

Cross-contamination occurs when gluten-free food comes into contact with gluten-containing food or surfaces where gluten-containing ingredients were used. Gluten is very sticky, and is hard to remove from surfaces. Here are some sources of contamination:

- **Bulk Food Bins-** Avoid purchasing flours, grains and nuts in bulk. There is usually cross-contamination between the bins from products falling from one bin to the other, and by misuse of the scoops.
- **Condiment Containers-** Beware of bread crumbs in the butter, jam, toaster, and on the counter. Buy squeezable mayo, mustard, and jelly and keep a dedicated “GF” tub of butter.
- **Cutting Boards-** Don’t prepare gluten-free foods on the same surface used to prepare foods with gluten unless the surface has been thoroughly cleaned. Since it is difficult to remove gluten from the roughen surface of wooden or plastic cutting boards, gluten free cooks do best with glass, ceramic or stone cutting surfaces or plastic cutting boards that are gluten free dedicated.
- **Wooden Spoons, Spatulas and Rolling Pins-** Make sure utensils have been thoroughly cleaned after preparing gluten-containing foods. Even better, have separate sets of utensils for gluten-free food preparation.
- **Toasters-** Don’t use the same toaster for gluten-free bread and regular bread. If your home isn't entirely gluten-free and you can only have one toaster, try to make it a toaster oven and get extra trays from the manufacturer for gluten-free toasting.
- **Sifters and Collanders-** Don’t use the same sifter or collander for gluten-free and regular flours or pastas. Clearly label the gluten-free sifter or collander to avoid mistakes.
- **Muffin Tins-** Do not bake gluten-free muffins or cupcakes in the same tins used for wheat-based baking. As with muffin tins, you should not bake gluten-free cookies on the same cookie sheets used for “regular” cookies. With cookie sheets, however, you can cheat and line them with either heavy-duty aluminum foil or a silicone pad.
- **Baking Dishes and Pans-** Pyrex baking dishes are easier to clean than metal baking pans. If they’re used for gluten by mistake, you can scrub them clean with steel wool. Disposable aluminum pans are a great alternative.
- **Multi-use Cooking Oil-** Don’t deep-fry gluten-free foods in the same oil used to fry breaded items. This is a particular risk in restaurants. Gluten-free frying **MUST** be in gluten free dedicated oils.
- **Shared Kitchen Space-** Avoid using gluten-containing flours in kitchens where gluten-free food is prepared. Wheat flour can stay airborne for many hours and contaminate surfaces, utensils, and uncovered gluten-free food. In general, foods prepared in any place that is not gluten-free are at risk for contamination (for example, when equipment is inadequately cleaned after producing gluten-containing foods).
- **Oats-** Cross-contamination is also the major reason why most commercial oats are considered unsafe for celiacs. While oat and wheat proteins may have some similarities, the major problem is that these two grains are usually grown next to

each other in the fields, processed in the same grain elevators, milled with the same equipment, and transported using the same containers. Inevitably under these circumstances, the grains co-mingle and the oats become contaminated with gluten. Gluten-free oats are slowly becoming available. Look for those in the gluten free section of the Market.

Hidden sources of gluten are lurking on nearly all market shelves. Here are some places that can trip up even the most discriminating gluten free baker.

- **Modified Food Starch**-Only wheat sources of gluten are disclosed when modified food starch is used. Therefore, you cannot assume that if wheat was not disclosed that it is gluten free, since barley may be a source of modified food starch.
- **Non Dairy Products** - Many rice and soy beverage manufacturers use barley enzymes in the production process of their products.
- **Dairy Products** - many low fat varieties of ice cream, sour cream, cottage cheese, and buttermilk contain modified food starch, that can contain gluten.
- **Spices and Extracts** - sometimes wheat flour is used in spices to prevent clumping. Many McCormick spices are gluten free. But even their seasoning mixes can contain gluten. Beware when purchasing spice mixes, rubs or sauces they can contain gluten.