

# FOOD MATTERS

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## SHOPPING FOR SPECIAL DIETS

Whether you are preparing dinner for a friend or having a relative stay over, if they're on a special diet, it's important that you read and understand food labels. Here are some tips.

### Diabetic

Look for low-fat products, particularly products low in saturated fats. Pick the product with the least fat, or one containing less than three grams per 100. Buy wholegrain and high-fibre foods, such as wholegrain breads and cereals (like Weet-Bix) and legumes (like baked beans). Avoid sugary foods and drinks. Low joule or diet drinks are suitable. The National Heart Foundation has a guide to good food choices.

### Gluten free

This is usually a very strict diet. Look for products with the "gluten-free" claim. Examples include gluten-free breads, biscuits, pasta and cereals. Many foods that are naturally free of gluten include rice, vegetables, fruit, legumes, eggs and dairy products, so they won't have the gluten-free claim on the packet. The Coeliac Society of Australia publishes a helpful Ingredient List

booklet. For this diet, if in doubt, leave it out!

### Heart healthy

Not all cholesterol-free products are low in fat. Choose foods that are low in both fat and cholesterol. Whole-plant foods, such as most nuts or nut butters, although high in fat, are heart-protective. Products rich in soy protein, such as So Good soy drinks, Soy Healthy burgers, sausages and schnitzels are very beneficial for the heart, and margarines with plant sterols can help. Buy wholegrain breads and cereals.

### Food intolerance

Some people are sensitive to added or naturally occurring chemicals in foods such as preservatives, MSG, amines and salicylates. Check with your guest as to what foods they can and cannot have. Choose foods without the additives that they can't tolerate. The Australia New Zealand Food Authority will send you a listing of food additives and their numbers so you can check the food labels.

See *page 48* for healthy recipes for special diets.