

Kinnikinnick Bread - 4 Varieties (Vegan, Gluten-Free, Soy-Free)

If you have already read my reviews on Kinnikinnick's Tapioca Rice English Muffins and their Ktoos, then you may sense that this manufacturer has already won me over. However, to truly prove their talent, at least one more important product must be met with good reviews. It was time to really put this company to the test; I went for the gluten-free gold, sandwich bread.

Over the past several months I have become more than familiar with the many tastes and textures of gluten-free, dairy-free bread. Creating sandwich-worthy slices is no easy task sans gluten. Yet, somehow, I felt that Kinnikinnick was up to the challenge.

With four flavors on deck to trial, I knew I had a big week of toasting ahead. Most gluten-free breads seem to shine once toasted. Of course, I couldn't let them off that easy. Gluten-free or not, I tasted each loaf as is, topped with my homemade "butter", toasted, and of course, as a sandwich medium.

Though I am pleased to define all four varieties as "real bread," each loaf had its own distinctive appeal;

Sunflower Flax Rice Bread

For my first taste test, I couldn't resist the grainy look of the Sunflower Flax Bread. Slightly speckled and dotted with sunflower seeds the complex texture had definite appeal.

The mild grainy flavor was delightful, and brought back memories of the Poulsbo bread my mother adored. A touch of sweetness pulled the flavors together, but this really is a savory loaf. It went perfectly with my old standby, tuna fish.

Coarsely chopped sunflower seeds perfectly mimicked the 7-grain allure. The flax meal added some texture and body, but overall, I didn't detect the flavor. The intact flax seeds had been baked in with the bread, and were therefore quite chewable. Though the loaf looked and felt quite dense, the texture was much lighter than I had anticipated. Unlike many GF brands, the Sunflower Flax loaf was not a bit dry, and didn't stick to the roof of my mouth; two definite pluses.

I really enjoyed the center of this bread, which was perfectly soft and tender. Unfortunately, the very outer crust bordered on chewy, and was not so much to my liking. Overall this was quite good bread, though I didn't find my perfect medium. The chewiness of the outer crust was remedied with a quick toasting. However, I preferred the center untoasted. Having to compromise to one side or the other kept me from labeling this the Holy Grail of gluten-free bread.

With several slice per loaf, it lasted for several days in our house. I was surprised by the freshness it maintained. Even on day three, no toasting was required. In the end, my two favorite applications for the Sunflower Flax variety were a good old-fashioned PB & J and toast with a drizzling of honey.

Brown Bread

For loaf number two, I picked what seemed to be the next hearty in line, the Brown Bread. I must start by saying that I really liked the flavor of this bread. It was very mild, yet it somehow tasted rich and nourishing.

The inside was incredibly soft, "glutinous," and delicious. The outer crust was only a little dry, but fortunately it was not chewy in the slightest. I was very pleased with this small compromise.

One common downfall of gluten-free bread is the need to toast it. Children toting their lunches to school don't typically have room in their backpacks to pack along appliances. A safe assumption I believe. Luckily, Kinnikinnick's Brown Bread is an excellent option. In fact, at first I refused to toast this bread. I hesitated to mess

with the wonderful texture that was not too dry and not too moist. It tended to stick to my teeth a bit, but this was really a small price to pay. As an added bonus, it also exhibited minimal crumbling and breakage in our sandwich trials.

In the name of a complete review, I broke down and plugged in the old toaster. Wow, am I glad I made that plunge! An already delicious slice was exalted to fabulous new heights. Okay, you may be thinking, "come on, its just bread." Yet, as anyone who has dabbled in or immersed themselves in the world of gluten-free knows, finding a good gluten-free bread is no easy task … and finding a gluten-free bread so spectacular that you can serve it to your wheat-loving friends and family is near impossible.

The Brown Bread easily toasted to perfection with a slight crisp, crunchiness. Somehow it seemed averse to burning, even when I trialed a darker toast. The slices are relatively thin, and perhaps a natural for this application.

With great curiosity as to the ingredients of such a product, I returned to the kitchen for the packaging. To my great surprise, white rice flour was the first ingredient. Where it obtained that rich brown hue and flavor, I am not certain. Also, this bread was smooth; it didn't have the grainy texture that rice flour often exudes. No matter, it's good.

My new favorite: Kinnikinnick's Brown Bread slathered with almond butter and a sprinkling of cinnamon. Though very low in sugar, this blend had a natural sweetness that stood on its own. It is possible that I may have found my Holy Grail of gluten-free bread. Yet there were two more loaves to stand on trial and challenge my new beloved Brown Bread…

Tapioca Rice Bread

By the time I made my way to the Tapioca Rice Bread, Kinnikinnick had become a part of my daily meal and snack routine. It featured as either toast after my morning workout, or in a lunchtime sandwich preparation. Honestly, I began to take the versatile bread for granted not making note of its many qualities.

Luckily, I did jot down a few observations of importance. The Tapioca Rice Loaf had an excellent, very mild flavor that was just a touch sweet. As someone who disliked the almost bitter taste of Wonder bread, I was pleased with this selection.

The texture was slightly on the dry side, just enough so that it might not slide past gluten consumers. However, a very light toasting, even to the point of just heating but not browning, seemed to perfect the texture. For anyone who is relatively comfortable with gluten-free bread, these slices would work well un-toasted for a lunchbox sandwich. Like the others, it is sliced nice and thin, making it excellent for the toaster and sandwiches alike.

Though it didn't quite top the Brown Bread, the Tapioca Rice Bread seemed to disappear in no time, and without a complaint. My favorite application was lightly toasted and smeared with a pat of butter alternative, such as Smart Balance Light, or my homemade coconut oil butter.

Sandwich Bread

The title is very fitting for this gluten-free loaf. These slices could actually hold their own in a lunch box, without the toaster hidden in the backpack. Admittedly, they are just a bit on the dry side, and they do benefit nicely from a very mild toasting. However, they were still soft, pliable, and perfectly suitable as is. The core of the bread actually maintained a touch of moisture that solidified its role as a tasty loaf. This also seemed to add the gluten-like properties it needed to keep the slices from crumbling or breaking.

Since I did not trial them at the same time, I couldn't specifically point out the differences between the Tapioca Loaf and the Sandwich one. Both are mild and pleasant. Both are excellent mediums for sweet spreads or deli sandwiches. Yet, somehow, I detected a preference for the Tapioca Loaf.

Though this one didn't wow me, I found it very enjoyable, and as a household we polished it off quickly. It seemed

more like a staple bread, something you could rely upon in a pinch. As well, it is an excellent choice for packing along with little ones who must follow a gluten-free diet. Thanks to Kinnikinnick, they need not feel left out when their friends are noshing on sandwiches at lunchtime.

Final Verdict: The Brown Bread may be my personal winner, but overall, Kinnikinnick impresses me to no end! Not a bad product in the bunch, the Kinnikinnick product trials may well continue…

My Extra Notes & Tips

- One odd feature I found of the Kinnikinnick loaves was the uneven slicing. This may change per batch, but I did note it with all but one loaf. I actually liked that I could pick the thickness I was in the mood for, but it was a bit strange nonetheless.
- This really is a fabulous brand for GFCF kids, whether due to intolerance, Celiac Disease, autism, or other special diet need. They won't feel left out of the "wheat" indulgence.
- Don't be afraid to stock up. These breads freeze beautifully, and defrost into their natural sandwich goodness.
- Gluten-free products are often a bit dense in calories and fat. At just 70 to 90 calories per slice, and relatively low in fat (from 2g in the white slices to 4.5 in the seed rich sunflower flax), these loaves are respectable for most diets. Keep in mind that the sodium may be a bit higher than average.

Where to Purchase: Kinnikinnick sells their products in grocery stores throughout the United States and Canada. See their website for a store locator. If you can't find their foods in your local area, just shop Kinnikinnick's online store. Their full product line (an enormous one at that) is available via the web.