

Frequently Asked Questions about Gluten-Free Products

Why gluten-free?

Gluten is a protein composite naturally found in wheat, barley, rye and oats that provides structure in baked goods. For instance, breads, bagels and pizza get their chewy texture from gluten. However, more than two million Americans suffer from a medical condition known as celiac disease which requires them to follow a diet free of gluten-containing foods. Other consumers who follow a gluten-free diet are those with a gluten intolerance or wheat allergy.

What is Celiac Disease?

Celiac disease is a permanent condition in which the lining of the small intestine is damaged by the consumption of gluten. Gluten is found in wheat (including durum, kamut, spelt & triticale), barley, rye, oats, and ingredients derived from any of these grains.

In the small intestine, there are finger-like protrusions called villi which absorb nutrients from the food we eat. If someone with celiac disease eats gluten, the villi become damaged and can no longer absorb nutrients. A gluten-free diet is a necessity for people with celiac disease. A trace of gluten through cross-contamination or error can cause a celiac harm and gastro-intestinal upset which can last for days.

How is cross-contamination prevented?

Cross-contamination of gluten-free ingredients and products is prevented by developing standards of best practices and making certain all staff are trained in safe handling guidelines.

- **Manufacturers** of products that carry a gluten-free label should consider a third-party certification process. Through third-party inspection of processes and procedures including purchase of ingredients, storage and handling, production, cleaning, and airborne dust contamination, a manufacturer can increase value and consumer confidence in their product. The FDA has a

standard of <20 ppm gluten for items with a gluten-free label and most third-party certifications test to <10 ppm.

Bay State Milling Company products are certified through the Celiac Sprue Association (CSA) (www.csaceliacs.org), a non-profit organization of “celiacs helping celiacs.” The CSA tests Bay State products to <10 ppm.

- **Distributors** have two main concerns:

Can I store gluten free flour in the same warehouse as gluten-containing flour?

Separate storage areas for gluten-free flour and gluten-containing flours are recommended. However, gluten-free flour and gluten-free dry mixes can be stored in the same warehouse with proper precautions. Always check to be certain all bags/containers are intact and not leaking. Store gluten-free flour and dry mixes adjacent to or above flours and mixes containing gluten, never below.

Can I transport gluten-free flour in the same truck as gluten-containing flour?

Products should be wrapped and stacked to minimize inadvertent cross-contamination. Gluten-free flours and gluten-free dry mixes should be loaded adjacent to or above gluten containing flours. *Mixed pallets are not recommended.*

- **Restaurants, bakeries & kitchens** need to develop guidelines for their specific environment including but not limited to:
 - **Ingredients** - make certain ingredients are gluten-free and suppliers have processes in place to avoid cross-contamination.
 - **Storage** - store gluten-free raw ingredients in their original packages or covered containers in separate and clearly marked areas. There should be no risk of mixing gluten-free products with ordinary products.
 - **Hygiene** – flour dust carried on hands, clothes, work surfaces and in the air can easily contaminate gluten-free

ingredients and products. A cleaning plan is essential to preventing contamination.

- Preparation:
 - Wash hands, change gloves after preparing other foods.
 - Prepare gluten-free products in a designated or separate area or prepare them in a thoroughly sanitized area before preparing gluten-containing items if possible.
 - Ensure all equipment, pans, dishes and utensils are cleaned prior to each preparation. Even if you can afford two sets clearly marked, one set can become contaminated when things get busy.
 - Use a separate breadboard for gluten-free bread, a clean colander for gluten-free pasta, and clean oil for frying gluten-free products.
- Service - serve gluten-free food on specific colored plates and mark all take-out containers holding gluten-free food to alert staff at-a-glance.

Will gluten-free products perform the same as products containing gluten?

Generally speaking, replacing gluten-containing flour with gluten-free flour takes some experimentation on the part of the baker, chef or food manufacturer. Because gluten-free baked goods lack the structure provided by gluten, gluten-free baked goods tend to have a drier, crumbly texture. Gluten-free baked goods tend to stale quickly so keep them well wrapped.

In Bay State Milling's BakingEssentials™ Gluten-Free All Purpose Flour and BakingEssentials™ Gluten-Free Pizza Crust Mix, we have added xanthan gum and tapioca starch to replace some of the qualities of gluten. When used in conjunction with the recipes developed by our Product Development Team (listed in the Gluten-Free and Product Information sections of our website, www.baystatemilling.com), you have a winning combination for a basic line-up of items to meet the expectations of your fussiest gluten-free customer.

These are some basic points to consider when developing your own best practices and training employees about handling gluten-free products. Serving the gluten-free market is a commitment, and nothing takes the place of being educated about your consumer!

Gluten-free resources:

www.csaceliacs.org

www.gluten.net

www.celiaccentral.org

www.celiac.com

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