
Professional Certificate in Gluten-free Lifestyle

Reading Food Labels and Identifying Gluten

In the Professional Certificate in Gluten-free Lifestyle, understanding key terms and vocabulary when reading food labels and identifying gluten is crucial. Here, we will explain some of the critical terms and concepts related to gluten-free diets and food labeling to help you make informed decisions about your food choices.

Gluten

Gluten is a protein found in wheat, barley, and rye. It gives elasticity to dough, allowing it to rise and maintain its shape. Gluten can cause health issues for those with celiac disease, non-celiac gluten sensitivity, or wheat allergy.

Celiac Disease

Celiac disease is an autoimmune disorder where consuming gluten triggers the immune system to attack the small intestine, leading to damage and preventing nutrient absorption.

Non-Celiac Gluten Sensitivity (NCGS)

NCGS is a condition where individuals experience adverse reactions to gluten but lack the antibodies and intestinal damage associated with celiac disease.

Wheat Allergy

A wheat allergy is an allergic response to any of the proteins in wheat, leading to symptoms like hives, itching, or anaphylaxis.

Gluten-Free Diet

A gluten-free diet involves avoiding foods containing gluten, primarily wheat, barley, and rye. It is a medically necessary diet for individuals with celiac disease, NCGS, or wheat allergy.

Food Labeling

Food labels provide information about a product's nutritional content, ingredients, and other relevant details. Understanding the terms used in food labeling is essential for a gluten-free lifestyle.

FDA Gluten-Free Labeling Rule

The FDA's gluten-free labeling rule defines gluten-free as containing less than 20 parts per million (ppm) of

gluten. This regulation applies to packaged foods labeled as gluten-free, whether or not they contain gluten-containing grains.

Gluten-Containing Grains

Gluten-containing grains include wheat (including spelt, kamut, and durum), barley, and rye.

Gluten-Free Grains and Starches

Gluten-free grains and starches include rice, corn, quinoa, millet, buckwheat, sorghum, amaranth, teff, arrowroot, tapioca, potato, and bean flours.

Cross-Contact

Cross-contact occurs when gluten-free food comes into contact with gluten-containing food, potentially contaminating it with gluten.

Voluntary Gluten-Free Labeling

Manufacturers may voluntarily label their products as gluten-free, even if they are not required to do so under the FDA's gluten-free labeling rule.

Precautionary Statements

Precautionary statements, such as "may contain gluten" or "made in a facility that also processes wheat," indicate potential cross-contact risks.

FALCPA

The Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act (FALCPA) requires manufacturers to list the top eight allergens (including wheat) on food labels.

Wheat-Free vs. Gluten-Free

Wheat-free means a product does not contain wheat but may contain other gluten-containing grains. Gluten-free means a product does not contain wheat, barley, or rye and any cross-contact risks have been minimized.

Gluten-Free Certification

Gluten-free certification programs, such as the Gluten-Free Certification Organization (GFCO), provide third-party verification of a product's gluten-free status.

Oats

Oats are naturally gluten-free but frequently contaminated with gluten during processing. Look for gluten-free labeled oats or those processed in a dedicated gluten-free facility.

Challenge

Try reading food labels in your local supermarket and identify any potential gluten sources or precautionary statements. Consider taking a picture of a label that you find confusing and researching it further to ensure it is safe for your gluten-free diet.

In conclusion, understanding the key terms and vocabulary related to reading food labels and identifying gluten is crucial for individuals following a gluten-free lifestyle. By being familiar with these terms, you can make informed decisions about your food choices and maintain a healthy gluten-free diet. Remember, always read food labels carefully, and when in doubt, contact the manufacturer for clarification.