



Catering for those with coeliac disease...

What is coeliac disease?

Coeliac disease is a genetic medical condition that results in permanent intestinal intolerance to dietary gluten. The only treatment for coeliac disease is a strict, lifelong gluten free diet. If left untreated, the lining of the small bowel is damaged. For those diagnosed with coeliac disease, a gluten free diet is not a choice, but a necessity, as even the smallest amount of gluten can cause illness and/or bowel damage.

What is gluten?

Gluten is a protein found in wheat, rye, barley and oats and ingredients derived from these grains. When following a gluten free diet, all gluten must be avoided. Obvious forms of gluten include most bread, cakes, biscuits, pastry, pizza, pasta, batter and breadcrumbs unless made from gluten free grains. Beer also contains gluten. Gluten may also be found in processed meat (i.e. sausages, rissoles, smallgoods), cornflour (from wheat), stocks, gravies, icing sugar mixture, mayonnaise, vinegars, mustards and pickles.

There are however a number of gluten free products available to substitute for their gluten containing counterparts. The following information will assist those responsible for catering for someone with coeliac disease...

How do I identify gluten free products?

There are three broad groups of food that are suitable for those on a gluten free diet:

- Naturally gluten free foods
- Food labelled as 'gluten free'
- Products that are gluten free by ingredient

1. Naturally gluten free foods

There are a wide variety of foods that are naturally gluten free. These include:

- Fresh fruit and vegetables
- Unprocessed meat, poultry and fish
- Eggs, nuts and legumes
- Milk (some flavoured milk may contain gluten which will be identified in the product's ingredient list)
- Fats and oils
- Alternative grains including: rice, corn (maize), soy, sago, tapioca, buckwheat, millet, amaranth, sorghum, quinoa and arrowroot

2. Food labelled 'gluten free'

A number of products are labelled gluten free. If a food (including imported products) is labelled gluten free, it must contain 'no detectable gluten' according to the Australian Food Standard. Consequently there is no need to be concerned about the product's ingredients.

The gluten free label overrides the ingredient listing

For example, if a product is labelled gluten free but 'Maltodextrin (wheat)' is listed as an ingredient, the gluten free label overrides the product's ingredient listing and it is suitable for inclusion in a gluten free diet.

3. Products that are gluten free by ingredient

If a product is not labelled as gluten free, it is important to check the ingredient listing on the packet. A number of products, although not made specifically for the gluten free market, simply happen to be gluten free by ingredient.

Under the Australian Food Standards Code, if an ingredient is derived from wheat, rye, barley or oats, then this must be declared. Consequently ingredients where the source grain is not identified are therefore from a non-gluten containing grain and are gluten free. *Ultimately, if you don't see wheat, rye, barley, oats or gluten on a food label, there are no ingredients derived from gluten containing grains.*

Exceptions... Some ingredients are so highly processed, that they are gluten free even though a gluten source is indicated. The most commonly used are:

- Glucose or glucose syrup from wheat
- Caramel colour (150) from wheat
- Dextrose from wheat

These ingredients are suitable for a gluten free diet.

Additional Tips

- Products that use advisory statements such as:
 - 'May contain gluten'
 - 'Manufactured on the same line as gluten containing products'are not suitable for those on a gluten free diet.
- The use of an 'either/or' statement within the ingredient list eg maltodextrin (wheat or maize) also excludes a product from a gluten free diet unless it is labelled gluten free.
- 'Contains' statements are sometimes used to summarise which allergens (including gluten) are present in the ingredients of a product. This statement usually appears below the list of ingredients.

If individual ingredients are identified as being derived from a gluten source, then the 'contains' statement refers directly to these ingredients. Specifically if the only ingredient in the product is glucose syrup (wheat), the 'contains' statement (i.e. contains wheat or gluten) refers only to this and the product is gluten free.

If a 'contains' statement is used which includes wheat (or gluten) and there are no individual ingredients identified with a gluten source, then the product should be avoided.

Avoid contamination...

- Thoroughly clean bread boards, knives and other cooking utensils used in preparation of gluten free foods.
- Ensure appliances such as toasters, sandwich makers and grills are clean before preparing gluten free foods.
- Use separate butter and condiment pots to prevent crumb contamination.
- Use separate water in a clean pot/strainer for cooking or re-heating gluten free pasta.
- Do not dust meats or fish with flour prior to cooking.
- Do not dust cake tins with gluten containing flour (including wheaten cornflour).
- Store gluten free products and ingredients in separate sealed containers, and clearly label all foods in the pantry, refrigerator and freezer once they have been removed from original packaging.
- Use separate oil for deep frying. If this is not possible clean deep frying oil regularly to remove visible batter or crumbs. This will ensure gluten free fried food is not contaminated.
- Icing sugar mixture commonly contains wheat. Keep this in mind when dusting cakes and slices. There is now a gluten free icing sugar mixture available.

If you are unsure whether a product is suitable, please double check with your customer. You are also welcome to phone The Coeliac Society in your state for clarification of any of the above information.

Each state society offers associate membership for individuals and companies working in food service provision. The Coeliac Society has prepared an *Ingredient List* booklet which lists ingredients and additives used in foods in Australia and indicates whether they are suitable for inclusion in a gluten free diet. This booklet is included with membership. For further information, please contact your state Coeliac Society on 1300 458 836.