

# no grains? no problem!

If you are cutting back on carbs or have a sensitivity to grains, the following grain-free products will be a delightful surprise

By Melissa Diane Smith



**Five years ago**, Vickie Laroue was diagnosed with celiac disease, autoimmune thyroid disease, and several heart disease risk factors: high insulin levels, excess weight around the waistline, and high blood triglycerides. Going gluten free helped ease her digestive discomfort, but it didn't solve the rest of her health problems. Over time, Laroue found that reducing her carb intake and avoiding all

grains was a much more therapeutic diet prescription for her.

Grain-free eating is based mainly on protein and vegetables. Fortunately, newly available grain-free products, such as those that follow, can add convenience and variety to a diet that goes totally against the grain. Here's a look:

• **Kelp noodles.** A low-carb, low-calorie pasta alternative is noodles made

out of kelp by the Sea Tangle Noodle Company. Kelp is a sea vegetable that's rich in iodine and many other nutrients. Kelp noodles have a neutral taste and pick up the flavors of other foods. Try the noodles in salads, or add them at the last minute to stir-fries or soups.

• **Raw food bars.** Quick-to-grab bars with the simplest of ingredients are fruit-and-nut bars made by companies such as Larabar, Think Organic, Organic Food Bar, and Dr. Weil Fruit and Nut Bars from Nature's Path Organic. These bars are rich in fiber, nutrients, and enzymes. However, they are not low carb—something low-carb dieters should know. The bars, which can make great, no-added-sugar desserts, come in flavors as varied as Cherry Pie, Chocolate Coconut, and Pistachi-Oh!

• **Flax-based crackers.** For a crunchy snack instead of rice-based crackers or corn-based chips, flax crackers by Lydia's Organics, Foods Alive, Go Raw, and Matter of Flax can fill the bill. Flax crackers are rich in fiber and also in omega-3 fatty acids, which are anti-inflammatory in nature and important in everything from heart to reproductive health. These crackers come in plain, savory, spicy, and sweet varieties.

• **Grain-free tortillas.** A great alternative to using high-carb gluten-free bread to make a sandwich is to use a grain-free tortilla to make a wrap. French Meadow Bakery makes two types: Woman's Tortilla, made from flaxseeds, soy flour, and black beans, and Healthy Hemp Tortilla, a soy-free product from amaranth flour, and hemp and other seeds. These low-carb wraps are a good source of fiber, omega-3 fats, and protein, so they don't spike blood sugar.

• **Nut and coconut flours.** Gluten-free baked goods made with rice flour, tapioca starch, potato starch, bean flours,

or soy flour can lead to weight gain or sensitivities in some people. A solution is to try baking with almond, hazelnut, or coconut flours (made by various companies including Bob's Red Mill). These flours are low in carbs and are good sources of fiber and fat, so they stabilize blood sugar more than typical gluten-free flours.

## Banana Coconut Muffins

Makes 6 muffins

Recipe is adapted from *Cooking with Coconut Flour* by Bruce Fife, ND.

- 2 Tbs. coconut oil
- 3 room-temperature eggs
- 1/3 cup mashed banana (1 small ripe banana)
- 1 tsp. alcohol-free vanilla flavor (such as Frontier Herbs) or vanilla extract
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1/4 cup coconut flour
- 1 Tbs. almond flour or hazelnut flour
- 1/4 tsp. baking powder (such as Hain Featherweight)
- 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 Tbs. shredded coconut
- 2 Tbs. raisins (optional)

Preheat oven to 400°F. Mix together oil, eggs, banana, vanilla, and salt. Add coconut flour, almond flour, baking powder, cinnamon, and shredded coconut, and whisk together until smooth. Fold in raisins. Pour into muffin cups greased with coconut oil. Bake 15 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center of muffins comes out clean. Cool on wire rack.

PER SERVING: 120 CAL; 4 G PROT; 8 G TOTAL FAT (5 G SAT. FAT); 7 G CARB; 106 G CHOL; 158 G SOD; 3 G FIBER; 2 G SUGARS

Melissa Diane Smith is a nutritionist and the author of *Going Against the Grain*. Visit [againstthegrainnutrition.com](http://againstthegrainnutrition.com) or [melissadianesmith.com](http://melissadianesmith.com) to learn more. ♦

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