



GLUTEN
INTOLERANCE
GROUP

College Dining Halls

Tips for Gluten-Free Students

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Before setting foot in the dining hall, a lot of important information can be gained from talking with various administrators and departments at your school. Most schools have an accommodations office or department, which can help with special needs like dietary restrictions. They can provide useful information, and also connect you with the right people in the Food Service group that is responsible for dining hall food. Meeting in person with a dining hall director or manager, and with the school or food service dietitian, can be very valuable. They can inform you as to how gluten-free food is approached in any particular dining hall, what is offered and when, how things are labeled, and what measures are in place to prevent cross-contamination. While a few colleges and universities have dedicated gluten-free dining halls, most do not. But most now are aware of the needs of gluten-free students, and can provide safe offerings.

Connecting with others who have already experienced your campus gluten-free is also an excellent way to get information. Try scoping out student groups on campus to see if there is a gluten-free meetup group or allergen-free group you could join. Also look to see if there is a local GIG support group on or off campus in the area (www.gluten.org/community/local-branches/).

- In busy dining halls it may work better to avoid the busiest times, if you can. The staff will have more time to attend to your requests, and to answer any questions that come up.
- If you have not had a chance to talk to the food service management staff about what they offer that is gluten-free, thorough questioning is necessary. You will need to find out what all the ingredients of a dish are, and whether cross-contamination with gluten was avoided during preparation in the kitchen. If there is plain grilled fish or chicken, for instance, confirm that nothing containing wheat or gluten was grilled on the same surface, and that no seasoning mixes or flavorings of any sort were used which could contain gluten.
- Sandwich bars can be an option. Use deli meats as an addition to a salad, or make a lettuce wrap. Gluten-free bread is sometimes available too. You need to confirm that deli items (especially meats) are gluten-free, since they can contain gluten. It is also necessary to consider how different items are offered and served, since students making sandwiches on gluten-containing bread could touch their bread while layering it with meat or cheese, which would cross-contaminate the tongs for these items. If you have any doubts about this, tell the staff about your needs and ask them to bring you some sandwich makings from the kitchen which have not been exposed to potential cross-contamination. Finally, do not use condiments



from communal containers: there is a high risk of these being contaminated with gluten due to double-dipping of utensils, or from crumbs which may have fallen in. Some dining halls offer single serve condiment packets, or you may want to bring along your own.

- Gluten-free foods that are self-contained or wrapped are a safe choice, since one of the biggest issues in a dining hall setting is cross-contamination with gluten-containing items from serving utensils. Good options:
 - Hard boiled eggs (still in shell)
 - Unpeeled whole fruit
 - Wrapped cheese sticks
 - Single serve yogurt
 - Wrapped/package GF muffin or protein bar
 - Single serve bags of chips, or other GF snack item
 - Single serve packets of peanut butter, to have with yogurt, fruit, or on gluten-free bread.
- Kindly request that any server who might be directly handling food for you change their gloves before handling special gluten-free items.
- At breakfast or brunch, omelet bars can be a good option. Talk to the person making your individual omelet. Make sure the pan has been thoroughly cleaned after use for any omelet that may have contained gluten. Ask about ingredients, even those which appear to be gluten-free, like shredded cheese or chopped vegetables.

Questions for staff/servers

Note: it's always a great idea to be extra gracious and thank the dining hall staff for their help. Plus, if you end up seeing some of the same staff repeatedly, developing a good relationship with them can be very helpful.

- "I have a medical need to be gluten-free; can you tell me if this dish is safe for me? (Specifically ask about prevention of cross-contamination in kitchen, if in doubt). Thank you."
- "I need to find out whether all the ingredients in this dish are gluten-free. Do you have that information handy, or is there someone in the kitchen you could check with who does? Thank you." (This might apply when an item is marked "gluten-free" and you have previously determined that measures are followed in the kitchen to prevent cross-contamination, but it looks like an ingredient is questionable, or you just want to confirm.)
- "I just need to confirm that 'x' is gluten-free. I know the basic ingredients are, but I have a medical need to be gluten-free so need to confirm that no gluten-containing crumbs might have gotten into this item, either in the kitchen or out here on the serving line. Thank you very much."
- If gluten-free pasta is on offer. "I am so glad to see that gluten-free pasta is available; can you tell me if it is cooked in a separate pot and drained with a separate colander? Thank you."

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Other helpful information is available at:
www.GLUTEN.org.

Advances in celiac disease are fast-paced. If this document is more than 2 years old, please visit our website for updated documents.

This information should not be used to diagnose or treat gluten-related disorders or other medical conditions. For questions about these conditions consult your healthcare team when considering this information.

Please consider your local GIG support group as another resource.

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The Mission of the Gluten Intolerance Group is to empower the gluten-free community through consumer support, advocacy, and education.

To make a donation or become a volunteer to GIG, visit our website or call the office at 253-833-6655.