

Japanese Dining: Gluten-Free

There are many ways to make your dining out experiences safe and enjoyable. Remember to always understand the menu, make special requests, and ask the wait staff questions.

When dining out at Japanese restaurants, what are some common menu items and how can you order them gluten-free?

Smoked Salmon Sushi Roll: Japanese sushi rice, rice wine vinegar, avocado, cucumber, smoked salmon, dried seaweed, soy sauce, wasabi (horseradish)

- ✓ Avoid the soy sauce (unless gluten-free) and check the wasabi for wheat as a filler. Ensure it is pure rice wine vinegar (not “seasoned”).

Sashimi: Maguro (tuna), Saba (Mackerel), Kajiki (swordfish) and Buri (yellowtail)

- ✓ Avoid the soy sauce (unless gluten-free) and check the wasabi (horseradish) for wheat as a filler.

Vegetarian Lettuce Wraps: 5 spice bean curd (tofu), cilantro, green onions, lime, minced vegetable sauce, mint, red onions, rice sticks, sesame oil, water chestnuts

- ✓ Ensure the vegetable sauce has not been thickened with flour.
- ✓ Check 5 spice bean curd for gluten. Avoid soy sauce (unless gluten-free).

Grilled Tofu: Curd made from mashed soybeans, served cooked; can also be served chilled with soy sauce and diced scallions

- ✓ Ask for it cooked on a clean grill without soy sauce (unless gluten-free). Order with white rice, steamed vegetables, and gluten-free peanut sauce.

Miso Soup: Tofu, scallions, miso paste, wakame (seaweed), mushrooms, sesame oil, dashi (fish stock)

- ✓ Choose soy miso paste; avoid barley miso paste. Fish stock is typically gluten-free.

Shioyaki: Broiled fish with light salt: yellowtail, salmon, tuna, scallops, and vegetables

- ✓ Order with white or brown rice and steamed vegetables. Avoid soy sauce (unless gluten-free).

Seaweed Salad: Seaweed, rice vinegar, soy sauce, sesame oil, sugar, ginger

- ✓ Avoid soy sauce (unless gluten-free). Ensure rice vinegar is plain, not “seasoned.”

Maki: (wrapped rolls) Alaskan, Philadelphia, California (crab), Tekka (tuna), etc.

- ✓ Avoid tempura, eel (marinated in soy sauce), soy sauce (unless gluten-free), wasabi (if thickened with flour). Avoid artificial crab (contains wheat starch) and ask for real crab in the California roll.

Seared Tuna: Seared tuna (or other fish) with mesclun greens

- ✓ Ask for tuna (or other fish) to be seared on a grill that has been thoroughly cleaned of marinades or gluten.

Edamame: Boiled soybeans with salt

- ✓ Order as is.

Dishes/Ingredients to Avoid or Request a Gluten-Free Substitution:

Teriyaki, Tempura, Katsu (fried food), rice seasoned with seasoned rice vinegar (choose plain rice or rice with plain rice vinegar), Eel (marinated in soy sauce), Soba noodles (if made with wheat), wasabi (unless freshly grated), soy sauce (unless gluten-free), fish sauce (if it contains wheat), Surimi (imitation crab meat which contains wheat starch), crab stick, Udon (if it contains wheat)

Always identify your needs. Consider carrying a gluten-free restaurant card in different languages or a gluten-free restaurant card in English.

Bring your own salad dressing or dessert with you to the restaurant.

If a utensil, preparation area, or cooking surface is used for foods that must be avoided, ask for it to be cleaned before cooking your meal. To be safe, ask staff to use disposable tin foil.
