



MEETING SPECIAL DIETARY NEEDS

Guest food preferences will vary widely depending on a number of factors. Certain health conditions may require special diets. Cultural and religious beliefs and practices may also influence what an individual chooses to consume. By taking into consideration common dietary needs, food pantries can ensure they are being inclusive of all possible audiences served.

Below you will find listings of sample food products meeting specific dietary needs.

Low sodium

Most Americans consume more sodium than recommended. While we could all lower our sodium intake, some individuals may have to be particularly careful about how much sodium they consume for health reasons. This includes individuals with hypertension, diabetes or chronic kidney disease, as well as individuals over the age of 51. Look for "Low sodium" or "No salt added" on labels of the following products:

- canned chicken in water, no salt added
- canned beans, no salt added
- tomato paste, sauce, and stewed tomatoes, no salt added
- green beans, sweet peas, no salt added
- various soup varieties, no salt added

Gluten intolerance

Gluten is a protein found in certain grains. Individuals with diagnosed celiac disease cannot eat foods containing gluten. They need to avoid the following grains: wheat, barley and rye. Some processed foods will also contain gluten. Possible sources of gluten in processed food products include: bouillon cubes, brown rice syrup, candy, deli meats and hot dogs, gravy, rice mixes, sauces, seasoned snack foods and soup.

Make sure to check labels carefully for ingredients containing gluten and err on the side of caution if unsure. The following food items are generally okay for those with a gluten intolerance:

- fresh eggs, fresh meats/fish and poultry (not breaded, battered or marinated)
- fruits and vegetables
- grains: amaranth, buckwheat, rice, quinoa, flax, cornmeal, oats
- soy

Vegetarian and vegan

There are many types of vegetarians. Most vegetarians follow a mostly plant-based diet and never or rarely eat meat, fish or poultry. Individuals following a vegan diet avoid any animal-based products, including milk and dairy, and other foods with ingredients from animal sources, like gelatin. Some common acceptable items for vegetarian and vegans include:

- fruits and vegetables
- nuts and seeds
- beans and legumes
- grains: quinoa, oats and rice
- meat and dairy free soups
- soy and tofu

continued... MEETING SPECIAL DIETARY NEEDS**Dietary beliefs**

There are certain beliefs people have about how food is prepared, processed and consumed whether for personal, cultural or religious reasons. To ensure foods meet the criteria defined by these beliefs, third-party certification agencies exist to approve, monitor and regulate foods. We will look at Kosher and Halal below.

Remember that not all items by a certified brand will be Kosher or Halal. It is important to check labels carefully.

- If the label does not clearly state that a product is Halal or Kosher, then assume it is not unless you have received written confirmation from the company that produces that product or their approved third-party certifier.
- Third-party certifiers have websites that are a great resource allowing you to search for certified products and/or contact customer service if you have a question.

Halal

Halal foods are those that Muslims are allowed to eat or drink under Islamic law, which dictates both what foods are permitted and how the food must be processed and prepared. Pork is the most common example of non-Halal food.

Common brands are Abbot, Baskin Robbins, Organic Valley, Campbell, English Biscuits, Nestle, Olympia, Wonderful and National.

Popular certifiers

- IFANCA
www.ifanca.org
- USA Halal Chamber of Commerce, Inc
www.ushalalcertification.com

Remember that Halal is a third-party certification. This means that any Halal certified product would have to state that on the label. This can be called out in many different ways, some examples are below:

**Kosher**

Kosher foods are those that follow Jewish dietary law. Kosher foods must also meet specific criteria for how it is processed and prepared, and may forbid certain animal products from being consumed.

Common brands are Athenos, CapriSun, Dalla Costa, Dasinu, Nantucket Nectars, Hunt's Tomatoes, Yoplait, Tropicana, Country Time Lemonade, Rose's, Upper Crust Bakery, Crown Naturals, Matt's, MegaFood, Eden, Ortega, Swiss Miss, Blue Diamond and Minute Maid.

Remember that Kosher is a third-party certification. This means that any Kosher-certified product would have to have a symbol on the label notating that the product is Kosher. There are multiple third-party certifiers who have symbols that denote a product is Kosher. Some examples are below:

Popular certifiers

- OK Kosher,
www.ok.org
- Orthodox Union (OU)
<http://oukoshers.org>

