties, Groetch says.

Typically, a wheat allergy is diagnosed by an allergist. After examining a patient's medical and dietary histories to determine any problem patterns with particular foods, the allergist will confirm the allergy with a skin prick or blood test. Like other food allergies, the only way to treat a wheat allergy is by avoiding the reaction-causing food—but there's some good news, too. "It's possible for children with wheat allergies to outgrow them," says Groetch. "Continue yearly follow-ups with your allergist to assess whether this might be the case for your child."

## Eating well without wheat or gluten

Eating a diet that's nutritious and delicious just requires some extra thought. "In most Western diets, wheat is a big source of B vitamins, iron, and folate," says Groetch. Fortunately, the nutrients are available in many other whole grains, as well as in leafy greens, meat, and beans. "The silver lining of a celiac or wheat allergy diagnosis is that you can use it as an opportunity to learn more about nutrition and try more foods," says Alicia Woodward, editor of the food allergy and sensitivity magazine, *Living Without*.

Those with celiac disease can eat any non-gluten grains including amaranth, buckwheat, corn, millet, quinoa, rice, and oats (make sure the package certifies that the oats were processed without wheat or gluten). Those with wheat allergies can eat everything from that list, along with barley and rye. Some people say they can handle spelt better than other types of wheat, since it contains less gluten. But spelt *is* a form of wheat, so it won't be tolerated by those with celiac disease or wheat allergies.

Talk with a dietitian who specializes in food allergies to help create a safe, healthy diet, and learn about food shopping and label reading at [celiac.org](http://celiac.org).



## Chewy Apricot–Chocolate Chip Cookies

Typically, baked goods rely on the gluten in wheat flour for structure and flavor, but gluten-free flours and starches combined with xanthan gum (an all-natural emulsifier that helps bind other ingredients together) also do the trick.

**Prep time:** 5 minutes

**Bake time:** 12 to 14 minutes

- 1 cup sorghum flour
- ¼ cup tapioca starch
- ¼ cup potato starch
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¾ teaspoon xanthan gum
- ½ cup unsalted butter, softened
- ½ cup brown sugar
- ¼ cup raw cane sugar
- 2 tablespoons molasses
- 1 tablespoon ground flaxseed whisked with 2 tablespoons warm water
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon almond extract
- ½ cup unsulphered dried apricots, chopped
- ¼ cup chocolate chips

1. In a medium bowl, mix the flour, starches, baking powder, salt, and xanthan gum.
2. In a separate bowl, beat the butter until creamy. Add the sugars and beat again until light and fluffy. Add the molasses, flaxseed mixture, and extracts.
3. Slowly mix the dry ingredients with the wet. Fold in the apricots and chocolate chips.
4. Use a tablespoon to drop the dough onto greased baking sheets. Bake in a 350° oven for 12 to 14 minutes, or until cookies are just beginning to brown.
5. Let cookies cool on the sheets for 2 to 3 minutes before transferring to wire racks.

**Makes about 20 cookies**

Per cookie: calories 151, fat 6 g, protein 1 g, carbohydrates 24 g, dietary fiber 1 g



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## Veggie Lentil Loaf

Classic meatloaf gets a gluten-free update (and a planet-friendly one, too, thanks to protein-rich lentils subbing in for ground beef). Instead of bread crumbs, this version absorbs moisture from white rice flour—a swap that works for meatball or meatloaf recipes, too. Serve alongside mashed potatoes, and use the leftovers to make sandwiches with gluten-free bread.

**Prep time:** 35 minutes

**Bake time:** 55 minutes

- 2½ cups French lentils, rinsed and picked over for tiny pebbles or debris
- 2 tablespoons olive oil, plus more for greasing the pan
- 1 large yellow onion, diced
- 2 green bell peppers, seeded and diced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon cumin
- ½ cup parsley, chopped
- ¼ cup tahini
- Zest and juice of 1 lemon
- ⅔ cup white rice flour
- Salt and pepper
- ¼ cup all-natural ketchup

1. Place the lentils in a medium saucepot, and fill the pot with enough water to cover the lentils by 2 to 3 inches. Cover, bring to

a boil, and simmer for 25 minutes or until the lentils are tender.

2. While the lentils cook, prepare the vegetables. In a large skillet, warm the olive oil over medium heat. Add the onions and sauté 5 to 7 minutes, or until soft and translucent. Add the peppers and sauté 5 minutes more. Add the garlic and cumin, and cook 1 minute more.

3. Transfer the vegetables to a food processor and pulse until very finely chopped. Place in a large bowl and set aside.

4. Add the cooked lentils, parsley, tahini, and lemon zest and juice to a food processor and process until mostly smooth.

5. Add the lentil mixture to the vegetables and stir to combine. Fold in the rice flour and season the mixture with salt and pepper to taste.

6. Lightly grease a 9-by-5-inch loaf pan, and spoon the mixture into it. Use a spatula to smooth the top of the loaf. Bake in a 350° oven for 40 minutes, or until the top of the loaf is just beginning to brown.

7. Remove the loaf from the oven and spread the ketchup over the top. Bake for another 15 minutes at 400°, then allow the lentil loaf to sit at least 10 minutes before slicing. Serve.

**Makes 12 slices**

Per slice: calories 230, fat 5 g, protein 13 g, carbohydrates 36 g, dietary fiber 6 g