

Gluten-free goodness

Can't imagine life without General Tso's Chicken and lo mein noodles? What about moo shu pancakes and wonton soup? You can if you have gluten sensitivity or celiac disease.

An autoimmune disorder that can occur in people with a genetic predisposition (possessing tissue transglutaminase, or tTG, antibodies), celiac disease is triggered by a protein called gluten, which is in wheat, barley and rye. When people with celiac disease eat foods containing gluten, their immune systems respond by damaging their small intestine.

Those with gluten sensitivity can endure abdominal pain, bloating, diarrhea and/or constipation when they consume gluten. Unlike celiac patients, people who are sensitive to gluten don't suffer intestinal damage or have tTG antibodies.

Two-and-a-half million Americans are believed to be undiagnosed sufferers of celiac disease, which can lead to serious health problems. Reportedly, one out of 236 Asians develops celiac disease. In 2013, researchers at Nanchang University determined the disease was more common than had been reported in China.

The only option for those with celiac disease and gluten sensitivity is a gluten-free diet. Yet, even if they avoid flour-based dishes, most Asian restaurant diners are almost guaranteed to be eating gluten. For example, all Chinese condiments – including traditional soy, oyster, hoisin and bean sauces – contain wheat.

So what choices do “wheatless” lovers of Asian food have?

- **Meals prepared at home.** You can cook gastro-friendly dishes such as Thai Chicken Curry. If cooking doesn't appeal to you, buy gluten-free frozen entrees and sides made by companies such as Feel Good Foods (<http://feel-good-foods.com>).
- **Gluten-free restaurant meals.** You might have noticed that restaurant chains such as PF Chang's serve gluten-free dishes. Chang's says its gluten-free dishes are cooked with chicken broth, oyster sauce, rice wine, sugar, water, and/or wheat free soy sauce and white pepper. Its cornstarch-based marinades are gluten free. Of course, steamed-vegetable menu options have always been a safe option for the non-gluten dinner.



Thai-Style Green Curry

- 1 cup jasmine rice
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 baby eggplants, halved lengthways, cut into 3/4-inch pieces
- 1 to 2 tablespoons Thai green curry paste, to taste
- 8 ounces green beans, stems removed, halved crosswise
- 2 carrots, sliced into bite-sized pieces
- 1/2 cup frozen peas
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- 1 bell pepper, de-seeded and sliced into bite-sized pieces
- 1 can (14 1/2 ounces) coconut milk
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 4 kaffir lime leaves, roughly torn
- 1 cup torn fresh basil leaves
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice (from 1 lime)
- 1/2 cup baby corn
- 2 tablespoons fish sauce
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- 2 teaspoons grated palm sugar, or regular sugar
- 1/4 cup cilantro (as garnish)

Prepare the rice.

Heat the oil in a wok or deep frying pan over high heat.

Add the eggplant and stir-fry for 3-4 minutes until golden. Set the eggplant aside.

Add the paste to the wok and stir briefly.

Add the green beans, carrots, peas, onion and bell pepper, and stir-fry, tossing 1-2 minutes until lightly seared.

Add the coconut milk, chicken stock, lime leaves and corn and bring to a boil.

Return the eggplant to the pan, and then reduce the heat to low and simmer for 5 minutes until the corn is just tender.

Stir in the fish sauce, lime juice and sugar and heat for 1 minute.

Garnish with cilantro, if desired, and serve over rice or rice noodles.

Recipe courtesy of celiac.com

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