

FOOD

# The Gluten Option

With a variety of foods available, giving up gluten doesn't mean giving up taste

**CHANCES ARE THAT EITHER YOU OR SOMEONE** you know has adopted the gluten-free diet, either by choice or necessity. One might say it's a trend, but a common reason for this lifestyle choice is to minimize unpleasant physical disturbances, including digestive upset, bloating, headaches and joint pain.

Another reason that some follow a gluten-free diet is to manage celiac disease, a serious autoimmune disorder. But this decision shouldn't be made lightly. "It is essential to get tested for celiac disease before starting a gluten-free diet," says Shelley Case, a registered dietitian and author of *Gluten Free: The Definitive Resource Guide*. "If an individual has eliminated gluten from his or her diet" because he or she suspects the disease, "the celiac blood and biopsy tests may be falsely negative."

Those who do go gluten-free benefit from more variety than ever. The diet has gone from offering few choices two

decades ago to more than 3,700 gluten-free foods today, including pasta.

Pasta has been a coveted dish among gluten-free dieters. Today there are far greater choices available that inspire excitement. "When choosing gluten-free pastas look for more nutritious options such as those enriched with iron and B vitamins and/or those made with pulses (beans, chickpeas, lentils), quinoa, brown rice and flax," advises Case. Below are a few varieties to consider.

**White rice pasta** Soft and sticky in texture, this pasta is best cooked until al dente.

**Brown rice pasta** Firmer in texture than white rice and rich in fibre, brown

rice pasta pairs well with heavier sauces such as Bolognese. Serve al dente.

**Corn pasta** This pasta is firm with a chewy texture and will retain its shape if cooked until soft. It goes great with any sauce or soup.

**Quinoa pasta** Because it is delicate and can overcook easily, quinoa pasta should be cooked until al dente.

**Bean pasta** Nutritionally dense and high in fibre, the texture and taste of bean pasta is close to that of traditional pasta, making it a good substitute for regular pasta.

While necessary for some, keep in mind a gluten-free diet isn't necessarily healthier. Many products contain high amounts of sugar and artificial ingredients to enhance taste. To make informed choices, consult a registered dietitian before going gluten-free.

—Agnes Borowik

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