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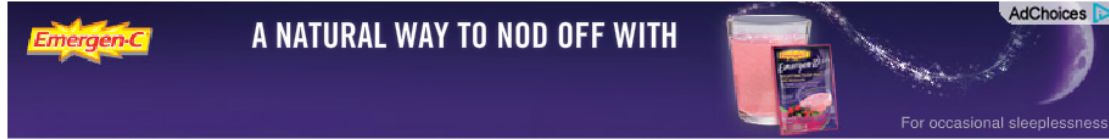
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10 Things I Wish Restaurants Understood About Gluten Intolerance

Posted: 04/02/2015 12:54 pm EDT | Updated: 06/02/2015 5:59 am EDT



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1. If you post your gluten-free menu on your website, it's more likely I (and people like me) will come to your restaurant. So many restaurants offer separate GF menus, but don't post them online. How do I know you offer this if you don't post it? I always

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evaluate menus online before I go anywhere. If you have a GF menu, you're 90% of the way to me booking a table.

2. If you offer a variety of gluten-free options on your menu, please offer something other than creme brulee, ice cream, and flourless chocolate cake for dessert. If you don't want to make gluten-free desserts, there are so many wonderful bakeries that do. I've been to so many restaurants where there are wonderful appetizer and entree options, but the same tired three no-thought desserts. I don't want to eat any of these ever again. A restaurant that offers real desserts would see my family returning again and again. I understand if you can't make these yourself, but there now wonderful gluten-free bakeries in almost all cities where you could buy pastries. Many restaurants outsource dessert. Why not do the same for gluten-free options?

3. Please understand that a true gluten-free friendly restaurant does more than just take gluten off the plate. I'm so tired of having my entree options include fish with no sauce, or steak with no sauce, or chicken without the couscous. Please make real substitutions instead of just subtracting things from my plate and still charging me the same amount. Creating a gluten-free pan sauce or flavored butter is not hard! Gluten-free pasta is readily available as are gluten-free rolls and bread. Cornstarch thickeners. Gluten-free breadcrumbs exist.



4. Pay attention to the dietary restrictions of your guests. If I order the cioppino with rice noodles and my server knows I am gluten-free and is hopefully communicating that to the kitchen, please do not put a piece of toasted wheat bread on top of my dish. This happens again and again to my family.

5. If you go to the trouble of creating a gluten-free menu, or marking items on your menu that are GF, please inform your servers about whether your specials contain gluten when you inform them about the dish. I find that they almost never know about gluten (even if there is a dedicated gluten-free menu for regular items) and always have to go ask. It doesn't inspire confidence and it creates so much back and forth to get an answers.

6. Earn big points with a bread alternative. If you provide bread to your guests, you will thrill me to no end by offering me a small plate of raw veggies, pickles, or corn tortilla chips instead. And yes, I'm happy to pay a small upcharge for this courtesy.

7. Make sure your gluten-free items really are gluten-free. I have caught numerous red flags on the menus in many restaurants - malt vinegar, beer, soy sauce, or other gluten-containing ingredients listed on a dish that is supposed to be gluten-free.

8. If you don't have a gluten-free menu, at least make sure your servers have a list of the items on the menu that are gluten-free, or at the very least that your kitchen has such a list. I can't make a good decision about what to eat if the server is going back

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and forth to the kitchen with questions and then coming to my table trying to remember exactly what the kitchen said. Often much is lost in translation and a server tells us he "thinks" something is gluten-free.

9. Be respectful of the promise you are making with gluten-free food. If you can't protect from cross-contamination, be honest. People who order gluten-free items have a variety of needs, including celiacs who become seriously ill from small cross-contamination, gluten intolerants who don't need a separate area in the kitchen but can't eat food you cook on the same pizza stone or in the same uncleaned pan where gluten was cooked, to people who choose to avoid gluten because they don't want to eat it and are not impacted by cross-contamination at all. 100% gluten-free is very hard to achieve. We get it. So just tell us the truth. Make it clear exactly what level of gluten-free you're offering so people can make informed choices.

10. Expand your clientele by realizing that there really is no reason to use gluten in nearly every dish on your menu. I've been stunned when restaurants tell me there is gluten in items such as risotto or Hollandaise sauce that do not traditionally include or use gluten! There are so many alternatives to gluten that work perfectly well in so many dishes. I ate at a major chain hotel's restaurant in Dublin and they told me they use no gluten in any sauces since so many diners are celiac or intolerant there and they achieve the same results with cornstarch. Often people are turned off at the thought of gluten-free food but the truth is gluten is unnecessary in so many recipes and no one cares or knows if you use cornstarch instead of flour. I cook wonderful food at home without gluten every single day and there is almost nothing I can't make. I would love it if the professionals would come to the same conclusion.

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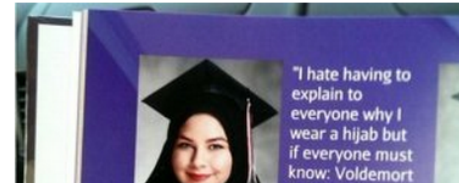


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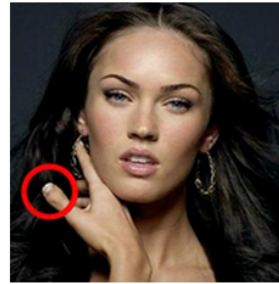
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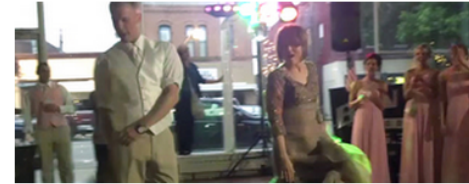
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