



Dear store manager,

The gluten-free community greatly appreciates your efforts to make gluten-free baked goods available to your customers. It is very important to make sure these products are safe to eat for people with celiac disease and other gluten-related disorders. Celiac disease is a serious autoimmune disease. A strict gluten-free diet for life is required to prevent debilitating and life-threatening health problems.

Under the FDA's gluten-free labeling rule, if a packaged food product (e.g., foods packaged by a retail or foodservice establishment that are offered for human consumption) is labeled gluten-free it must (among other criteria) contain less than 20 parts per million of gluten, including from **cross-contact** with wheat, barley, or rye. To put this amount into context, if you could cut a one-ounce slice of wheat bread into 7,030 pieces, the amount of gluten in ONE of these pieces would be equivalent to the amount of gluten in an entire one-ounce slice of gluten-free bread containing just under 20 parts per million of gluten. In other words it takes far less than a crumb of a wheat product to cause a product NOT to be gluten-free.

If you are preparing foods in a kitchen also used to prepare wheat-based products there is a tremendous likelihood that you are contaminating gluten-free foods unless strict quality control measures are in place. These measures include (and this is by no means an exhaustive list):

- storing gluten-free flours separately from wheat, barley, and rye flours
- preparing gluten-free food in a separate section of the kitchen
- scrupulously cleaning all shared surfaces and equipment
- testing of shared surfaces and equipment to check for gluten contamination
- periodically sending finished products to a third party testing facility for gluten testing

The FDA's gluten-free labeling rule does not explicitly cover foods placed in a wrapper or container at the time a customer places an order. However, to protect the health of your customers the same protocols to prevent cross-contact should be followed. In addition, unpackaged foods advertised as gluten-free sold behind a counter should not be stored next to food containing gluten. Employees should also change gloves before handling food advertised as gluten-free.

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Gluten Free Watchdog sends packaged food products labeled gluten-free to an independent food testing facility and publishes the results for consumers (i.e., subscribers to Gluten Free Watchdog). We generally test national brands but due to concerns about products being prepared in-house by retailers we have started testing these products as well. Concerned consumers have been advised by Gluten Free Watchdog to first talk to store managers and provide them with this letter. If consumers remain concerned about store practices they have been advised to contact us.

To learn more about Gluten Free Watchdog please visit
www.glutenfreewatchdog.org.

To learn more about the FDA's gluten-free labeling rule, please see
<http://www.fda.gov/food/guidanceregulation/guidancedocumentsregulatoryinformation/allergens/ucm362880.htm>.

Sincerely,

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