

---

# Navigating Social Situations in College as a Student with Celiac Disease

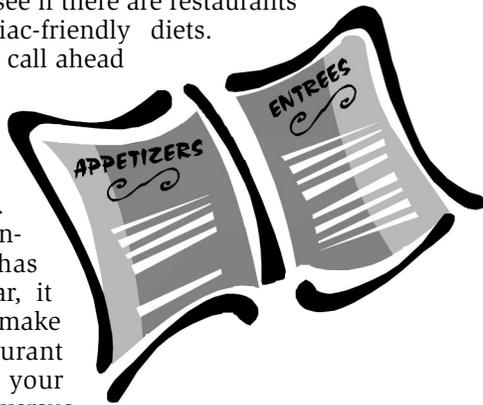
HANNAH SWARTZ

**N**ow that you have gotten settled into your new college environment, you hopefully have made some new friends with whom you are spending time. Just as in high school, there will be social events where having celiac disease can make it harder to fully participate. However, there are always a few options for how to make things easier on you once at the event.

## Going out to dinner with friends?

Check online to see if there are restaurants that cater to celiac-friendly diets. Also, make sure to call ahead

to talk to someone about the restaurant's policies on cross contamination. Given that a gluten-free lifestyle has become so popular, it is important to make sure the restaurant could cater to your needs as a celiac versus someone who is gluten-free by choice. If you have no say over the restaurant, call ahead as well and look at the menu online beforehand.



## Going to a get-together at a friend's dorm?

Offer to bring something that you know you could eat but that others could also enjoy. Your friend will appreciate the help and you will feel better going given you know that there will be something there that you can eat. Also, you could offer to host next time if you felt comfortable and this would give you an even better chance to make sure there are gluten-free options.

## Going on a day trip or extended outing?

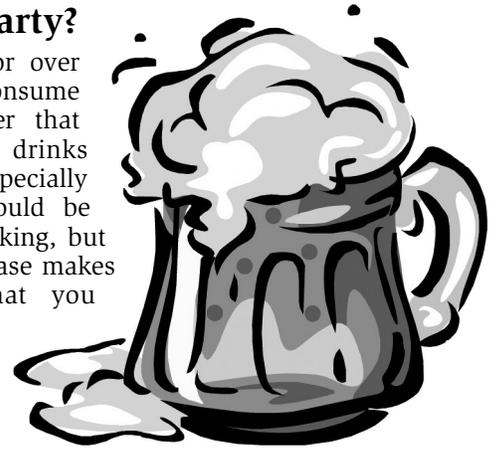
Make sure you bring your own food that will be easy to carry around. Even a gluten-free protein bar or some trail mix is better than nothing. It is always better to assume you won't be able to find food and have your own than to be left without anything to eat for a long time.

## Going to a school-sponsored event?

Talk with the dining coordinator running the event and see what the menu will be. The coordinator will likely know what is gluten free or not so that you can go into the event prepared. Be careful about asking the staff serving the food at the event, given that many schools have a catering service, and these staff might not actually know what the ingredients are or how the food was prepared.

## Going to a party?

If you are 21 or over and can legally consume alcohol, remember that many alcoholic drinks contain gluten, especially beer. Anyone should be careful when drinking, but having celiac disease makes it imperative that you know what is in your drink and have verified that it is safe for you to consume.



## Still feeling like you are the only one on a gluten-free diet?

Colleges often have endless lists of clubs. Check to see if there is a food allergy/intolerance awareness group or specifically a gluten free/ceeliac group. Your school might have a club expo or an online directory that will make clubs easier to find. If there isn't a club that suits your needs, check out your school's process for creating a new one. It would not only help you meet other students with celiac disease but would also be a fun, new learning experience.

No matter the situation, there is always a way to work around the obstacles and make sure that your social event is both fun and safe for you. Thinking ahead and planning for different scenarios will make the event that much better in the end.