

10 GLUTEN FREE BEST PRACTICES

If you are setting up to prepare a gluten free meal or dish for a family member, friend, or guest with Celiac Disease, stick to these 10 gluten free best practices:

1. ELEVATE YOUR GLUTEN FREE AWARENESS. For starters, do your gluten free homework. Do some heavy research. Find out what items and products are gluten free approved and what items are not. Next, communicate with your gluten free guest. Ask questions. If you still feel iffy on the gluten free guidelines, invite your gluten free guest (or a gluten free friend) to participate in the food making process

2. KEEP IT SIMPLE. Buy fresh ingredients. Cook from scratch. Gluten sneaks its way into a lot of popular cooking items, including salad dressings, marinades, rice mixes, cooking sprays, etc. Outsmart gluten by avoiding such items.

3. CHOOSE WISELY. When selecting gluten free products, only purchase items that are CERTIFIED gluten free. Remember: When in doubt, rule it out. Be 100% sure of its gluten free-ness.

4. ORGANIZE. Devise a game plan. Cover all of your bases to avoid cross contamination scares.

5. KEEP IT CLEAN. Gluten is a sneaky little sucker. It hides in tile crevices. It sticks to wet surfaces. To absolve your kitchen of all things gluten, be sure to clean ALL counter tops, kitchen appliances, utensils, pots, pans, measuring cups, dishware...EVERYTHING. Use disinfecting sprays or wipes, soap, and hot water to wash all tools and surfaces you will be using. Leave no tool or surface unwashed! Note: Avoid the use of wood cutting boards, strainers and toasters. Even heavy cleaning won't render these safe for gluten free preparation and cooking.

6. TAG. Designate certain kitchen items as strictly gluten free (after you give them a thorough clean, of course!). Use an oven safe tag on colanders, pots, and pans to avoid potential mix-ups.

7. LABEL. To avoid cross contamination, it is highly recommended that you label certain items, such as condiments. Double dipping with gluten-tainted utensils is an all too common occurrence. To avoid an ensuing disaster (i.e. gluten attack), simply stick a gluten free label on the product or jar as a reminder that it is anti-gluten. Following your meal, impress your guest by sticking a gluten free label on an extra plastic container so your guest can bring home any leftovers for lunch the next day.

8. TAKE YOUR TIME. Don't be in a hurry during your gluten free food prep experience. Go through the process slowly and consciously to avoid any slip ups leading to cross contamination. Slow and steady wins the race.

9. GLUTEN FREE FIRST. It may be that you don't have adequate dishware, kitchen tools, supplies, and counter top space to divide, cook, and conquer gluten and non-gluten foods simultaneously. If this is the case, prepare all gluten free foods first. Makes sense, right?

10. COVER GLUTEN FREE TERRITORY. Lids and foils are your comrades, people. Keep all gluten free items covered, foiled, or separate to avoid cross contamination. After you have covered it up, stick a gluten free label on it to remind yourself and your guests that it is a strict gluten free zone.

IF YOU ADHERE TO THESE GUIDELINES, YOU WILL BE IN THE CLEAR OF ANY GLUTEN CROSS CONTAMINATION FEARS.

To purchase gluten free labels and tags, please visit glutenfreelabels.com. To learn more about Celiac Disease, please visit CeliacCentral.org.

