

# Go with Gluten, or Gluten-Free?

by B. Kay Sugg

From gluten-free menu items in restaurants, to gluten-free labels—and even whole gluten-free aisles—in the supermarket, gluten-free (GF) designations are popping up everywhere. While for some this represents a trend, for many, adhering to a gluten-free diet is a matter of health. Here's what you need to know about gluten.

**What is Gluten?** Gluten is a protein found in wheat, barley, rye and triticale. In addition, wheat or wheat gluten is often added as a thickening or binding agent, flavoring, or coloring in processed foods; those adhering to a gluten-free diet must pay close attention to ingredient listings on food labels.

**Going Gluten-Free** There are some studies claiming that gluten-free diets are beneficial, and many popular diet trends center upon reducing or completely eliminating gluten intake. Cited benefits are improved health, weight loss, and increased energy, but more study is needed. According to market research, 26-30% of US adults eat a gluten-free diet as a part of what they believe to be a healthier diet. Going gluten-free is a choice for some people, however there are many who have no choice due to medical conditions associated with gluten.

**Celiac Disease** This is a hereditary autoimmune disease and occurs in those with a genetic susceptibility to it. When people with this disease eat gluten, the immune response of their bodies attacks and damages the small intestine and prevents the absorption of some nutrients. Symptoms include nausea, bloating, diarrhea, and anemia. Celiac disease in children can affect their growth and development.

Since there is no cure for Celiac disease, people that suffer from it rely on managing their symptoms by eating a gluten-free diet. Less than 1% of the US population has celiac disease, gluten ataxia, or wheat allergy according to the National Institutes of Health.

**Other Impacts** The results of a study of over 100,000 people who did not have celiac disease showed that those who ate gluten-free diets had an increased risk of heart disease compared to those who ate foods containing gluten. (People with celiac disease have twice the risk of developing coronary artery disease and four times the risk of developing cancer of the small bowel than those who eat a regular diet which includes gluten.)

If you do not have celiac disease or a diagnosed gluten sensitivity, eliminating gluten from your diet can lead to nutritional deficiencies and malnutrition. It is wise to be cautious and consult with your doctor before implementing gluten-free or other diets.

## Processed Foods That Often Contain Gluten

- Beer, ale, porter, stout
- Breads
- Bulgur wheat
- Cakes and pies
- Candies
- Cereals
- Communion wafers
- Cookies and crackers
- Croutons
- French fries
- Gravies
- Imitation meat or seafood
- Malt, malt flavoring
- Matzo
- Pastas
- Hot dogs
- Processed lunchmeats
- Salad dressings
- Sauces, soy sauce
- Seasoned rice mixes
- Potato and tortilla chips
- Self-basting poultry
- Soups, bouillon, soup mixes
- Vegetables in sauce

### Sources

National Center for Biotechnology Information, [ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](https://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)  
Celiac Disease Foundation, [celiac.org](https://celiac.org)  
Mayo Clinic, [mayoclinic.org](https://mayoclinic.org)





# Festive Cranberry Walnut CHEESE BALL

Recipe by Raia Todd

*Start your holidays with this quick, easy, and exceptionally good cheese ball. Not only is it delicious, it adds color and beauty to your table. For more gluten-free recipes (along with Paleo, Keto, and egg and dairy-free recipes), check out author and blogger Raia Todd's website, [raiasrecipes.com](http://raiasrecipes.com).*

## INGREDIENTS

1 8oz. package cream cheese, room temperature  
1 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese  
1 tsp orange zest  
1/2 cup finely chopped dried cranberries, divided  
1/4 cup finely chopped walnuts

## INSTRUCTIONS

- A few hours (or the day before) you'd like to devour the cheese ball, set out the cream cheese and let it come to room temperature.
- Combine cheeses, zest, and half of the chopped cranberries until smooth and well mixed.
- Stir cheese mixture in a ball and place it in the center of a piece of plastic wrap.
- Wrap the ball in the plastic, firming up the shape.
- Place the cheese ball in the fridge overnight or until firm.
- Before serving, combine the remaining cranberries with the walnuts.
- Roll the cheese ball in the cranberry/walnut mixture.
- Serve with gluten-free crackers.

## NOTES

To keep the cranberries sugar-free, roughly chop up fresh cranberries, spread them on a parchment-lined cookie sheet and dehydrate them in the oven at 170 degrees for about 6 hours. For faster prep you can use Craisins, or dried cranberries, which usually contain sugar.

