



## Gluten-free options abound for holiday meals, desserts

While many people look forward to traditional foods of the holiday season, those with gluten intolerance or celiac disease may not share the same enthusiasm. Their trepidation is related to the many foods that contain the gluten protein found in wheat and related grains. Also, many foods contain gluten in forms that are not easily recognized.

More than most any other time of the year, this season has an abundance of traditional foods containing gluten. Thanksgiving has turkey stuffing, gravy and pies. And in the days leading up to the Dec. 8 Honolulu Marathon, the event's 10,000 to 15,000 local runners and walkers will be carbo-loading. Of course, gluten-rich pasta is the classic carbo-loading food.

The holiday season continues throughout December and into the new year with lots of cookies, specialty breads and many other goodies that can isolate the gluten-sensitive individual. With studies indicating the number of individuals sensitive to gluten has doubled during the past 15 years, you are likely to know at least a few people who would greatly appreciate hav-

ing a gluten-free option or at least knowing which foods they can feel safe to eat.

**QUESTION:** What are good gluten-free options for Thanksgiving Day foods?

**ANSWER:** For turkey stuffing, commercial gluten-free stuffing mixes are now available at many supermarkets and specialty food stores. These are good for the novice gluten-free cook. For more experienced gluten-free bakers, making gluten-free breads are a bit more challenging, but many supermarkets carry specialty flours such as Bob's Red Mill flours. Ask at your local grocery.

Other creative stuffings can be based on rice or gluten-free oats, mixed with nuts and fruit.

Gravy is usually made with wheat flour as a thickener but can be made with cornstarch or sweet rice flour. Remember that for gravy to be gluten-free, the turkey should not be stuffed with traditional wheat bread dressing.

**Q:** What are some good gluten-free carbo-loading options?

**A:** If you want to stick with pasta, there are some rice-based pasta options that can be a good stand-in.

Other high-carb foods are potatoes, sweet potatoes, taro, poi and more exotic grains like quinoa. Don't overdo the quinoa, though, for those who are prone to kidney stones. Quinoa is rather high in oxalic acid, which contributes to the formation of the major type of kidney stone. Also, don't be fooled by the more exotic forms of wheat such as spelt, kamut, couscous and orzo. They all contain gluten.

**Q:** What are some good gluten-free dessert options for the holiday season?

**A:** The classic holiday meringue cookie does not contain gluten. Try some of the gluten-free cookie premixes available or use recipes such as Alton Brown's five-star chewy gluten-free chocolate chip cookie on the Food Network website. Outside of using gluten-free flour mixes, there are many other options such as tapioca pudding cooked with dried cranberries.

On the savory side, try gluten-free crackers that can be spruced up with cheeses or sliced meats cut to fit.

To request gluten-free recipes, email Joannie Dobbs at [food-info@hawaii.edu](mailto:food-info@hawaii.edu).

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