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East Lakeview gains two gluten-free restaurants

Bountiful Eatery now open, Senza coming soon on Broadway in East Lakeview -- and both are gluten-free



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Skewers at Bountiful Eatery (August 7, 2012)

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By Erin Brereton | For RedEye

9:35 a.m. CDT, August 7, 2012

A year and a half ago, plagued with what appeared to be a [sinus infection](#) and recurring low energy, Ed O'Brien had his doctor run a number of tests to find out why he felt so run down.

The test led to two results: A diagnosis that O'Brien was gluten intolerant, and a new restaurant in East Lakeview.

O'Brien, a former Panera Bread manager, stopped eating foods with gluten (a protein found in rye, barley and all types of wheat) and spent a year developing fast-casual dining spot Bountiful Eatery (3312 N. Broadway 773-687-9811), which opened July 11 and serves gluten-free dishes.

According to O'Brien, the reaction to gluten-rich foods can vary in different people who have a [gluten sensitivity](#) or [celiac disease](#), which the nonprofit Celiac Disease Foundation defines as an autoimmune condition that can result in small intestine damage when food containing gluten is consumed.

"It's a really bizarre situation because some people have stomach problems, some have allergy outbreaks—some have a different reaction," O'Brien said. "But it's amazing how when you stop [eating foods with gluten], you feel a lot better."

Bountiful Eatery has been open less than a month but has already attracted a number of [gluten-free](#)

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"People come in and say, 'I have [celiac disease](#), I can't eat out at all!' " O'Brien said.

The demand for gluten-free fare in the neighborhood is enough for more than one business to take root. At 2873 N. Broadway, coming-soon restaurant Senza is slated for a summer opening.

Senza's philosophy is "surprisingly gluten-free," and executive chef Noah Sandoval says that pretty much sums it up; while the menu will be 100 percent [gluten-free](#), if customers can't tell, all the better.

It'll have a coffeehouse-like atmosphere during the day, with grab-and-go breakfast and lunch options such as bagel sandwiches and sides of mac 'n' cheese and chips. In the evening, the menu shifts to composed dishes: Think duck egg ravioli and grilled Caesar salad with a big gluten-free crouton. There won't be a sit-down bar, but cocktails, wine and [gluten-free beer](#) will be served.

Located a few blocks north on Broadway from coming-soon Senza, Bountiful Eatery's offerings include wrap sandwiches, made with pitas from gluten-free Rose's Bakery in Evanston, along with salads and soups (currently cold varieties such as gazpacho).

The top-selling item is the quarter-pound grass-fed bison burger (\$9.99); however, several vegan-friendly items are also on hand, including a quinoa salad seasoned with parsley, mint, cucumber, lemon juice, scallions and garlic.

The eatery, which O'Brien describes as "very red, very bright and very modern," uses locally grown, organic ingredients whenever possible—its bison, for example, comes from an Indiana farm.

Bottled [coconut water](#) and ginger ale are for sale, while a smoothie bar 16- or 24-ounce smoothies from more than a half-dozen fruits and juices, along with almond and soy milk, [Greek yogurt](#) and other items.

Diners who'd like to pair their healthy meal with something a little more indulgent are in luck: Chocolate shop Windy City Sweets is Bountiful Eatery's neighbor.

"We're right next to Windy City Sweets," O'Brien says. "We have people come in, get a salad and go next door and get ice cream."

Erin Brereton is a RedEye special contributor. Additional reporting by RedEye special contributor Erin Gibbons.

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