

## Gluten-Free Update

Gluten-Free (GF) is not going away any time soon. With Lifestyle choices, Celiac Disease and Gluten intolerance on the rise, more and more people are making the choice to go GF. Study shows that over 15% of NA households have purchased gluten-free products in 2015 doubling in the last 5 years. Almost one-third of Canadians are looking for gluten-free products, of which 2.5M for health reasons alone. In addition, some retailers have dedicated more shelf space to gluten-free products than in the past, while hotels/restaurants continue to add GF selections as part of their menu.

### What is Gluten?

Gluten is a protein found in wheat, rye, and barley. In the case of wheat, gliadin has been isolated as the toxic fraction. It is the gluten in the flour that helps bread and other baked goods bind and prevents crumbling. This feature has made gluten widely used in the production of many processed and packaged foods.

### What is Celiac Disease?

Celiac disease is a medical condition in which the absorptive surface of the small intestine is damaged by a substance called gluten. This results in the body's inability to absorb nutrients such as: fat, protein, vitamins, carbohydrates, and minerals, which are necessary for good health.

A "GF" claim has a special meaning beyond "there is no gluten in the product". In Canada's Food and Drug Regulations, it is defined as a "food that has been specially processed or formulated to meet the particular requirements of a person a) in whom a physical or physiological condition exists as a result of a disease, disorder or injury ...". In the case of gluten free products, this means that the product has been formulated for someone with celiac disease. In Canada, a ruling came into effect in August 2012, whereby in order to be considered GF, the gluten threshold could not exceed 20ppm.

As food trends grow expect to see more ancient grains and grain alternatives to show up on grocery store shelves, and on restaurant menu's as the popularity grows for these ancient grains. One such grain, sprouted grains is thought to provide additional nutritional benefits. Therefore manufacturers are blending more ancient grains into their GF products, which increases nutrition, and may also enhance GF product flavours and bring new and interesting products to market. In addition, consumers with celiac disease and NCGS(non-celiac gluten sensitivity), have found sprouted grains to be more easily digested.

Interest in GF products will likely remain high as the reason for avoiding gluten continues to increase. With several GF motivators such as life-style, gluten intolerance, sensitivity, celiac disease, allergen or perception that GF is a healthier choice, either way it is driving consumers to either try or switch to gluten-free products. Trend or fad, you decide?