

# Gluten-free Guide for Beginners

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## Introduction

"My aunt used to say, 'What you can't see, can't hurt you'...well, she died of radiation poisoning a few months back!"

~ *Harry Hill*

So, you're going free, gluten-free. Congratulations. Now, whether it's because gluten is not treating you well or you're simply looking for a healthier way of eating, it doesn't have to be a traumatic change, leaving you wanting and yearning for what you can't have. You can have your cake and eat it too (and your pasta...and your pizza...and bread).

But, what does it really mean to be "gluten free"? These days, you hear the term buzzing around like a pesky house fly. You walk into a grocery and your eyes are confronted with the phrase on scores of packages and advertisements. But you may be asking yourself what exactly is this gluten we seek freedom from? *Do tell.* I shall. In this book.

Gluten is much more than just wheat or bread and pasta. It's sneaking around corners and hiding in shadows you never would have thought to look into. It can affect your body and mind in ways you never imagine.

Fear not, gluten-afflicted one! I will talk you through understanding gluten, how it affects your mind and body, and show you how you can lead a healthier life – in regards to going gluten-free. You're still responsible for the tubs of ice cream you devour, bottles of hard cider you chug or cliffs you bungee from.

There's a virtual warehouse of gluten-free options available today - some good, some not so much - but far more choices exist than even five years ago. Especially with the wizardly internet, you're no longer limited to what your local supermarket offers. Yay for technology! Now there are breads available that do *not* taste like you spread butter on a sand dollar. Pizzas exist that do not taste like you slathered sauce and cheese on the tongue of a Converse high-top, and there's gluten-free beer that tastes like...beer. *Fist bump.*

You should be careful though, not all gluten-free processed food is your friend. If you care about malevolent ingredients in your food, like corn syrup or red dye #5, you'll have to become an ingredient label reader. Sad, but true. Some companies want to make a fast dollar on the gluten-free hype and have little concern for the overall quality of the product. *Does it contain gluten? No...but, it is made with sawdust and formaldehyde. But, no gluten? No gluten. Corporate high-five.*

Of course there are naturally-occurring gluten-free foods that require no reading glasses or ingredients label cipher. You can easily pick up a gluten-free meal without examining one label.

Alcoholic beverages on the other hand can be trickier and the labels won't give up ingredients. But...it's just *whiskey*, right? Nope. Most people know beer is made from grains like barley and wheat and wine from grapes. But when it comes to the hard stuff like vodka, bourbon or gin, the answers can get as blurry as your eyes after a few too many of those. I will discuss the libation situation in Chapter 5.

Giving up foods you love is difficult, but when you see there are tasty alternatives and easily prepared meals to cook, the painful yearning should be minimal and short lived. Once your body is feeling better, the break up with gluten will be a welcomed change.

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## Gluten 101

"Food is an important part of a balanced diet."

~ Fran Lebowitz

**Gluten.** Is it just wheat? Is it that muscle of the posterior end, the Gluteus Maximus? Many people think wheat is the only grain that contains gluten, but you it is found many other grains as well. You're told you must eat grains in order to have a balanced diet, and who wants to be unbalanced? But, that's not the whole truth. Also, in the grab-bag of hearsay are the notions that, if something is labeled gluten-free that it's automatically "healthy" or going gluten-free is a weight reeducation plan, like the Baby Food Diet. Guess again.

### Shop Talk

*Gluten* [gloo-ten] noun. A group of proteins from in grains such as wheat, barley, rye, semolina and spelt.

## So, What Do You Know About Gluten?

Let's go a little botany 101. Gluten is not the wheat or grain itself, but actually a group of proteins within the grains. Wheat, rye, barley, couscous, semolina and spelt all contain gluten.

### Special Feature: *Buckwheat Is Not a Wheat*

Buckwheat is an identification contradiction. It is not part of the wheat family nor does it contain gluten. Misleading. Most grains are grasses, but Buckwheat is actually a fruit seed that comes from a flowering plant related to rhubarb. It can be used in place of rice, made into porridge or ground into flour. You may have seen "Kasha" cereals in the grocery, which is actually toasted buckwheat.

So, we could say Buckwheat is a fruit seed with an identity crisis.

By the way, did you know there is also gluten in corn and rice? Yep. Yet, the gluten in the listed grains above is different from the gluten in corn or rice. Corn and rice gluten do not affect those who have typical gluten-related issues. Though some people may be allergic to corn, that allergen has no relation

to the gluten sensitivity found with other grains. So, if you see corn or rice gluten listed as an ingredient, you're safe.

Now, back to the wheat. Of all the grains, wheat contains the most gluten, which is why wheat is so important to making bread. The gluten gives dough elasticity, allowing the dough to rise and stretch like an old comfy pair of elastic-band sweat pants after Thanksgiving dinner. Without the wheat you're looking at a brick of bread, not a fluffy, air-bubbled loaf. That's also why other grain breads like rye will still contain wheat.

**Special Feature: *Beer Responsible for Egyptians Discovering Fluffy Bread***

Beer may be responsible for Egyptians discovering how to bake bread that rises...not because they were sitting around the pyramid one star-filled night, slugging back a few pints and Horus had a "great idea". No, it's theorized they used beer instead of water to bake bread. The yeast in the beer reacted with the gluten in the wheat, causing the dough to rise. Magical mystery bread.

## **Wheat Runneth Over**

Let's take a look at the other foods in which wheat is needed. Many people don't realize how dependent we are on wheat for some of our most beloved foods. Want spaghetti? You need some pasta – wheat. Want a hamburger? Probably want a bun – wheat. A dripping BLT or turkey on rye? Got to have some bread – wheat. Clam chowder or tomato soup? Crackers, please. Want a beer? Cheers – gluten. Bagels, pretzels and pizza – Wheat, wheat, wheat. Donuts, tortillas (unless of course they're corn), and most cereal, all contain wheat. Let's not forget breading on your KFC super-crispy chicken or cookies, cakes, pie crust, muffins and pancakes. You get the idea.

The U.S. is one of the top consumers of wheat - apparently Americans have a love affair with wheat. Or do we? Companies like to be sneaky, putting wheat in places where we would never even think it would be found, but we'll get more into that in Chapter 4.

## **What Do You Know About Going Gluten-Free?**

If wheat is so domineering in the American diet, one would think you "need", right? You were taught that the four basic food groups are fruits and vegetable, dairy, meat and...*drum roll*...grains! How could your teachers, parents, scientists and our government (they are the ones who instituted the standards) all be wrong – or lying to you? Not only that, but for many people, the grains are the tastiest group. Who doesn't love them some pizza or homemade bread?

Well, let's look way back in history to answer these questions and more. The first humans to the evolutionary party did not eat wheat, only in the past 10,000 years did we figure it out and begin growing, harvesting and gorging on it. That may seem like a long time ago, but if you consider humans have been leaving footprints on this planet for at least two million years, 10,000 is only a blip.

Long before we were dialing for Domino's and Amazon Fresh deposited boxes of cucumbers at your door, we had to wander around searching for food like hungry little puppies. We were hunters and

gathers, eating what we found and killed, not what we grew. Imagine doing that after a long day in the cubicle. *Honey, I'm going out to hunt rabbit and pick some berries. I'll be back in time for din...oh wait, I'm hunting dinner.* There were no caves with white picket fences and gardens. Cavemen Carl and Carrie hunted small animals and insects and plundered nests for eggs. They fished, picked nuts, berries, leaves, and roots for sustenance.

Historians theorize that, as populations grew and climate changes occurred, greater need for a guaranteed food supply developed. Ancient peoples began staying together in larger numbers, perhaps for safety or maybe for more dating options – *Hey, did you see that new guy in cave 2C? He has all his teeth!* Regardless if they were looking to start a soccer league or flash mob a woolly mammoth, our ancestors discovered a need for food they didn't have to rummage for or stalk. So, Cavemen Carl and Carrie began planting more and wandering less.

But wheat wasn't on the menu just yet. Wheat is actually toxic to humans in its natural, raw state – poison. It wasn't until some ancient Galloping Gourmet discovered that cooking the grain broke down the toxins and made it ingestible for humans. I wonder if they took volunteers for that initial taste test. So, if you're ever stranded for days in a wheat field in Kansas, don't think you can graze on Farmer Fred's crop till you find your way out. You'd be better off eating the insects crawling on the wheat. But, the insects are probably poisoned with pesticides so... just make you sure you never get stranded in a Kansas wheat field.

Once the toxicity bug got cooked out wheat made a contender for a good diet staple with its high calorie content and ability to be grown in mass. And due to wheat's affinity for mild, dry climates, it became popular in Middle Eastern countries, eventually spreading to Europe. We can thank the Europeans for bringing it to the United States, but the wheat fields of Kansas didn't exist until around 1839.

When our dapperly- dressed founders landed in New England, they discovered the wheat wouldn't grow in the freakishly cold, wet winters of the north north. So, it wasn't until settlers forged west that they found a pleasant climate for wheat to prosper.

This brief lesson in wheat history is to point out that, contrary to what many think, wheat has not been a "natural" food source for humans. Without cooking or processing it, we cannot safely dine on it. But, in Chapter 2 I will delve into how even the processed wheat of today can be detrimental to you – wheat it not necessarily the breakfast champions should be eating.

## Gluten-Free Eating Is Not a Weight Loss Plan

What are other misconceptions about wheat or going gluten-free? One is the assumption that going gluten-free is merely a diet fad or other weight-loss strategy – like the lemon water and tabasco twaddle. *My, you've lost weight. Jenny Craig or gluten-free?* While it is possible to lose weight switching over to a gluten-free diet, but that is not a guarantee or the point.

*Author's Aside: Gluten-Free, Not Calorie-free*

After telling a friend I was now eating gluten-free, she asked, "Oh, are you trying to lose weight?"

"Nope," I replied, "just trying not to feel like a bloated, arthritic amnesia victim. Do I look like I need to lose weight?"

The point of being gluten-free is to rid yourself of the plaguing symptoms of eating gluten. Though, with a gluten-free lifestyle you *could* initially lose weight because you're digestive system is functioning properly and smoothly and you're no longer feeding on high-carb, high-calorie breads and pasta. Perhaps, if you no longer feel (and look) like a bloated toad with bad joints and a learning disability, you will have more energy for exercising - if you don't already. Yet, if you continue to eat or substitute those gluten foods with bacon and gluten-free pecan shortbread cookies, then the weight loss probably won't be happening.

It's like those cereal commercials claiming to lower your cholesterol and your pants size. It's not the actual cereal that will lower your cholesterol and drop the pounds. It's the fact that you're now crunching on a lower-fat, airy rice flakes and have stopped feasting on mouth-watering bacon or savory blueberry muffins slathered with butter. You're lowering your calorie intake - for breakfast. But, if you now eat your bacon for lunch on a BLT and continue to gorge on chicken and waffles, that cereal isn't going to get you into a teeny-weeny bikini. So it is with going gluten-free.

*Author's Aside: I'm Not Picking on Bacon*

I put down bacon twice in two paragraphs. I do not want to be misunderstood. Bacon is yummy. Bacon can be gluten free. But, too much bacon on your plate can lead to too much meat on your seat. Bacon in moderation.

Even if losing weight is not on your agenda, you need to pay attention to what's going on in your **processed gluten-free** foods if you don't want to *gain* weight. Foods such as breads, pastas, pizzas, cookies and crackers can actually have a higher calorie and fat count than the regular gluten-based items.

Shop Talk

*Processed gluten-free* [**proh**-sesd] adjective, [gloo-ten-free] adjective. A food that is not naturally gluten-free. In its natural state it is not gluten-free and is created in a factory. Bread doesn't grow on trees.

For instance, Amy's, a popular **organic** prepared food company, offers some gluten-free options, but their frozen pizza is high in calories and fat.

Special Feature: Amy's Cheese Pizza Compared to DiGiorno Cheese Pizza

<u>Amy's Cheese Pizza</u>		<u>DiGiorno Cheese Pizza</u>	
Serving Size – 1/3 <b>(113 g)</b>		Serving Size – 1/6 <b>(140 g)</b>	
Calories – 320		Calories – 320	
Total Fat – 16g		Total Fat – 12g	
Saturated Fat – 4g		Saturated Fat – 5g	
Trans Fat – 0		Trans Fat – 0	
Cholesterol – 0		Cholesterol – 0	
Sodium – 590g		Sodium – 960g	
Carbohydrates – 34g		Carbohydrates – 38g	
Fiber – 2g		Fiber – 2g	
Sugar – 5g		Sugar – 6g	
Protein – 10g		Protein – 15g	
Vitamin A 6%	Vitamin C 6%	Vitamin A 6%	Vitamin C 4%
Calcium 15%	Iron 8%	Calcium 20%	Iron 10%

Note that the serving size for Amy's is actually smaller – 113g compared to DeGiorno's 140g. So, even though the calorie count for both is the same, you get slightly less pizza for those calories and the fat is actually higher with Amy's.

Source: Fatsecret, 2014  
<http://www.fatsecret.com/calories-nutrition/amys/gluten-free-cheese-pizza>

Tip: Read the Serving Sizes

When reading a label, don't just look at the calories or fat. Pay attention to the serving sizes. Companies know most people don't bother to read the serving size on a package, so they love to knock the serving size on their products to make high calorie foods look less villainous. You may think 20 calories is super for a gluten-free muffin, but then you see the serving size is 1/36 of a whole muffin.

### Shop Talk

*Organic* [awr-gan-ik] adjective. Referring to any food that is not genetically modified, grown “naturally” without pesticides and no added chemicals (preservatives, etc) and also food coming from animals that are fed organic diets and raised in natural environments.

### A Gluten-free Label Does Not Guarantee Its Healthy

Speaking of label reading...when you hear or read the term “gluten-free” you may unconsciously assume “healthy”. It’s gluten-free...it’s good for me! Often when you cut elements out of your life the goal is to feel good, right? Whether it’s smoking, sugar, caffeine or a crazy ex, you do it to feel better. Yet, not all processed gluten-free foods are “healthy”. Granted if you’re picking up a box of gluten-free cookies or a cake, you probably don’t care about getting to know what’s inside, you just want some fun. *Just give me sugar cookies; I don’t care if they have potassium aluminum sulfate.* For those of you who do care what other mystery **additives** are in your gluten-free foods - especially if you’re eating it on a regular basis – read on my friend, read on.

### Shop Talk

*Additive* [**ad-i-tiv**]noun. Any substance added to a food for preservation, stabilization or coloring.

Most organic gluten-free products use only natural ingredients. One reason many gluten-free breads are found in the freezer section is because they use little or no preservative. However, “organic” is not a guarantee everything in the product is good for you.

### Author’s Aside: Udi’s Gluten-Free Bread Contains Corn Syrup

I ate Udi’s gluten-free bread for several months before I actually read the label. I naively assumed gluten-free was synonymous with “healthy”. But, as I began researching more about what’s in our foods, I began label reading gluten-free food ingredients, as well.

On reading Udi’s, I discovered it was made with corn syrup. No, no. I found their website and commented that I will no longer be purchasing their bread because of the corn syrup. They assured me it was processed differently therefore not “bad”. Ok, maybe not *as* bad as high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS), but it’s still not good. Udi’s claim that because regular corn syrup is derived directly from corn starch, and does not go through the *additional* processing that HFCS does, it’s benign.

Yet, corn syrup still goes through a chemical processing, it is not a *natural* extraction. There simply is not anything natural about corn syrup. To make corn starch from which corn syrup is derived, corn kernels are first bathed in a “small” amount sulfur dioxide, which reacts with the water in the solution creating...sulfuric acid. Acid. The kernels swim in this acid bath up to 40 minutes. Further down the road, the corn starch is introduced to a “weak” solution

of...hydrochloric acid. Acid – Part II. This pressure-heated chemical hot-tub converts the corn starch to sugar - the longer it's submerged the sweeter it will be. Then it will go on to further refinement and filtering.

So, non-HFSC is still a simple, “refined” sugar. Simple sugars are quickly broken down in your body, causing blood sugar and insulin spikes. This speedy processing prevents the feeling of fullness even after a high-calorie intake. Complex sugars, like those found in fruits, are processed more slowly, giving a more even release of insulin with no blood sugar spikes.

Simple, refined sugars have been linked to obesity and diabetes. Is it a coincidence that diagnosis of diabetes boomed after corn syrup was ok'd as a food additive and used in all the wrong places? Corn syrup is corn syrup...is bad for you.

Now the food company magicians are bullying the FDA to allow HFCS to be labeled as “corn sugar”. People got smart and stopped buying food with HFSC, so now they have to change the game and give you a new word to figure out.

The large food companies, though, are not as concerned about their ingredients as the organic companies when it comes to your health. The health of their profits is the focus and the gluten-free explosion is another “profit tonic” they can exploit. Therein, they are more inclined to use cheap chemicals to boost texture, color, and shelf life - kind of like Botox for your food.

These companies use additives like *ammonium phosphate*...which is used as a fire retardant and fertilizer...in bread. Yum. How about *ammonium sulfate* – or as his friends like to call him - *sulfuric acid diammonium salt*? Besides being an “anticaking agent” in food, this bad boy is also used to make explosives. Foods that make you go BOOM! The list of food additives that you may encounter in your gluten-free foods is truly too long and scary to include, but you will find many links to sites that covers all that madness in The Deep Dish.

[Tip: Food Additive Website](#)

Food Additives, 2013

<http://www.foodadditivesworld.com/other-food-condiments.html>

Furthermore, food companies can put anything they want on the front of their package. Anything. The law says so. While they are required to list the ingredients *somewhere*, the front of the packaging is a free-for-all. They can claim it's gluten free...that it will make your straight hair grow curly, rip you with muscles, and potty train your dog if he eats it. Anything goes. Only in the ingredients do they have to tell the truth – mostly.



Another little sleight-of-hand (more like slight-of-truth) the food companies like to perform is in regards to listing “natural ingredients”. When you see “natural flavors” on the package, they are usually anything but natural. Our government is playing peek-a-boo with facts. They consider anything that has originally been extracted from a plant or animal to be “natural”. Never mind what processing it has gone through or other chemical make-over has been performed have been added to it. As long as the beginning of its laboratory life began with a living organism, then it’s “natural.”

*Special Feature: Check Out Cereal and Salad Dressings for an Eye Opener*

Next time you’re at the market take a gander at cereals claiming, on the front, to contain strawberries or some other fruit. Then read the ingredients. Find any fruit? Think those little round blue things are blueberries? Guess again. Balls of blue dye #2.

Another good example is salad dressings. Not only are they secretors of gluten, but many falsely claim to be all olive oil. Look on the back. While some may list olive oil as one of the last ingredients (the lower on the list, the less it contains) behind other oils like canola, sunflower or cottonseed, other dressings do not contain one drop of olive oil. Liar, liar.

Additionally, most of these oils are overheated during their processing, which damages the oil. Damaged oils can cause damage to your cells, eventually causing damage to DNA, which could lead to cancer. Genetically modified you.

When it comes to frozen foods like a plain bag of peas or beans - not the “vegetable medley” soured in a mystery sauce – it’s hit or miss. Some – not most - brands will contain preservatives; even though freezing is supposed to be the preserving factor.

If you’re concerned about unhealthy additives in your gluten-free food, you will have to make ingredients perusing a habit. – it only takes four weeks to create a habit. You can do it. Unless of course you eat all **naturally -occurring gluten-free** foods like fresh meats, fruits, vegetables and raw nuts. The best rule of thumb – if it has an ingredients label, read it.

**Shop Talk**

*Naturally-occurring gluten-free* [nach-er-uh-lee] adverb, [uh-kur-ing] verb, [gloo-ten-free] adjective. A phrase to describe a food that, in its natural state, does not contain gluten. Example: 1. Apples. Pick them and eat them – never had gluten, never will. 2. Beef - in its raw, throw-it-on-the-grill state.