

The Wheat-Free Cook

*Gluten-Free Recipes
for Everyone*



JACQUELINE
MALLORCA

the
wheat-free
cook

GLUTEN-FREE RECIPES FOR EVERYONE

jacqueline mallorca



WILLIAM MORROW

An Imprint of HarperCollins Publishers

dedication

for chuck williams

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dedication

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introduction

I’VE ALWAYS LOVED COOKING, and baking in particular, so when I was told that I could no longer eat wheat in any form, I was taken aback. And the diet sheet I was given seemed calculated to bring on severe depression. Torn between outrage and laughter, I decided that if life had handed me a lemon, I was going to fight back. I’d cook it.

As anyone who is new to cooking without wheat or gluten soon discovers, it was a bit like exploring a foreign cuisine and using unfamiliar ingredients. However, being a food writer, I’m used to developing recipes, so I did have an advantage right out of the starting gate. Flours made from brown rice, quinoa, teff, chestnuts, almonds, and flax began to fill my freezer. Cakes, cookies, and tarts were no problem at all, and in fact often surpassed the originals made with wheat flour. Gratifyingly, food friends and associates—knowledgeable cooks with critical palates—all chorused the same refrain: “Jackie, this is better than the wheat version. And lighter. Can I have the recipe?”

Bread was another matter, at least in the early days. Gluten-free flours lack structure: they don’t interact with leavening to create a light, airy loaf. The gluten-free bread one could buy was appalling, so I kept trying and finally hit upon the idea of returning to the small, round hearth breads of old. They have a crisp crust that contrasts with the soft interior, and being made with whole grains in true artisan style, they’re healthful as well as delicious. They are also very quick to stir together.

Day-to-day cooking doesn’t need all that much tweaking to make it gluten-free. After all, it’s just as easy to thicken a comforting stew with rice flour or cornstarch as it is with all-purpose flour, and sautéed chicken breast tastes much better when coated with a mixture of ground hazelnuts and Parmesan than it ever did covered in stale boxed bread crumbs. I’ve included a cross-section of recipes for everyday cooking and weekend entertaining that everyone at the table can relish, whether they’re gluten-sensitive or not.

Cooking necessarily involves buying ingredients, and gluten-sensitive shoppers do have to become hawk-eyed label checkers. Wheat can turn up in the most unexpected places, like soy sauce, so you’ll find a buyer’s guide. Be aware that “wheat free” doesn’t necessarily mean gluten-free. Happily, new labeling laws now coming into effect are making gluten-free shopping easier every day, and some chains, like Whole Foods and Trader Joe’s, offer pamphlets listing literally hundreds of gluten-free groceries, from corn spaghetti to Japanese tamari sauce.

There is a world beyond wheat, and a very rewarding one at that. I have thoroughly enjoyed creating these recipes, and I hope that you—and your family and friends—will enjoy them too.

wheat allergy versus celiac disease

A wheat allergy and celiac disease are not the same thing. When a person has a wheat allergy, his or her immune system has an abnormal reaction to the proteins in wheat. Other major food allergens include eggs, corn, fish and shellfish, milk, peanuts, soy, and tree nuts.

When someone with celiac disease eats food containing gluten, part of the protein found in wheat, barley, and rye, it triggers an immune-system attack on the lining of the small intestine. The resulting damage, which prevents the body from absorbing nutrients properly, can lead to diarrhea, fatigue, nausea and weight loss, and of course, malnutrition. Many health professionals believe that untreated celiac disease—which often has no symptoms—can lead to osteoporosis, anemia, infertility, and cancer. A related condition, dermatitis herpetiformis, causes a distinctive weepy, itchy rash that frequently appears on the hands, behind the knees, and inside the elbows. Unfortunately, a dermatologist will rarely suggest that it might be caused by something you ate.

Up until quite recently, it took an average of eleven years to get a correct diagnosis for celiac disease, partly because symptoms vary so much among individuals, and because it was thought to be a childhood ailment rarely seen in America. That point of view is changing. It is now estimated that celiac disease affects 0.5 percent to 1 percent of the U.S. population, or between 1.5 million to 2 million Americans. (In Finland, it's 2 percent of the population; in Italy, 1.2 percent and in northern Ireland, .09 percent.) Diagnosis is often difficult, as the symptoms can mimic other conditions such as Crohn's disease, or be ascribed to irritable bowel syndrome. Blood tests can reveal celiac-related antibodies, but an intestinal biopsy is usually needed.

Celiac disease is hereditary, though not all children of a parent with the disease will test positive. As with a food allergy, there is no cure other than avoiding the offending substance, at least so far. Still, this beats taking drugs with unknown long-term side effects.

Although those of us with a wheat allergy or celiac disease must be vigilant about what we buy and eat, we don't have to forgo favorites like pasta, bread, and cake. We can still eat well and entertain family and friends at the table, perhaps even better and more healthfully than ever before.

Dining out also requires caution. Generous friends and relations who want to cook for you but are uncertain about the, um, gustatory limitations are no problem—just give them a copy of this book. Fast-food chains are generally off-limits, as the majority of their offerings involve wheat in one form or another. In any case, the food tends to arrive in those kitchens prepacked, and the staff has no idea what's actually in it. But here too, government regulations that demand full disclosure are starting to come into effect. All those people diagnosed with celiac disease, plus millions of others with various food allergies, do have a certain amount of clout.

As celiac disease becomes better known among the general public, even chains are starting to offer gluten-free specials. You'll find that the waiters in established restaurants are generally most helpful if you ask their advice about the menu, explaining with regret that you can't eat anything containing wheat flour in the sauce (or dusted on before browning), bread crumbs, croutons, or pasta. Chefs are nurturing people by nature, and will usually make a big effort to take care of you—and gain a happy repeat customer.

the gluten-free shopper

If you're new to dining well without wheat or gluten, keep the following "do's, don'ts, and maybes" in mind when grocery shopping. (For mail-order suppliers of gluten-free foods and mixes, and useful contact information for gluten intolerance support groups and other resources.)

YES

All fresh meats, seafood, poultry, and eggs; fish canned in oil, brine, or water; cured or cooked meats like prosciutto and ham; many sausages (but always check the labels)

All plain fruits and vegetables (fresh, frozen, or canned); plain fruit juices; fresh and dried herbs; dried beans, peas, and lentils; olives

All plain dairy products, including milk, cream, and butter. Sour cream, cottage cheese, and yogurt are fine if they contain no suspect thickeners.

All types of cheese (except processed), such as Cheddar, Swiss, Parmesan, ricotta, goat's and sheep's milk cheeses

Olive oil, canola oil, and other pure vegetable oils; margarine

All vinegars (except malt vinegar)

Tamari sauce, if brewed solely from soybeans

Chicken, beef, and vegetable broths, if they contain no hydrolyzed wheat protein or other source of gluten

Jams and jellies, honey, sugar, molasses, maple syrup, corn syrup

Plain chocolate (dark, milk, and white) and chocolate chips; pure cocoa powder

Plain nuts and nut flours; peanut butter

Tea, coffee, and pure hot chocolate and cocoa

Plain ice creams, frozen yogurts (check the labels), sorbets

Rice (all types: white, brown, converted, jasmine, basmati, Arborio, etc.)

Corn (cornmeal, masa harina, grits, cornstarch, polenta, precooked polenta rolls, tortillas, etc.)

Other Grains, Seeds, Roots, and Flours

Amaranth, arrowroot, buckwheat (kasha), flax, millet, potato starch, potato flour, quinoa, sorghum, soy, tapioca (manioc), and teff

Pasta made from rice, corn, buckwheat, quinoa, or any other gluten-free grain; Asian rice flour and mung bean noodles

Miscellaneous Ingredients

Annatto; citric, malic, and lactic acids; glucose syrup; guar gum; lecithin; maltodextrin (a corn derivative, unrelated to barley malt); plain spices; sucrose, dextrose, and lactose; baking powder, baking soda, and cream of tartar; pure vanilla extract; active dry yeast; xanthan gum

Wines, red and white; fortified wines like sherry; all distilled alcoholic beverages such as brandy, rum, Scotch, tequila, and vodka

MAYBE

Modified food starch research suggests that most modified food starch used in the United States is cornstarch, but some may be modified wheat starch (contact the manufacturer if in doubt)

Oats (oats are technically gluten-free, but may be contaminated with other grains)

Mustards, ketchups, salad dressings, and flavored yogurts (these products are usually gluten-free, but always read the labels)

Pharmaceuticals (pharmaceuticals are usually gluten-free, but check to make sure)

NO

Wheat, and anything with wheat in its name except buckwheat (a misnomer, it is gluten-free), and any form of wheat, such as bulgur, bread flour, cake flour, couscous, durum, einkorn, emmer,

farina, farro, kamut, matzo, semolina, spelt, triticale, and wheat bran

Bread, pizza, hamburger buns, cookies, crackers, pretzels, and other bakery items made from wheat, barley, or rye flour

Breakfast cereals, except those marked gluten-free. (Even standard cornflakes contain malt flavoring, which is made from barley.)

Pasta made from wheat

Foods containing modified wheat starch, hydrolyzed wheat protein, malt (flavoring, syrup, or extract), and malt vinegar

Meat, poultry, seafood, or vegetables that have been breaded or floured, or are served with a sauce or gravy thickened with wheat flour or marinated in a mixture that contains soy sauce or teriyaki sauce. This includes most frozen meals, fast foods, snack foods, and deli take-out items.

Canned soups and chicken, beef, and vegetable broths containing flour or hydrolyzed wheat protein, barley, or pasta

Beer, as it is brewed from barley. However, gluten-free beers made in the United States, Canada, Britain, and Australia are now appearing on the market.

Happily, gluten-free shopping becomes easier all the time. The number of manufacturers making gluten-free foods is increasing rapidly, and new research often shifts foods from the “maybe” to the “yes” category. For well-researched, up-to-date information about what’s in that used to be out, read the magazine *Gluten-Free Living*.

gluten-free grains, flours, and other ingredients

WHEN YOU LOOK BEYOND WHEAT, there's a whole cornucopia of gluten-free grains, seeds, and nuts out there that have been cultivated since the dawn of civilization. Rice sustains more than half of the world's population, and along with corn is the most obvious and useful alternative to wheat. In addition, there's South American amaranth and quinoa, East African teff, Asian millet (revered by the ancient Chinese as one of their Five Sacred Grains and the most widely used grain in India today), and northern European buckwheat, which isn't wheat at all but botanically related to rhubarb. Nuts such as walnuts, almonds, pecans, and chestnuts make wonderful flour, as do dried beans. Even cocoa can be utilized as a form of flour.

I can't claim that this is a comprehensive list, but it does include those ingredients most readily available in the United States. Some grains are best when used whole in pilafs, others shine when ground into flour and used for baking, and most are good both ways. Nearly all of them are utilized as whole-grain flours, with all their nutrients intact, and provide healthful complex carbohydrates and fiber as well as good flavors.

As a general rule, it's best to buy nuts and gluten-free flours in small quantities and store them in the freezer or refrigerator. Being completely natural, they contain no preservatives or other dubious additions. It's advisable to buy gluten-free flours that have been prepackaged in a dedicated facility. Open bins in natural foods stores can be cross-contaminated by other customers using a scoop from one neighboring bin containing, say, whole wheat flour.

In your own kitchen, keep any gluten-containing products strictly segregated, and don't share hard-to-clean items like a toaster, or let anyone put gluten-free bread or crackers on the same platter with those made from wheat. Even the tiny amount of gluten present in a few bread crumbs can cause trouble for celiacs.

You can grind your own flours from gluten-free whole grains, but it may be more trouble than it's worth. I have an electronic grain mill, which makes more noise than the Concorde taking off. It usually sends my late-lamented cat flying from the kitchen with her fur standing on end. It does a good job but wafts flour over every surface. An electric coffee mill reserved for grinding things other than coffee is useful for reducing small quantities of flaxseeds or nuts to flour. A food processor simply whirls the former about, and tends to make nut paste from the latter unless you add rice flour or sugar. I don't blend my own supposedly all-purpose flour mix, as most breads, cookies, tart shells, and cakes require different ratios of gluten-free flours to be at their best.

almond meal/flour

Ground from whole almonds with the bran intact, this mellow, off-white flour is invaluable for cakes and cookies. It is available ready ground, but unless you can find a source with a high turnover—ensure freshness—and reasonable prices (Trader Joe's is a good source), it's best to grind your own.

An electric coffee mill reserved for grinding items other than coffee works pretty well. If you use a food processor, combining whole almonds with a little rice flour or sugar, subtracted from the other ingredients listed in a recipe, helps to prevent turning the nuts into paste by mistake. Incidentally, a cup of whole almonds weighs 4 ounces. One cup of ready-ground almond meal weighs approximately 3 ounces.

amaranth

A tiny round grain known as the “mother grain” in the Inca empire, *Amaranthus caudatus* is not a true cereal, although it’s used like one. High in protein, calcium, iron, and fiber, the whole grains cook in 15 minutes or less.

arrowroot starch

Derived from the rhizomes of various tropical plants and generally used in North America as a thickener, this cornstarch-like product gives a glossy finish to sauces. Be cautious about utilizing it in cookie doughs, as too much will turn the baked cookies into cement.

brown rice flour, white rice flour

The all-purpose workhorse of the gluten-free kitchen, flour milled from brown rice is mellow in flavor, nutritious, and generally invaluable. White rice flour (not to be confused with Asian rice flour, a silky powder) is milled from hulled rice. When used in baking, both brown rice flour and white rice flour are usually combined with cornstarch, potato starch, or tapioca starch to counteract their slight coarse texture.

buckwheat, buckwheat flour

Not wheat at all but a relative of rhubarb (the name is derived from the Dutch *bockweit*, as the triangular seeds were thought to resemble beech nuts), buckwheat is a hardy plant that manages to flourish in poor soils and inhospitable climates. Famously used in Russian *blini* (pancakes) and Japanese soba noodles, buckwheat flour is excellent in rustic flatbreads. The whole grains or groats are made into kasha, a dish that corresponds to an Arabic pilaf or an Italian risotto.

chestnuts, chestnut flour

The European chestnut, *Castanea sativa*, contains more starch and far less oil than any other tree nut and makes a sweet-tasting flour. Once used by poor peasants in rural Italy for making hearth breads and polenta, it’s more of a luxury food today. Whole chestnuts can serve as a starchy vegetable or stuffing ingredient, or be turned into delicious desserts. They are available fresh, canned, frozen vacuum-packed, and candied. For more information on chestnuts.

chickpeas, chickpea flour

Ground from dried chickpeas, or garbanzo beans as they are also known, chickpea flour has a distinctive but pleasant flavor, making it a good candidate for breads but not cakes. Universal and popular Middle Eastern dishes like hummus and falafel are based on chickpeas, and the cuisine of India would be poorer without them. Garfava flour is a proprietary blend of garbanzo and fava bean flour.

chocolate

Chocolate is derived from the seeds of cacao trees cultivated mainly in Latin America, West Africa, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Caribbean. Depending on where they're grown, cacao beans, like coffee beans, have distinct flavor characteristics: fruity, floral, and so on. After harvesting, the beans undergo fermentation, when they start to develop their unique flavors, and are then dried and graded. Chocolate manufacturers roast and hull the beans to free the meat, or nibs. These nibs are ground into chocolate liquor, a thick, nonalcoholic paste of cacao butter, a form of vegetable fat, and vegetable solids. Unsweetened chocolate is essentially solidified chocolate liquor with a high percentage of cacao butter. Bittersweet, semisweet, and milk chocolate contain increasing amounts of sugar, so the percentage of cacao butter decreases accordingly. White chocolate is cacao butter (often mixed with some other, cheaper fat) mixed with lots of sugar, milk solids, and vanilla, and tastes of dried milk powder. Dark chocolate and chocolate chips with at least 60 percent cacao butter are the best choice for baking—and eating—for their rich flavor and silky smoothness. Ghirardelli's 60 percent dark chocolate is an excellent buy, the thin bars are easy to chop and melt, and both the chocolate and Ghirardelli's 60 percent chocolate chips give first-rate results in baking.

cocoa powder

Cocoa powder is made when chocolate liquor is pressed to extract about three-quarters of its cacao butter. (The correct spelling got mangled years ago.) The remaining solids are made into unsweetened cocoa powder, either natural or Dutch-processed. Natural unsweetened cocoa powder gives a deep, intense chocolate flavor to baked goods, and is the form I prefer. Good brands include Hershey's, Ghirardelli, and Scharffen Berger. Dutch-processed unsweetened cocoa is treated with an alkali to neutralize its natural acidity, has a more delicate flavor, and dissolves easily in liquids. Valrhona and Droste are two excellent brands. Both natural and Dutch-processed cocoa make good gluten-free baking ingredients.

corn, cornmeal, cornstarch

Corn, more often known outside the United States as maize, is actually a kind of grass with huge seed heads, or cobs. Fresh sweet corn in season is a treat; popcorn is a perennial favorite as a snack. Cornmeal remains an integral part of American cooking in the form of corn bread, grits, and tortillas, and Italian polenta has now become popular. Eating corn with beans creates a complementary mix of amino acids that raises the protein value. If possible, avoid labels that say "degerminated" when buying corn products; you want the whole grain. When used as a thickener for sauces, silky white cornstarch gives a glossy finish. Particularly useful in baking, it helps to smooth out the slight coarse texture of many gluten-free flours, but like its fellow starches, has little or no nutritional value. Cornstarch is generally interchangeable with potato starch and Asian rice flour/sweet white rice flour in baking.

flaxseeds, flaxmeal

According to nutritionists, flaxseeds are one of most nutritious plant foods on the planet. They contain more heart-healthy omega-3 oil than fish and more fiber than oats, and have a pleasantly nutty, grassy flavor. You can grind your own using an electric coffee mill (a food processor just spins them around

as the outer coating is extremely hard), or buy preground flaxmeal and store it in the freezer. Flaxmeal can lend suppleness as well as goodness to gluten-free breads, as it's high in flax oil. However, as always, consult your physician and nutritionist for their views about the nutritional and medical value of any so-called super food.

garbanzo flour

See Chickpea Flour.

garfava flour

See Chickpea Flour.

lentils, lentil flour

One of the few dried pulses that don't have to be soaked before cooking, brown, green and black lentils cook in about 35 minutes and make a tasty side dish. The little red ones are best for soup, as they quickly disintegrate. Various kinds of lentil flour are much used in India for making poppadums, those crispy wafers that complement curries so well. (Imported poppadums are available, but read the label to make sure they are gluten-free.) Lentil flour is good in flatbreads, and lentil flour "risotto" makes a welcome addition to hearty soups.

manioc flour

See Tapioca Starch.

millet, millet flour

One of the first grains to be cultivated by man, perhaps 12,000 years ago, nutritious millet contains almost 15 percent protein. The leading staple grain in India, it is also popular in China, South America, Russia, and the Himalayas. It has a mellow, nutty flavor and cooks in just 15 minutes, but few people in North America are familiar with it. Much too good to reserve for birdseed, millet makes an excellent pilaf or grain salad, especially when toasted before cooking to bring out its delicate flavor. It also makes a good hot breakfast cereal with raisins and honey. Use the flour mixed with other gluten-free flours in breads and muffins.

montina, montina flour

Developed in Montana from Indian lovegrass, a hardy native plant that thrives in poor soils, this high-protein grain yields good flour for gluten-free baking.

nuts, nut flours

A storehouse of vitamins, minerals, and fiber as well as being good to eat at any time, almonds, hazelnuts, pecans, and walnuts make luxurious gluten-free flours. True, most nuts are also high in oil, but it's the heart-healthy, mono- or polyunsaturated kind. When nuts are ground, the flavorful oil content can take the place of butter in baking; just as the starchy part stands in for flour. Nutrient-rich peanuts are not true nuts but legumes.

oats, oat flour, oatmeal

Oats do not contain gluten, despite long-standing claims to the contrary. Oats, however, are particularly subject to cross-contamination by other grains in the field, or during the milling and packing process in a plant that also handles other grains. In a recent newsletter published by the Celiac Disease Center at Columbia University, readers were advised that multiple studies in Europe and the United States show that the majority of people with celiac disease tolerate oats. Reliably gluten-free oats are available by mail order from the Gluten-Free Oats Company in Powell, Wyoming, and Creech Hill Estates in La Salle, Quebec. Aside from the fact that oatmeal tastes delicious, scientific studies have shown that oats contain a special form of fiber, beta-glucan, found to be effective in lowering LDL cholesterol.

potato flour

This is a heavy, strongly flavored flour sometimes added to bread in small amounts. Don't confuse with potato starch, which is far more useful.

potato starch

A silky white starch with a texture like talcum powder that's useful as a thickener, potato starch is interchangeable with cornstarch and Asian rice flour/sweet white rice flour for smoothing out the slightly coarse texture of whole-grain brown rice flour.

quinoa, quinoa flakes, quinoa flour

Along with amaranth, high-protein quinoa helped to sustain the vast Inca empire before the arrival of the Spanish conquerors, who banned its cultivation for religious and political reasons. Botanically related to Swiss chard and beets, the whole grains make excellent pilafs and hearty salads; the flour—used in conjunction with other gluten-free flours—is good in breads. Quinoa flakes make a mellow, high-protein addition to homemade muesli, stuffings, and meat loaves, and can be cooked like oatmeal. Most quinoa must be rinsed before cooking to remove the residue of bitter saponins, the plant's defense against insects.

rice

Rice, *Oryza sativa*, sustains more than half of the world's population. There are hundreds of varieties, but all of them fall into two main camps: Indica rice, which is dry and separate, and Japonica rice, which sticks together. The former is fluffier when cooked (think of pilaf); the latter contains more starch and is generally gummier and creamier (think of creamy risotto or rice pudding.) Whole, brown, rice contains complex carbohydrates, thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, phosphorus, iron, potassium, and fiber. White rice is refined, with the germ and bran removed. In the United States, most refined white rice found on grocery shelves is enriched with at least some of the nutrients lost during processing, but not the fiber. Converted rice is parboiled before refining, a process that forces some of the B vitamins into the endosperm so they are not lost when the bran is polished off, but it's still not as healthful as brown rice. Some round-grain rice varieties, like Italian Arborio and Spanish Calasparra, are especially good for absorbing flavorful broths during cooking while simultaneously retaining their shape. All kinds of rice are gluten-free, from Uncle Ben's to the exotic ones like Bhutanese red rice and Japanese black rice. Glutinous rice, spelled with an "i," is another term for

sticky rice. It does not contain gluten.

rice flour, asian

Not the same product as rice flour milled from brown or white rice, silky white rice starch interchangeable with cornstarch as a thickener, and as a mixer in gluten-free baking.

sorghum/milo

A hardy, gluten-free mild-tasting grain believed to have originated in Africa, sorghum can be utilized like oatmeal, and is available as flour.

soy flour

Like most bean flours, yellow soy flour has a pronounced flavor. A cheap source of protein, it is used extensively in the food industry in everything from frozen desserts to meat loaf. A small amount can be used in gluten-free breads, but it makes them dense.

sweet rice flour/starch

Milled from glutinous or sticky white rice, this neutral-tasting (not sweet) starch has a slightly sticky quality that can be handy for baking when used in combination with other gluten-free flours, as it helps to retain moisture.

tapioca starch

A favorite for bread baking when combined with other gluten-free flours, tapioca starch lends a chewy, slightly elastic quality. Also known as cassava or manioc and derived from a root, the whole root “pearls” and granulated tapioca can be made into a milk-based pudding.

teff flour

Tiny, highly nutritious teff, the staple grain of Ethiopia and Eritrea, is now cultivated successfully in the United States. Available as ivory or brownish flour at some natural foods stores and by mail order, teff flour has a sweet, molasseslike flavor and makes exceptional gluten-free brownies, cookies, and gingerbread. It can also be cooked like porridge for breakfast. A form of millet, it contains over twice the iron of other grains and twenty times the calcium: one cup of cooked teff contains more calcium (387 mg) than a cup of milk.

wild rice

This is not a true rice at all, but the long, dark brown, slightly smoky-flavored seed of an aquatic grass indigenous to the Great Lakes region. A luxury food that is usually blended with other types of rice because of its high price and assertive though delicious flavor, wild rice has twice the protein and fiber of brown rice, but not as much iron and calcium.

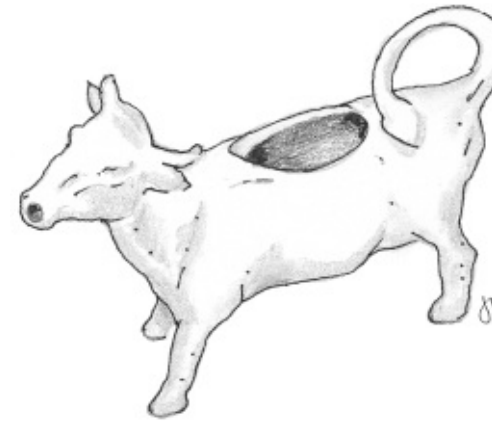
xanthan gum

Derived from corn sugar, this white powder looks a lot like baking powder and is used in similar amounts, so an admittedly rather costly 8-ounce bag goes a long way. Invaluable in gluten-free bread

baking, it provides elasticity and helps to prevent dryness and crumbling. A very small quantity also benefits shortcrust pastry and some cakes and cookies, which can otherwise be too fragile. It can be found in natural foods stores, including Whole Foods, some supermarkets, and on the Web via sources such as Bob's Red Mill, and it keeps at room temperature.

breakfast

GIVEN THE PREVALENCE OF BOXED CEREALS, toast, bagels, and doughnuts on the average American morning menu, going wheat-free sounds difficult, if not impossible. In fact, breakfast bars and muffins made with alternative grains are delicious, not to mention good for your health. Rice Flour English Muffins freeze well and can be thawed and toasted whenever you please; toasty homemade muesli is another option. A weekend brunch, when there's time to linger, can include indulgences like pancakes, warm apple crumble, or an almond flour coffee cake like Grandma never made.



yogurt–rice flour pancakes

A GLUTEN-FREE BATTER makes Exceptionally tender pancakes, and cooking them on an ungreased nonstick griddle ensures a fine surface texture. It also prevents the aroma of burned butter from permeating your kitchen. The recipe can be doubled easily.

½ cup brown rice flour
1 teaspoon sugar
Pinch of fine sea salt
½ teaspoon baking soda
1 large egg
1 tablespoon canola oil
½ cup plain whole milk yogurt

■ **Makes 16 three-inch pancakes**

Combine the rice flour, sugar, salt, and baking soda. In a separate bowl, mix the egg, canola oil, and yogurt. Add to the dry ingredients and stir until smooth. The batter will look thick and puffy. Heat a heavy nonstick skillet or griddle over medium-low heat, but do not grease it. Add the batter by the heaped tablespoonful, spacing the pancakes 1 inch apart and flattening the batter a little with the back of the spoon. Cook until golden on both sides, 2 minutes or less. Stack on heated plates or keep warm in a low oven.

rice flour crêpes

UNLIKE A CRÊPE BATTER made with wheat flour, which has to stand for a while to let the gluten relax, this one can be used immediately. Quick to make and extremely versatile, crêpes can contain savory or sweet fillings, from Italian beef ragù to applesauce. They can be made ahead and refrigerated or frozen.

2 large eggs
Pinch of fine sea salt
Pinch of sugar
1 cup milk
1/3 cup white rice flour
1/3 cup cornstarch
2 tablespoons melted butter, plus extra for skillet

■ Makes approximately 15

1. In a blender or food processor, combine the eggs, salt, sugar, and milk. Process to blend. Add the rice flour and cornstarch, and process until smooth. Pour into a bowl and stir in the butter. The texture should be like thin cream. Stir occasionally while making the crêpes, adding a little water if the batter becomes too thick.
2. Heat an 8-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat, and grease lightly with butter. (No need to repeat this step.) Using a small measuring cup, ladle about 2 tablespoons of the batter into the pan, tilting the pan by the handle to cover the bottom. When lightly browned, about 1 minute, turn with a nylon spatula and cook for a further 30 seconds. Stack the crêpes on a plate with the well-browned side down.
3. To fill and roll, place about 1/3 cup of your chosen filling down the center of the paler side of each crêpe. Roll up like a cigar with the browned side out. Transfer to a plate or baking dish with the seared side down.

brown rice flour

Flour milled from brown rice was once dismissed as being of interest only to health food fanatics, but its nutty flavor and healthful qualities now attract mainstream chefs. Unlike white rice, brown rice undergoes only minor milling. Just the outer husk is removed, leaving the healthful bran layer intact. Flour made from it has a nonintrusive, mellow flavor. When mixed with other gluten-free flours, it can make delicious breads with a crisp crust and a tender crumb. (But not always. Thus far, the leaden, presliced rice flour loaves available in natural foods stores could double as door

stops.)

When it comes to making cakes and pastry, brown rice flour's lack of gluten becomes an advantage. While ideal for bread making, gluten can make other baked items tough, hence the use of low-gluten cake and pastry flours in upscale bakeries.

Don't confuse milled (ground) rice flour with Asian rice flour, a silky white powder much like cornstarch. The latter has its uses, but makes terrible bread on its own. On the other hand, for general baking, a small proportion of Asian rice flour/starch, cornstarch, or potato starch balances out the slightly coarse texture of brown rice flour very nicely. Tapioca starch serves the same purpose but adds a chewy element, so it's best used for breads.

Brown rice flour can be found in natural foods stores and some supermarkets, and by mail order. White rice flour milled from polished white rice doesn't contain all the fiber and B-group vitamins, which are lost when the bran is rubbed off, but it's useful in certain baked goods and for dusting fish fillets or chicken before cooking as it gives crisper results than brown rice flour, which is softer due to the bran content.

Always store brown rice flour in the refrigerator or freezer. Being a healthful, preservative-free, whole grain flour, it can go rancid at room temperature.

rice bran and raisin muffins

TRUTH TO TELL, THERE'S not much difference between the average American muffin and British cupcake. These muffins are of the more restrained plain variety, and are delicious with butter and marmalade. Like all muffins, they should be served warm. By the way, aluminum foil muffin cups will stand unaided on a baking sheet, and baked muffins don't stick to them.

1 cup rice bran
½ cup raisins
1¼ cups milk
4 tablespoons (½ stick) unsalted butter, softened
1/3 cup packed dark brown sugar
1 large egg
¼ cup honey
1 cup brown rice flour
½ cup cornstarch
1 tablespoon baking powder
½ teaspoon fine sea salt
½ cup sliced almonds, optional

■ Makes 14

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F. Grease muffin pans or line with cupcake papers. Alternatively, place 14 fluted aluminum foil muffin cups on a baking sheet,
2. Combine the rice bran, raisins, and milk in a large bowl, and let stand for 10 minutes.
3. Cream the butter and brown sugar together until fluffy, then beat in the egg and honey until smooth. Stir into the rice bran–milk mixture. Combine the rice flour, cornstarch, baking powder, and salt, and sift into the batter. Stir well to mix, and spoon into the muffin cups, filling them two-thirds full. Top with sliced almonds, if using. Bake until golden brown and risen, 25 minutes. Serve warm.



toasted quinoa muesli

MUESLI WAS ORIGINALLY CREATED in Switzerland about a century ago by Dr. Max Bircher-Benner, who served soaked raw oat flakes, nuts, and grated apple to patients at his natural health clinic in Zurich. A dear German friend, Inge Roberts, introduced me to her more luxurious version. She uses oats; toasted quinoa flakes taste equally good. The recipe can be multiplied ad infinitum.

¼ cup chopped pecans or sliced, toasted almonds
1 apple, unpeeled, cored and chopped
2 tablespoons raisins
½ cup quinoa flakes, lightly toasted in a dry skillet
1 banana, sliced
1 cup plain whole milk yogurt
2 tablespoons berry sauce or honey

■ Serves 2

Combine the pecans, apple, and raisins in a food processor and pulse to make a chunky sauce. Add the quinoa flakes, and pulse briefly to mix. Divide between 2 bowls, and top with the sliced banana and yogurt. Drizzle with berry sauce or honey.

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