



**Waffle cone with honeyed yogurt,  
fresh blueberries, lavender cream and lime,  
\$5, Executive Chef Noah Sandoval,  
Senza, Chicago. RECIPE, p. 80.**

# Gluten morgen

Waking up to wheat-free breakfasts of champions

by Seánan Forbes

If you want to see joy on a patron's face, tell someone with celiac disease she can have her choice of pastries for breakfast. Michael Barbanti, cook/co-owner of 2Good2B Bakery & Cafe in Encinitas, Calif., says that at least twice a week a customer will have what he calls an emotional moment. One woman asked the chef five times whether everything was really gluten-free.

"It was like she'd been let out of this jail cell," Barbanti said. "She started to cry."

Cana Flug, owner of Besaw's in Portland, Ore., agrees that it's time for breakfast to receive a gluten-free wake-up call: "There's a huge gluten-free market, especially [at] breakfast." Executive Chef Michael Uhnak dishes gluten-free morning carbs in many forms, including bread, toast and pancakes. His French toast is laced with fruit: berries in season; apples when it's cool (\$12, recipe, p. 79). As to the bread, Uhnak was inspired by an incidental challenge: He tasted a local company's gluten-free bread and said, "I can do this." Made with sorghum flour, tapioca and ground oats, Uhnak's bread is hit with diners.

#### OUT OF THE BREAD BOX-

2Good2B's brunch menu includes red velvet pancakes. For weekdays, Barbanti says, "I wanted to introduce a healthier alternative." His gluten-free multigrain pancakes are made with buckwheat and brown rice flour, giving them a rich, nutty flavor (\$7.95, recipe, [plateonline.com](http://plateonline.com)). To keep the pancakes light, Barbanti recommends a blend of tapiocas and potato starches. If your restaurant uses it, reach

for cornstarch, but create the batter in stages. "If you put too much starch in it, it gets papery," he warns.

In New York City, the Cinnamon Snail food truck dishes out vegan food and gluten-free goodies. "There is always the possibility of cross-contamination [on the truck]," Chef/Owner Adam Sobel says. "For people who have extreme sensitivities, we warn them that we process stuff using the same equipment," he says.

When it comes to breakfast offerings, Sobel serves his gluten-free waffles with maple-syrup-caramelized apples. The waffles get a hearty flavor from cashews and oats, ground in a food processor, and garbanzo and tapioca flours. Agave nectar adds sweetness and canola oil infuses fat. "We use a Liège-style waffle iron," Sobel says, so "the outside gets a little bit browned and crispy."

Served from a truck or not, there's more to gluten-free breakfasts than just French toast and waffles. At Chicago's gluten-free Senza, Executive Chef Noah Sandoval makes waffle cones with yogurt, berries and granola. With honeyed yogurt, blueberry-lime compote, lavender cream and house-made granola, the cone is distinctive enough to build both a reputation and a clientele (\$5, recipe, p. 80).

If you're new to gluten-free cooking, get ready to experiment. "It's testing," Sandoval says, "going through the motions." Gluten-free flours don't only act unlike wheat flours, they also taste different. "If there's a flavor that's a little bit off—like if you use too much garbanzo flour—you can really tell," he says.

The waffle cones get their crunchy texture and golden color thanks to a

VU  
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VIDEO DEMO  
 Watch Noah Sandoval whip up his waffle cone at [plateonline.com](http://plateonline.com).

**Gluten-free French toast**  
with vanilla whipped  
cream, \$12, Executive  
Chef Michael Uhnak,  
Besaw's, Portland, Ore.  
RECIPE, p. 79.



combination of tapioca, garbanzo flour, sorghum flour, white rice flour and arrowroot. Keep your pantry simple, says Sandoval. "You have to narrow it down to an all-purpose mix." Create something you can apply in different areas, and gluten-free baking becomes easier.

At Senza, patrons also order comfort-food favorites like popovers with gravy and fluffy English muffins with duck rillettes. "You couldn't tell the difference," says Sandoval about his English muffin served with a soft-boiled egg and tarragon hollandaise.

Garden-fresh kale plays a part in gluten-free potato cakes with warm prosciutto and fried duck egg (\$8, recipe, [plateonline.com](http://plateonline.com)) at Besaw's. In the potato cakes, Uhnak observes, "flour's just a binder with the egg." Making a good gluten-free potato cake is about technique. Make thin cakes and "get a good sear on them, so the edges are crispy. Crisp up your prosciutto, so it sits on top." The centers of the potato cakes are moist, the

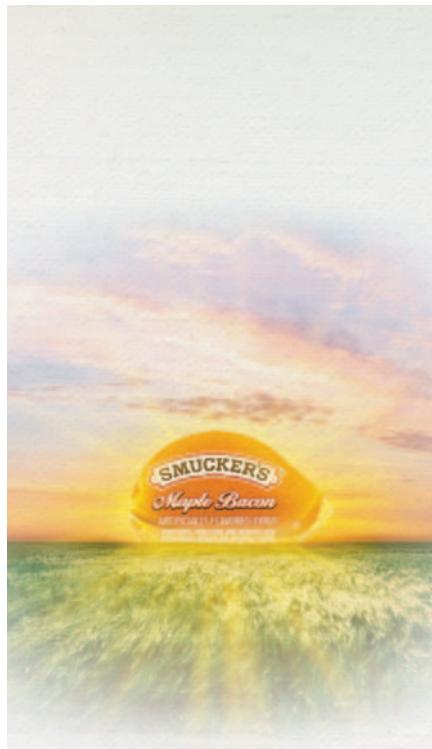
cheese is moist and "the greens add a nice texture," Uhnak says. "You're going for smooth and crunch."

At Brooklyn, N.Y.'s, Sun in Bloom, Chef/Owner Aimee Follette gives her big brunch crowds plenty of gluten-free options. Her chia seed porridge with vanilla, cinnamon and dates is especially popular with children (\$10.50, recipe, [plateonline.com](http://plateonline.com)). Follette says, "I've heard kids say, 'This is the best food I've ever had!'"

Find the balance, and you have a seller for all patrons. "Our catchphrase," Sandoval says, "is 'surprisingly gluten-free.' Hopefully, you're not going to notice." Like other chefs making gluten-free food that wins the mainstream market, he knows that gluten-free doesn't have to mean second rate.

"We're blessed to talk to these people, who now have a safe haven," Barbanti says. "That's why we're doing it."

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