

CARIBBEAN CRAVINGS

BY KRISTY TOLLEY, DELIGHT CONTRIBUTOR

GIN-CLEAR WATERS, white sands, and perpetual sunshine comprise the idyllic trifecta that lures many visitors to the Caribbean. If you've put off a tropical getaway for fear your gluten allergies will not be accommodated, have no fear. While it's always a smart idea to pack your favorite gluten-free snacks wherever you go, there are plenty of dining options in the Caribbean to keep you sated.

All-inclusive resorts like Beaches and Sandals strive to support all dietary restrictions and needs, and provide ample gluten-free fare. Prior to meals, guests can fill out a form indicating their requirements and limitations, which allows for a seamless dining experience. Guests can also request standing orders at favorite restaurants. Partial to the gluten-free pancakes with chocolate chips or cheese omelets? With a standing order, you can enjoy them each morning – fuss free.

Renting a private villa is also a convenient option for travelers with dietary restrictions. Creating your own meal plan decreases the likelihood of an allergic reaction. If cooking meals is not your idea of a vacation, you should consider hiring a chef as part of your villa rental. Prior to arriving, communicate your dietary limitations, and your personal chef will craft a menu that caters to your needs.

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**GLUTEN-FREE
GETAWAYS**





**Grilled
Jamaican jerk
chicken with
black beans**

While all-inclusive dining and cooking your own meals are great solutions, don't miss out on sampling local cuisine. Caribbean restaurant owners are increasingly aware of the importance of a varied menu for diners with certain food restrictions. Interestingly enough, gluten-filled fare wasn't even originally on the Caribbean menu.

"Since European colonization, our cuisine has relied on wheat more and more," says Mikol Hoffman, Director of Operations for Flavors of San Juan Food & Culture Tours. "Proteins are now breaded, for example. However, the original cuisine of the region was largely gluten-free."

Guided food tours are a popular excursion for cruise ship passengers and island vacationers alike. They are also an ideal way to find out the absolute best places to eat without "trial and error" dining. In addition, many tours accommodate dietary restrictions like gluten allergies.

"We receive several gluten-free requests on our Old San Juan Food Tour," explains Hoffman. "Fortunately, our menu is mostly gluten-free, except for the first stop where we are happy to provide gluten-free alternatives."

Thankfully, gluten-free dining in the

Caribbean isn't just limited to upscale restaurants.

"This increased catering to dietary needs covers dining experiences from high-end dining to casual easy ethnic eateries," notes Marzeta Bodden, founder and tour guide with Cayman Food Tours. "In addition, the major grocery stores have very good selections of gluten-free items."

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Gluten-free guests on the Cayman Food Tour can partake in alternatives like gluten-free roti and pasta dishes.

For many local restaurants, catering to their patrons' dietary needs has been a priority for

some time. For example, Rhumb Lines Restaurant in St. John provides separate menus for several common dietary needs – soy-free, sesame-free, peanut and tree nut-free and gluten-free.

"We find that it's so much nicer to hand our guests a menu showing what they can enjoy; instead of rattling off a list of all those items on our full menu that they can't consider," explains Hillary Tittle, the restaurant's proprietor. "Also, with the often-transient nature of the restaurant staff on a holiday island, having menus upon which less-experienced staff members can rely can be vitally important." ■

RESTAURANT GUIDE

All restaurants listed provide gluten-free versions of select menu items or offer a completely separate gluten-free menu.

1

ARUBA

Iguana Joe's
Linda's Dutch Pancakes and Pizza
Madame Janette
Passions on the Beach

2

CAYMAN ISLANDS

Agua Restaurant and Lounge
Grand Old House
Island Naturals Café
Jessie's Juice Bar
Royal Palms Beach Club
The Greenhouse

3

MEXICO

Casa Mission, Cozumel
Mariscos Mazatlan, Cabo San Lucas
Natura, Cancun
Savio's Bistro by La Dolce Vita, Cancun
The Bistro, Cabo San Lucas
The Club Grill, Cancun
Vegan Planet, Cancun

4

PUERTO RICO

Aguaviva San Juan
Ali Baba Turkish Restaurant
En Condado, San Juan
Café Berlin, San Juan

5

TURKS AND CAICOS

Baci Ristorante
Hemingway's on the Beach
Salt Mills Café and Diner

6

US VIRGIN ISLANDS

Eat @ Cane Bay, St. Croix
Buccaneer Resort Restaurants, St. Croix
Galleon, St. Croix
Morgan's Mango, St. John
Havana Blue, St. Thomas
Rhumb Lines Restaurant, St. John
Salud Bistro, St. Croix
Sogos Restaurant, St. John
XO Bistro, St. Thomas