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## [Gluten-Free Sweets For the Holidays](#)

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For those who can't eat wheat, the puddings and pies of **the** holiday season used to evoke an upsetting 'look but don't touch' vibe. Luckily, gluten-sensitive people will soon be able to banish those hangdog looks **forever**, because finding gluten-free food is getting easier by **the** year. While many GF products lack a certain *je ne sais quoi* (read: wheat) **there** are some GF desserts capable of dispersing feelings of isolation with a nice sugary high.

**Mariposa's** seemed particularly promising, with locations in both Oakland and San Francisco, but in the end disappointed. Its pumpkin loaf (\$7) was dry and tame spiced, powdercoating the tongue as if it were the chrome body of a Chrysler. The chocolate chip cookie (\$1) tasted particularly gritty. Oakland's outpost also featured cupcakes (\$3.50) from Miglets in Walnut Creek, but these too were off. Stiff bouffants of frosting-topped wizened little cakes that tasted of fridge — I wondered how long they had been in **the** case.

Things started looking up at **Good Chemistry**. Located near Oakland's Grand Lake Theater in an extremely clean space, its goods had flavor and lots of it. The pumpkin loaf (\$6) zinged with cinnamon and nutmeg and its chocolate chip cookie (\$2.75) hit hard with buttery brown sugar flavor and crispy-yet-chewy edges. But the standout was the chocolate-pecan cookie (\$2.75).

Striated with jagged chunks of chocolate and possessing an oh-so-shiny patina, you could serve it without shame to those who are skeptical of GF goods. We thought that the price for such a small cookie was a bit steep, but considering the lavish use of Strauss butter and Ghiradelli chocolate, it's worth the cost. Go in **the** morning **before** it sells out, which it often does.



Down south in San Carlos, **Zest Bakery's** coconut chocolate cupcake (\$3) was the best cake-like dessert I've found. Unlike Miglet's, whose cupcakes take advantage of the richness of its frosting to mask **the** unholy texture of its cake, Zest's coconut-enriched crumb needed no adornment.

If cupcakes are too passé (or too trendy) **for** you, you can also just order a whole cake. Avoid the chocolate chip cookie (\$1.50), which is a bit granular, though the ginger one endeared with its lingering tingle on **the** tongue.

In San Francisco, **Chestnut Bakery** has jumped on the GF wagon. A low-key, date-friendly spot in the middle of the Marina, it is not an entirely gluten-free bakery so celiac sufferers proceed with caution. Its chocolate chewy cookies (\$1.50) feature a gooey, fluffy interior, as if the chocolate had just melted. The banana muffins weren't too shabby either. During **the holidays** a flourless Black **F**orest cake is available on order.

San Leandro's **AG Ferrari** and Berkeley-based company **Phoenix Pastificio** also offer good GF alternatives. And both can be found in multiple locations throughout the Bay Area. AG Ferrari's flourless chocolate cake (wonderfully inexpensive at \$9) is like a truffle the size of a cake. Phoenix's almond macaroons (\$3) are fluffy-chewy snowballs, so pretty you could hang them on **the** Christmas tree.

*Photo: [micropig](#), [Phoenix Pastificio](#)*