

UPGRADED HEALTH

The Gluten-Free Mediterranean Swap Guide

Keep the meal. Change the ingredient.

Practical substitutions for bread, pasta, grains, thickeners and sauces, with label checks and shared-kitchen habits that help you use your Mediterranean meal plan.

Inside this bonus

Ingredient-by-ingredient swap tables

Portion and cooking adjustments

A pantry list and one-day sample menu

Cross-contact and restaurant questions

A companion to The 30-Day Mediterranean Meal Plan System.

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Start with the meal you like

Keep the basic pattern

A Mediterranean-style meal can use vegetables, fruit, beans, fish, eggs, poultry, olive oil, nuts and gluten-free grains. Start with foods you enjoy, then replace any gluten-containing component. Gluten-free does not mean grain-free, low-carbohydrate or automatically higher in protein.

Know what you are replacing

Wheat, barley and rye contain gluten. Farro, spelt, bulgur, durum, semolina and conventional couscous are not gluten-free. Buckwheat is different from wheat, but packaged buckwheat products still need label checks. [1, 2]

For celiac disease or wheat allergy

This is an ingredient guide, not a diagnosis or treatment plan. If you are being evaluated for celiac disease, ask your clinician before removing gluten because dietary changes can affect testing. Celiac disease, wheat allergy and gluten sensitivity are different; a gluten-free claim is not a universal wheat-allergy guarantee. Follow your clinician's advice. [1, 3]

How to use these tables

Choose the matching food category, make the swap, then follow the replacement package's cooking directions. Quantities below are practical starting points, not nutritional equivalents. Check labels on every packaged component and use clean equipment. A gluten-free ingredient cannot protect a meal from cross-contact elsewhere.

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Read the label before the front claim

Look for a gluten-free claim

For FDA-regulated foods in the United States, a gluten-free claim must meet defined requirements, including less than 20 parts per million gluten. “Wheat-free” alone is not enough because a product may contain barley or rye. A third-party certification is separate from the FDA claim and may use additional requirements. [3]

Read the ingredients too

Scan for wheat, barley, rye, malt and ingredients made from them. Barley malt, malt extract and malt vinegar are common concerns. Ordinary soy sauce often contains wheat. “Contains wheat” statements help identify wheat, but do not replace a full gluten check. [2, 3]

Check convenience foods every time

Food	What to check
Broth and bouillon	Gluten-free claim; flavorings and thickeners
Prepared chicken and deli meat	Seasoning, marinades and added broth
Pesto, hummus and dressings	Full ingredient list and gluten-free information
Frozen vegetables and rice	Plain ingredients versus sauce or seasoning packets
Beans and lentils	Added sauces; gluten-free sourcing when needed
Oats and granola	Gluten-free labeling; other grains and mix-ins

When you cannot confirm

Choose a clearly suitable alternative or contact the manufacturer. Recheck when you buy again because formulas and production practices can change. “Organic,” “natural,” “vegan” and “sourdough” do not mean gluten-free. Oats deserve a separate conversation with your clinician if you have celiac disease. [1, 2]

Bread, wraps & breakfast swaps

Instead of	Use	How to adjust
Whole-wheat bread	Labeled gluten-free bread	Start with the same slice count; slice size and protein vary.
Pita or tortillas	Gluten-free pita or tortillas	Use the same number if similar in size. Warm as labeled to prevent cracking.
A large wrap	Lettuce cups + cooked rice	Use several sturdy leaves; add rice separately if you want a similar starch portion.
Regular oats	Gluten-free-labeled oats	Use the same dry amount and the new package's cooking time. See oat note below.
Wheat cereal or granola	Gluten-free cereal or granola	Measure the serving; recipes and nutrient content differ.
Wheat crackers or crispbread	Gluten-free crackers or crispbread	Match by serving size or weight rather than cracker count.
Breakfast couscous	Cooked quinoa or buckwheat groats	Match the cooked volume; cook separately as labeled.

Oats need an individual decision

Ordinary oats commonly encounter gluten during growing or processing. If you eat oats, select gluten-free-labeled oats. Most people with celiac disease tolerate suitable oats, but some do not; discuss whether to include them with your care team. [1, 2]

Keep the filling, change the carrier

For a hummus wrap or turkey pita, you can keep the filling if its ingredients are suitable. A rice bowl is often easier than finding a specialty bread that holds together. Check the filling as carefully as the bread.

Pasta, couscous & grain swaps

Instead of	Starting swap	Cooking change
Dry wheat pasta	Same dry weight of gluten-free pasta	Cook in fresh water; follow package time and taste early.
Couscous in a salad	Same cooked volume of quinoa	Cook quinoa separately. Do not use couscous's water ratio or 5-minute method.
Farro or bulgur in a bowl	Same cooked volume of brown rice, quinoa or buckwheat	Choose one grain and follow its own package directions.
Barley in soup	Cooked brown rice added near the end	Start with equal cooked volume. Add gradually; it can thicken leftovers.
Wheat orzo in a skillet	Gluten-free orzo	Check liquid needs and timing; pre-cooking separately may be more reliable.
Wheat noodles	Gluten-free rice or legume noodles	Avoid overcooking; some break if stirred too much.
Semolina polenta-style side	Plain corn polenta labeled gluten-free	Use its package ratio; cornmeal textures vary.

Cooked and dry are not interchangeable

A recipe calling for 1 cup cooked farro can use roughly 1 cup cooked quinoa as a portion starting point. It cannot use 1 cup dry quinoa without changing yield and liquid. A recipe calling for 4 oz dry pasta can start with 4 oz dry gluten-free pasta, but the cooking time may be different.

Protect the protein estimate

Rice or corn pasta may provide less protein than lentil or chickpea pasta. Check labels if you are using the High-Protein Lunches bonus. Keep the recipe's fish, chicken, eggs, beans or dairy portion unless you intentionally want to change it.

Flour, crumbs, sauces & condiments

Need	Useful option	Watch point
A soup thickener	Cornstarch mixed with cold water	Start with 1 tbsp cornstarch + 1 tbsp cold water per 2 cups hot liquid; simmer and adjust.
Flour in baking	Gluten-free 1:1 baking blend	Use a recipe designed for that blend when possible; almond flour is not a direct 1:1 swap.
Meatball breadcrumbs	Gluten-free breadcrumbs	Start with the same volume; texture varies. Let mixture stand briefly before shaping.
A crisp crumb topping	Crushed gluten-free crackers or chopped nuts	Use similar volume; nuts change flavor and add allergens.
Soy sauce	Tamari labeled gluten-free	Tamari is not always gluten-free. Start with the same small amount and taste.
Malt vinegar	Wine vinegar or lemon juice	Use similar volume, then adjust acidity. Check the selected product.
Broth, bouillon or sauce	Gluten-free-labeled version	Do not assume a familiar brand's whole range is suitable.
Seasoning blend	Checked blend or individual spices	Confirm every component; avoid unknown bulk-bin scoops.

Thicken late in the slow cooker

For soup, whisk a small cornstarch slurry into hot liquid near the end and let it simmer until thickened. If your slow cooker cannot bring it to a simmer, finish a portion on the stove. Mashed beans can also add body without flour. Do not add dry cornstarch directly to hot soup.

Shared kitchens & eating out

Reduce cross-contact at home

Clean counters and utensils before preparation. Keep gluten-free foods covered and stored above loose flour or crumbs. Use separate spread containers or squeeze bottles to avoid a bread knife carrying crumbs into shared butter, hummus or nut butter. [4, 5]

A dedicated toaster or suitable toaster bag is a practical precaution. Use a dedicated or thoroughly clean colander and avoid scratched equipment that traps residue. Cook pasta in fresh water; do not reuse wheat-pasta water. Keep serving utensils separate. Do not prepare gluten-free meals while wheat flour is being scattered nearby. [4, 5]

Ask about the preparation, not just ingredients

At a restaurant, explain your actual dietary requirement. If you have celiac disease, say so. Ask whether the kitchen can prevent cross-contact, including on grills, cutting boards, pasta equipment and in fryers. A menu symbol alone does not answer these questions.

A simple ordering script

“I need a gluten-free meal for medical reasons. Can you prepare plain fish or chicken with rice and vegetables using clean utensils and a clean cooking surface? Please check the seasoning, marinade and sauce, and let me know if you cannot prevent cross-contact.”

Three questions worth asking

Is the rice cooked in a broth or seasoning that contains gluten?

Is the sauce thickened with flour or made with regular soy sauce?

Does the fryer, toaster or pasta water also handle wheat-containing food?

If the answer is uncertain

Choose a different dish or another place that can answer clearly. Removing bread or croutons after they touch the meal does not undo contact. Keep a suitable packaged backup with you when options are limited.

Apply the swaps to your program

Meal in your downloads	Practical change
Berry-Walnut Overnight Oats	Use gluten-free-labeled oats if appropriate for you; check the remaining ingredients.
Turkey Mediterranean Pita	Use gluten-free pita or a rice bowl; check prepared turkey and sauces.
Mediterranean Pasta Salad	Use the same dry weight of gluten-free pasta; cook separately as labeled.
Lemon Chicken Couscous Skillet	Prepare quinoa separately and fold in at the end; adjust added liquid to avoid a soupy skillet.
Chicken, Farro & Roasted Pepper Salad (Lunch 2)	Replace 1 1/2 cups cooked farro with 1 1/2 cups cooked quinoa; protein changes.
Turkey Meatballs with Spinach & White Beans (Crockpot 9)	Use suitable gluten-free oats or gluten-free breadcrumbs; check other packaged ingredients.
Chickpea Couscous with Raisins (Vault 19)	Use ready-cooked quinoa instead of dry couscous; heat as labeled and skip couscous water.
Pesto Chickpea Pasta (Vault 22)	Choose gluten-free pasta and confirmed suitable pesto; allow the package's cooking time.

One swap changes the shopping list

Cross off the original grain or bread and add the replacement quantity. If you use cooked grains, record cooked volume; if buying dry, use the package yield to work backward. Do not keep both ingredients on the list unless another meal still needs the original.

Check the whole recipe

These changes address the obvious gluten source. Broth, sauces, seasonings, ready-cooked proteins and preparation surfaces still need checking. The Gluten-Free note on a recipe is not a guarantee about a particular brand or kitchen.

A small pantry & one-day menu

A starter pantry

Choose plain rice, quinoa, gluten-free pasta, canned beans, canned fish, olive oil, lemon juice, suitable broth and individual herbs. Add gluten-free oats if appropriate for you, plus one bread or cracker you like. Buy manageable quantities before committing to large bags.

One simple day for one adult

Meal	Assembly idea
Breakfast	3/4 cup plain Greek yogurt, 1/2 cup berries, 2 tbsp walnuts and 1/4 cup suitable gluten-free oats.
Lunch	One drained 5 oz can tuna, 1/2 cup white beans, 1/2 diced cucumber, 1 tbsp lemon juice and 1 tsp olive oil.
Dinner	About 4 oz cooked plain chicken, 1/2-1 cup cooked quinoa and 1-2 cups vegetables, with lemon and olive oil.
Optional snack	Fruit with plain yogurt, or vegetables with confirmed gluten-free hummus.

This is an assembly example, not a calorie-controlled plan or a complete nutrient prescription. Adjust quantities, add food if needed and confirm every packaged ingredient. Cook chicken to 165°F; use the food-safety instructions in your meal-plan downloads.

Keep shopping simple

For the example day, buy yogurt, berries, walnuts, suitable oats, tuna, white beans, cucumber, chicken, quinoa, vegetables, lemons and olive oil. Optional snacks are extra. The amounts above are portions, so compare them with package sizes and what you already own.

A useful default

When a specialty substitute is expensive or disappointing, turn the meal into a bowl: keep its main filling and vegetables, then serve over a checked cooked grain or potato. This avoids rebuilding every familiar food with specialty flour.

Your swap worksheet & sources

Meal I want to keep: _____
Ingredient to replace: _____
Replacement and amount: _____
New cooking time or liquid amount: _____
Labels and equipment to check: _____
Grocery-list change: _____

References

[1] NIDDK: Eating, Diet, & Nutrition for Celiac Disease
<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/celiac-disease/eating-diet-nutrition>

[2] Celiac Disease Foundation: Gluten-Free Foods
<https://celiac.org/gluten-free-living/gluten-free-foods/>

[3] FDA: Gluten-Free Means What It Says
<https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/gluten-free-means-what-it-says>

[4] Beyond Celiac: Cross-Contact
<https://www.beyondceliac.org/gluten-free-diet/cross-contact/>

[5] Gluten Intolerance Group: Cross-Contact at Home
<https://gluten.org/2021/01/08/cross-contact/>

U.S. labeling context. Sources checked September 2026. This guide supports cooking and shopping decisions; it does not certify products or diagnose a gluten-related condition.