



Catering for Gluten Intolerant and Coeliac Guests

As a host with Australian Homestay Network (AHN), you will receive requests to host students with varying dietary requirements, including guests who are gluten intolerant or coeliac. Below are some misconceptions about providing these meals, as well as a few tips on how to cater for guests who follow a gluten-free diet.

COMMON MYTHS

Hosting a guest with special dietary requirements is challenging:

While hosting a guest with specific dietary requirements does require some consideration, it doesn't have to be hard. By communicating with your guest and their family, even before arrival, you can understand their needs and find suitable food options for them. You can cook meals that suit both of your diets with a little planning. Or, you may wish to switch to the same diet while the guest is staying with you; an adventure in your own home!

Being gluten intolerant and coeliac is the same thing:

Incorrect. While there are a lot of similarities between the two, there are distinct differences.

Coeliac Disease is an immune-based condition. Coeliacs must follow a strict gluten-free diet or could suffer long-term health consequences such as chronic inflammation, malnutrition, infertility and an increased risk of bowel cancer.

Even small amounts of gluten can be harmful, which is why it's essential to prevent cross-contamination when storing, preparing, cooking and serving food in the home. Take care to store gluten-free products away from gluten-containing food and separate utensils, cooking equipment and food prep areas. Examples of this could be having two toasters or using a [toaster bag](#), or separating your butter and spreads into individual containers to ensure breadcrumbs aren't accidentally left behind and consumed. Read more about managing cross-contact at home [here](#).

Gluten Intolerance can often present with similar symptoms to coeliac disease, however, the severity is more in line with discomfort and it's less likely to have a full negative impact on a person's overall health. Where Coeliac Disease is an autoimmune disorder, gluten intolerance is a sensitivity.

Some people with non-coeliac gluten sensitivity may not need to give up gluten entirely and may see improvement by simply reducing gluten and carbohydrate intake.

Gluten-free meals are expensive to prepare:

While there may be certain specialised gluten-free products that can be more expensive, providing meals for gluten intolerant or coeliac guests does not necessarily have to be costly. Many common foods are naturally gluten free while other specific items are readily available in most grocery stores as outlined below.

Providing gluten-free meals is restrictive:

Avoiding gluten can be tricky to start with, however, once you sit down and see which products you can use you'll realise it's not overly limiting. Many foods are naturally free of gluten, including:

- Fresh fruit and vegetables
- Raw, unprocessed meat, poultry and seafood
- Eggs
- Nut and seeds
- Raw herbs and spices (always read the label to ensure no wheat, barley or rye have been added if you're buying a seasoning mix)
- Legumes, example chickpeas, soy beans, black beans, lentils
- Natural and minimally processed dairy foods such as cow's milk, cheese and yoghurt
- Fats and oils
- Gluten-free grains include rice, corn, quinoa, buckwheat and soy.

Gluten-free food is difficult to find:

Besides the everyday whole foods mentioned above, gluten-free products are usually pretty accessible. Supermarkets generally stock items for specific dietary needs in their Health Food aisle or you can look for products labelled Gluten Free in other sections. The Coeliac Australia Endorsement Logo also helps you to easily identify gluten-free foods while shopping.



Gluten-free food is not as tasty:

While some packaged gluten-free products might not be as flavourful or have an odd texture, the range available nowadays means there are plenty of options to try. Your guest or their parents should be able to give you the names of some brands they like.

It's actually also simple to make tasty gluten-free meals from scratch – just look at all the everyday food and ingredients we've listed that can be used! There are thousands of recipes available online on popular sites like [taste.com.au](https://www.taste.com.au) and [RecipeTin Eats](https://www.recipe-tin.com.au), as well as inspiration from chefs like [Jamie Oliver](https://www.jamieoliver.com) and Australia's own "Gluten-Free Queen" [Helen Tzouganatos](https://www.helentzouganatos.com).

BONUS TIPS

Communicate with your guests prior to their arrival:

We touched on this earlier but it's so easy and important. Ask your guests in advance about their dietary needs and preferences, what they like to eat, and their recommendations on how best to cater for them. This will help you plan and prepare accordingly.



Be cautious when dining out with your guest:

More and more restaurants and take aways will offer gluten-free options and some cater to coeliac customers.

If they don't have visible indicators about which menu items are gluten free, just be careful that you and your guest are provided with correct information from the kitchen regarding ingredients and how the food is prepared.

You will need to be more conscious about coeliac-friendly venues to ensure there is no cross-contamination. We recommend you dine at [restaurants accredited by Coeliac Australia](https://www.coeliac.org.au) so you can be confident they will cater to your guests' unique needs.



Educate your whole household:

If you're providing a gluten free or coeliac diet as part of your homestay packages, make sure your family members are aware of the requirements and understand the importance of avoiding cross-contamination.

Check food additives and ingredients at home:

Always check the [ingredient and allergen labelling](#) on your food products.

INGREDIENTS derived from wheat, rye, barley or oats will be shown on food labels in **bold**. If there is no mention of wheat, rye, barley or oats here it means that no ingredient is derived from a gluten-containing grain.

CONTAINS provides a summary of the allergens (including gluten) present in the ingredients of a product. Gluten and wheat must be declared separately.

The inclusion of gluten in the allergen summary statement indicates that gluten is present. These products are not suitable for a gluten-free diet.

If only wheat is declared here it indicates that the product contains a wheat-derived ingredient, but that it does NOT contain gluten. These products are suitable for a gluten-free diet. Products with this declaration may also be labelled 'gluten-free'.

MAY CONTAIN are voluntary, precautionary statements. Examples include 'May be present: Gluten', 'May contain wheat', or 'Manufactured in a facility uses to produce other products containing gluten'.

For coeliacs, it's generally best practice to avoid products where wheat or gluten is mentioned in the MAY CONTAIN statement, however, it's up to individuals to make their own decision so check with your guest about what their approach is.



Contact AHN

For General Support / Feedback
Contact your local AHN office
[homestaynetwork.org/contact-us](https://www.homestaynetwork.org/contact-us)

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