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Tips for Gluten-Free Label Reading

How to determine if a product is gluten-free

1 A product which carries a 3rd party certification such as that of GIG's Gluten-Free Certification Organization (GFCO), is considered safe for gluten-free consumers.



Certified

Gluten-Free

2 As of August 5, 2014, if a product is labeled "gluten-free" and is an FDA regulated product, it is considered safe for gluten-free consumers. The regulation specifies that manufacturers choosing to label products "gluten-free" are required to comply with the definition detailed in the regulation. The regulation also applies to the terms "no gluten," "free of gluten," and "without gluten."



**A product that is labeled gluten-free may include the term "wheat" in the ingredient list (e.g. wheat starch) or in a separate "Contains wheat" statement, but the label must also include the following statement: "The wheat has been processed to allow this food to meet the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requirements for gluten-free foods."*



FDA and USDA

The FDA gluten-free labeling regulation is a part of FALCPA (the "Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act"). FALCPA applies to FDA-regulated products only. The FDA regulates the vast majority of packaged foods. The USDA regulates meats, poultry, egg products and mixed products which generally contain more than 3% raw or 2% cooked meat (e.g. some soups and frozen entrees). Products regulated by the USDA are not required to comply with FALCPA, but an estimated 80-90% do so voluntarily.

3 For products which are neither certified nor labeled “gluten-free”, it is essential to read the ingredient list.

If any of the following are present on the ingredient list, the product is not gluten-free:

- » Wheat (including all types of wheat such as spelt)
- » Rye
- » Barley
- » Oats unless certified gluten-free
- » Malt
- » Brewer’s yeast

More information regarding looking for wheat on ingredient labels

FALCPA

The FALCPA labeling regulations require that the top 8 allergens be clearly identified, wheat being one of them. Derivatives of wheat such as “modified food starch” must clearly indicate that “wheat” is the source when this is the case.

“Wheat” can either appear in parentheses in the ingredient list or in a separate “Contains” statement below or next to the ingredient list.

FDA and USDA

As stated above, even though USDA products are not required to comply with FALCPA, it’s estimated that 80 to 90% do so voluntarily. If you see a “Contains” statement or other indication that a USDA-regulated product is complying with FALCPA, then you can simply look for the word “wheat.” If there is any doubt about whether a product is complying with FALCPA labeling, the following ingredients may be derived from wheat and need to be avoided or investigated:

- » starch
- » food starch
- » modified food starch
- » dextrin

Remember: wheat-free is not the same as gluten-free. A product may be wheat-free but still contain rye or barley.



Other helpful information is available at www.GLUTEN.org.

Also, consider your local GIG Branch as another source of information.

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GIG is a nonprofit 501c3 national organization providing support for persons with gluten intolerances, in order to live healthy, productive lives. GIG Branches provide support at a local level.

To make a donation or become a volunteer to GIG, visit our website or call the office at 253-833-6655.

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Statements such as "may contain wheat" or "processed on equipment which handles wheat" are not relevant to gluten-free status of a product. These are voluntary statements which may be used to alert consumers with wheat allergies, or in the interest of full transparency on the part of the manufacturer. Follow the steps laid out above for gluten-free label reading. These "may contain" type statements do not enter into the equation of determining gluten-free status.