

Middle Eastern 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 Middle Eastern restaurants, what are some common menu items and how can you order them gluten-free?

Shish Kebab: Skewered and grilled cubes of meat, usually beef, chicken, or lamb:

- ✓ Ask if the meat can be cooked on a separate, clean grill. Order with a side of plain rice or vegetables. Avoid any pita bread or bulgur (cracked wheat) on the side.

Shawarma: Sliced meat, usually beef, chicken, or lamb, that is stacked and roasted with spices on a vertical rotisserie or spit:

- ✓ Order with a side of plain rice or vegetables. Avoid any pita bread or bulgur.

Falafel: Deep-fried, ball-shaped fritters made from chickpeas and fresh herbs:

- ✓ Traditionally made with gluten free ingredients, but ask if there is any wheat flour in the falafel mix. Ensure oil isn't used to fry any gluten-containing foods like pita. Order with a side of plain rice or vegetables instead of in a pita.

Hummus: Dip made with cooked chickpeas, tahini, oil, lemon juice, and garlic:

- ✓ Order without pita bread. Ask for vegetables for dipping.

Shakshuka: Eggs poached in tomato sauce with onions, peppers, garlic, and spices:

- ✓ Ask it to be served without pita bread.

Grilled Halloumi: Grilled sheep's or goat's milk cheese that is semi-hard and unripened:

- ✓ Ask if it can be cooked on a separate, clean grill.

Baba Ganoush: Dip made with eggplant, olive oil, lemon juice, garlic, and often tahini:

- ✓ Order without pita bread. Ask for vegetables for dipping.

Dolma: Grapes leaves stuffed with rice or ground meat:

- ✓ Ask if they have been stuffed with bulgur.

Labneh: Dip made of strained yogurt often garnished with olive oil and spices:

- ✓ Order without pita bread. Ask for vegetables for dipping.

Desserts: Rice pudding (riz bi haleeb), milk pudding (malabi, muhallebi), ice cream (pistachio, saffron, rose or orange water).

- ✓ Ensure no semolina (wheat) has been used in the puddings. Avoid desserts with phyllo dough, cookies and cakes.

Dishes/Ingredients to Avoid or Request a Gluten-Free Substitution: Pita bread, bulgur, tabbouleh (made with bulgur), baklava (contains phyllo dough), fattoush (contains pita), kofta (ask if it contains bulgur or bread), muhammara (may contain breadcrumbs), halva (may contain wheat flour).

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, bread 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.
