

5 Tips to Enjoying Sushi Gluten Free



Sushi can be one of the gluten friendliest food choices out there, but there are a few tips you need to know before you order.

I was recently in Columbus, Ohio with my daughters. We went to a local sushi restaurant that actually had a gluten free menu. The problem was that our gluten free knowledge seemed to be greater than theirs. My daughter, who has celiac disease, ordered a roll off of the gluten free menu, but when she took her first bite she realized that it had tempura shrimp (aka gluten). She quickly spit it out and asked the waitress for the menu, which makes no mention of tempura in this particular roll, but the waitress assured us that it is always made that way. Moral of the story, don't rely on the restaurant staff to keep you safe.

After that incident I decided to pen this blog about how to make your next sushi experience gluten free. Here are the top 5 items in a sushi restaurant that you must avoid:

1. **Tempura** - This is the item that recently snuck into my daughter's sushi roll. The name itself represents a tempura batter which is a coating made up of wheat flour, starch, eggs, baking powder or soda, oil, and spices. This batter coats different types of seafood or vegetables and is then thrown into a deep fryer. As you may know, "deep fried" is a red flag in the gluten free world.

Tempura seafood can be ordered separately or stuffed within a roll. It is important to read all ingredients and make sure you are not ordering an item containing tempura.

2. Imitation crab - It may have the word “crab” in the title but imitation crab does not contain any crab meat. It’s commonly made from Alaskan Pollock, which is a flaky white fish. The Pollock is minced, cleaned, and frozen then mixed with starch, egg albumen, and crab flavoring. It is molded into the shape of a crab leg and then striped with a red dye to appear as real crab. Wheat starch is commonly used during this process, and since wheat contains gluten, it made this list.

Imitation crab is commonly found in the popular California Roll, which also includes cucumbers and avocado. From the California Roll comes the Rainbow Roll and several other sushi rolls. So it is important to ask the server if the restaurant uses real crab or imitation crab. If the answer is imitation, then pick something else from the menu.

3. Soy Sauce - This is another one that can throw people for a loop. The name soy sauce is accurate because it is, in fact, made from soy beans, but soy sauce also contains wheat. A good question to ask before ordering is if the restaurant has gluten free soy sauce, commonly known as Tamari. Some restaurants also allow you to bring your own gluten free soy sauce if they don’t supply it, you just have to ask.

4. Other sauces - Sauces such as teriyaki, eel (unagi), ponzu and oyster are all made using soy sauce, which makes them off limits for gluten free. Many rolls come with one of these sauces over top. For this reason, it is good to tell your server “no sauce” for any sushi rolls that you order, even if it doesn’t mention the sauce on the menu.

5. Cross contamination - As with any food you eat, you need to watch out for cross contamination. Specify to the server that you are very allergic and need to make sure the utensils and cooking surface used to prepare your sushi are properly cleaned. Fragments of tempura, splashes of soy sauce, or a knife used to prepare imitation crab could end up contaminating your sushi roll if you aren’t careful. Knowledge is power and could prevent you from getting sick later.

Avoiding all of the above mentioned items when going out for sushi will definitely make your experience more enjoyable. The most common mistake made by a gluten free person is not asking the proper questions.

What are the ingredients? How do you make it? Feeling sick is not fun, so taking the necessary steps to prevent it will make your experience much more enjoyable!

For more information on gluten free sushi:

<http://www.livestrong.com/article/454037-gluten-and-sushi/>

<http://deliciousliving.com/blog/sushi-not-gluten-free-who-knew>

<http://www.eatmedaily.com/2009/07/traumatizing-imitation-crab-manufacturing-video/>