

5 major questions Gluten-Free Consumers want to know about Food Production

The **Canadian Celiac Association** approached BRCGS with 5 major questions that Gluten-Free consumers would like to understand about food production. The **Gluten-Free Certification Program (GFCP)** is one that certifies food production sites under a food safety standard with the specific goal of eliminating contamination by gluten.

Seems simple right? Not exactly.

We at BRCGS are known as program owners. We develop programs that take specific precautions and use detailed methods for safety. These methods help suppliers achieve safe and authentic gluten free production, allowing your favourite brands to label their products with the trademarks you know and trust. As someone with celiac disease, you cannot afford to take chances on the food you eat, check for marks like the Canadian Celiac Gluten-Free Trademark or the BRCGS Gluten-Free Trademark when seeking assurance if a product is safe to eat.



To help you understand the processes and procedures involved in safe production and why products may be recalled if they do not meet food safety standards, see these 5 questions asked by CCA on behalf of Gluten-Free consumers.

1. Who ensures the safety and certification of gluten free foods?

There are five main parties that are involved to ensure the safety and certification of gluten free foods.

- First, BRCGS: we write the standard and help sites develop rigorous food safety management systems to ensure safe and authentic Gluten-Free food production.
- Second, Certification Bodies: these organizations are independent from BRCGS who know the rules and regulations of food safety standards, they help officially accredit certifications as a third party. We partner with CBs to avoid biases in our program.
- Third, Auditors: auditors are dedicated food safety experts who have extensive experience in the field and conduct audits on behalf of certification bodies.
- Fourth, Manufacturers: as mentioned earlier, manufactures (a.k.a sites/suppliers) are the organizations that produce food for the brands you know and are the parties that undergo certification.
- Fifth, the Canadian Celiac Association: this non-profit organization has an important mission and recognize the Gluten-Free Certification Program as a strong one, lending BRCGS their trademark to stamp on product packaging for companies who work with sites that are certified. This in helps you as a consumer to make label checking easy on your grocery runs.

2. What is the process companies must go through to obtain certification for a product?

Our program is unique from other Gluten-Free certifications because it does not rely on product testing alone. This may seem counter-intuitive, but science teaches us that it is much safer to avoid contamination by controlling your environment over relying on testing the finished product. This also pertains to individual ingredients being inherently gluten free. For example, rice does not inherently contain gluten, but if produced in a contaminated environment, gluten can be traced in the product. The GFCP is founded on a Management System approach to producing Gluten-Free foods. This means every step of the production process, from incoming ingredients to finished product, is considered, assessed, and monitored to manage and control gluten.

3. What standards must be met to obtain gluten free certification?

There are certain standards that the building itself must meet to be allowed to operate. These include sound construction and surfaces (walls, floors, ceilings) that are in good condition and easy to clean. The site must have certain prerequisite programs in place such as training of staff, sanitation, pest, and waste management to help minimize the risk of contamination. The site must also have a robust, documented Hazard analysis and critical control point (HACCP) plan to manage food safety with an emphasis on gluten controls. In terms of gaining certification, the site must meet all the requirements of BRCGS' Gluten-Free Certification Program, without exception. This will be demonstrated at an annual audit performed by a suitably trained auditor from an accredited Certification Body.

4. What happens in an audit?

An audit functions like a practical exam. Manufacturing sites go through a lot of training and preparation to ensure they have implemented the Gluten-Free Certification Program properly. The steps to completing an audit include:

- Document review - A review of the documented Gluten-Free Management System
- Production site inspection - To review the practical implementation of the systems, including observation of product changeover procedures and interviews with personnel
- Traceability challenge - Including a review of all relevant records of production (e.g., ingredients intake, production records, finished product checks, and specifications).
- Label review - Including a review of a sample of Gluten-Free product labels to check against specification and legislation
- Final review of findings by the auditor(s)

5. What should people do if a product they use has been recalled, or if they suspect a product may have been contaminated with gluten?

If a product has been recalled, it will be listed on the **CFIA's Recalls Page**. Consumers should follow the instructions listed against the relevant recall notice. These will usually be “do not consume”, and “return it for a full refund”. We recommend taking photographs of the product and packaging. Retain a small portion of the product in the freezer (up to 50g) in case independent testing is required. Make sure to label this carefully so no one in your home gets sick.

If you have any concerns about a product which is not yet subject to a recall, contact the manufacturer (or brand owner) to report the problem, providing as much detail of the product as possible. Retain the product and the packaging if possible. If the product has a Canadian Celiac Association trademark on it, please also contact BRCGS at enquiries@brcgs.com.

There you have it, 5 major questions answered. If you would like to learn more about the use of trademarks and Gluten-Free production, listen to our podcast *Confidently Compliant: A Food Safety Podcast*, episode 5- **why care about trademarks?**

Featuring CCA's Melissa Secord and BRCGS' technical services coordinator, Barry Meikle.

Find more resources about the **Gluten-Free Certification Program** by **registering your interest**.

[Learn more about GFCP](#)