

# The Gluten-Free Label: What it Means, What it Doesn't & What Everyone With Gluten Sensitivity Needs to Know

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Gluten is a protein found in many types of grains, and the foods made out of them. All types of wheat (including farina, graham flour, semolina and durum), barley, rye, bulgur, Kamut, kasha, matzo meal, spelt and triticale contain gluten, as do foods such as bread, pizza dough, cookies, pasta, crackers, gravies, sauces, cakes and many more. Oats may also contain gluten.

For some, particularly those with [celiac disease or gluten sensitivities](#), eating gluten causes an immune reaction that damages the surface of the small intestine. As a result, their ability to absorb nutrients from food decreases, which can lead to severe vitamin deficiencies, malnourishment and illness.

Though there is no cure for celiac disease, it can be managed by avoiding dietary gluten. As such, a number of food products have come out in gluten-free or low-gluten varieties to cater to this population.

## Gluten-Free Foods May Still Contain Gluten

While a gluten-free label can make life much easier for those with celiac disease or gluten intolerance (as it is difficult to find many foods without gluten), there is currently no U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulation that defines the term "gluten-free."

However, the FDA has allowed the "gluten-free" label to be used anyway, provided it is "truthful and not misleading."

Nonetheless, some foods with a gluten-free label will still contain gluten. This is because many of these foods contain a special starch that has been treated to remove the amount of gluten, but it is impossible to remove it all, according to the UK's Food Standards Agency.

## How Much Gluten is Allowed in Gluten-Free Foods?

To date, there is no legal definition of "gluten-free," but there is an international standard for gluten-free products called Codex Alimentarius. The standard allows products to be labeled as gluten-free if there are less than 200 parts per million (ppm) of gluten in the final product, according to the Food Standards Agency.



For those with celiac disease or gluten intolerance, finding gluten-free products in the grocery store can be a challenge -- particularly because the gluten-free label is still being defined.

In the United States, the FDA has proposed a regulation to further limit the amount of gluten allowed in foods with the gluten-free label. If the regulation is passed, gluten-free foods would contain less than 20 ppm of gluten. A final regulation must be issued by the FDA by August 2008. This standard of less than 20 ppm is also being proposed internationally.

Meanwhile, the Gluten-Free Certification Organization, an independent organization that's part of the Gluten Intolerance Group, has their own Certified Gluten-Free label, which has a standard of less than 10 ppm of gluten.

### How Much Gluten is Safe?

A study published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition by researchers from the University of Maryland Center for Celiac Research found that in order to "treat" celiac disease people with the condition should ingest under 50 mg/day of gluten.

However, another study by the Center in conjunction with the University of Ancona in Italy (which is expected to be published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition), aimed at establishing the maximum amount of gluten that could be tolerated by people with celiac disease. They found that 10 mg/day of gluten was safe.

### An Ideal Resource for Those Looking to Avoid Gluten

If you are trying to avoid gluten in your diet, it can be challenging to find alternative sources of flour and recipes that actually taste good ... especially for dessert-oriented ones.

A highly recommended resource is [Gluten-Free French Desserts And Baked Goods](#), which provides recipes -- over 100 in all -- for a dazzling array of quick breads, tarts, cakes, puddings, custards, crêpes, cookies, brownies, and bars -- all imaginatively reformulated for gluten-free diets. (Even those who don't have to eat gluten-free will love this book!)

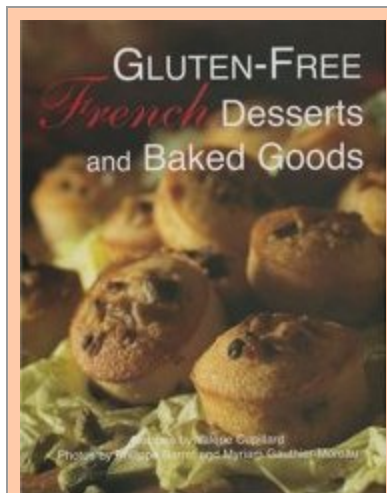
Of course, those following a gluten-free diet can always feel safe eating the following naturally gluten-free foods:

- Fresh meats, fish and poultry (without breading or marinades)
- Most dairy products
- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Rice
- Potatoes
- Gluten-free flours (rice, soy, corn, tapioca, potato)

### Recommended Reading

[Got Abdominal Pain, Diarrhea or Other Digestive Issues? It May Be Celiac Disease](#)

[The Top 8 Foods People Are Most Sensitive To -- Without Even Knowing It!](#)



On a gluten-free diet?  
[Gluten-Free French Desserts And Baked Goods](#) has over 100 irresistible recipes for breads, tarts, cakes, puddings, custards, crêpes, cookies, brownies, and bars -- all made with gluten-free ingredients!