

# Gluten Free Option-menu

This plan is written in a registered nutrition professional style for older adults: it prioritizes adequate protein, gentle textures, hydration, and lower sodium where possible, while keeping all meals gluten-free. Based on guidelines from sources like the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and senior living resources, this improved version adds variety in proteins, vegetables, and starches to prevent boredom, support better nutrition, and increase appeal, making it more likely to be RD-approved. Meals aim for balanced nutrients, with rotations to include fiber-rich veggies, lean proteins, and whole GF grains for sustained energy and health.

## **Gluten-free plate guide (simple):**

- 1/2 fruit and non-starchy veggies
- 1/4 lean protein (eggs, chicken, turkey, fish, beans)
- 1/4 GF starch (GF toast, GF bread, mash, rice, quinoa)

## **Swaps and tweaks for gluten-free success in assisted living:**

- Strict GF handling: use separate toaster, cutting board, knife, butter/spreads and soup ladles to prevent cross-contact.
- Choose certified GF bread/toast when possible and verify gravy and soup bases are GF (no wheat flour, no malt, no regular soy sauce).
- Protein support: aim for a solid protein portion at lunch and a smaller one at dinner (helpful for muscle maintenance in older adults).
- Sodium awareness: use low-sodium broth and season with herbs/lemon/garlic powder instead of excess salt. Target under 2,300 mg/day total, with low-sodium products ( $\leq 140$  mg/serving).
- Comfort + chewability: keep meats moist (gravy, broth) and beans well-cooked for easier chewing.

## Monday

- Breakfast (moderate): Eggs (scrambled or soft, no salt added) + GF toast + fresh fruit (berries or soft banana). Beverages: Water, unsweetened tea/coffee.
- Lunch (main, largest): Lemon-herb chicken (moistened with low-sodium GF broth) + mashed potatoes + steamed green beans. (Add extra herbs for flavor.) Beverages: Water.
- Dinner (light): Turkey on GF bread (open-faced if preferred) + low-sodium GF vegetable soup. Beverages: Herbal tea, water.

## Tuesday

- Breakfast (moderate): GF oatmeal (made with water, topped with cinnamon) + fresh fruit (apple slices cooked/soft if needed). Beverages: Water, tea/coffee.
- Lunch (main, largest): Baked white fish (seasoned with garlic and lemon) + brown rice + steamed carrots. (Extra veggies for volume and fiber.) Beverages: Water.
- Dinner (light): Low-sodium GF lentil soup + turkey on GF bread (smaller portion). Beverages: Water.

## Wednesday

- Breakfast (moderate): Eggs (omelet style, with herbs, no wheat additives) + GF toast + fruit cup (no added sugar). Beverages: Water, tea.
- Lunch (main, largest): Herb-seasoned turkey + quinoa + steamed zucchini. Optional: add extra beans for fiber if tolerated. Beverages: Water.
- Dinner (light): Low-sodium GF chicken noodle soup (using GF pasta) + soft cooked spinach. Beverages: Herbal tea, water.

## Thursday

- Breakfast (moderate): GF yogurt (plain, low-sugar) + GF toast + fruit (peach slices or pear). Beverages: Water, tea/coffee.
- Lunch (main, largest): Chicken + low-sodium GF gravy + sweet potato mash + steamed broccoli. Beverages: Water.
- Dinner (light): Low-sodium GF vegetable soup + fruit (if appetite is low, fruit works well as a light finish). Beverages: Water.

## Friday

- Breakfast (moderate): Eggs (soft) + GF toast + fruit (berries or banana). Beverages: Water, tea.
- Lunch (main, largest): Baked salmon (lemon-herb, low-sodium) + GF pasta + steamed cauliflower. (Keep gravy light and GF, avoid thickened wheat flour.) Beverages: Water.
- Dinner (light): Turkey on GF bread + low-sodium GF soup. Beverages: Water, herbal tea.

## Saturday

- Breakfast (moderate): GF pancakes (scratch-made, no added salt) + fruit cup. Beverages: Water, tea/coffee.
- Lunch (main, largest): Ground turkey stir-fry (with low-sodium GF tamari alternative) + brown rice + mixed vegetables (carrots and zucchini). Beverages: Water.
- Dinner (light): Low-sodium GF bean soup + turkey on GF bread (half portion). Beverages: Water.

## Sunday

- Breakfast (moderate): Eggs + GF toast + fruit (soft apple/pear or banana). Beverages: Water, tea.
- Lunch (main, largest): Roast chicken (herb-seasoned, no skin) + quinoa + steamed green beans (add extra spinach if constipation risk and tolerated). Beverages: Water.
- Dinner (light): Low-sodium GF vegetable soup + turkey on GF bread (open-faced). Beverages: Herbal tea, water.

### Tips for older adults (comfort + nutrition):

- If chewing is difficult: shred chicken/turkey/fish and moisten with low-sodium GF gravy or broth; serve open-faced sandwiches.
- If appetite is low: keep breakfast moderate, make lunch nutrient-dense, and keep dinner simple.
- Hydration reminder: offer water with each meal and between meals.