

## on your plate

# Revisiting malt and why we don't do lists of GF brands

## Q. Is malt gluten free?

**A.** We wrote about malt flavoring recently but decided to revisit the question because it still seems to confuse many who follow the gluten-free diet. Malt is usually made from barley and is not gluten free. It can be made from corn, but that is rare.

Most malt comes from barley grain that has been soaked, germinated and dried. Ingredients made from malt include malt flavoring, malt syrup and malt extract, none of which are currently considered gluten free.

Malt flavoring is found in a wide variety of products. It is very common in cereals, including those that do not have any other gluten-containing ingredients. Still these cereals are not considered gluten free.

In fact, General Mills recently replaced the malt flavoring in Rice Chex with molasses in order to be able to label the cereal gluten free.

There have been some questions about ingredients made from malt and whether they might be considered gluten free if a proposed definition for the gluten-free label is approved by the Food and Drug Administration. The proposed definition sets a standard of less than 20 parts per million for products labeled gluten free. (See story page 13.)

In the document outlining the proposed definition, the FDA pointed to a study that found cases where some foods, including breakfast cereal, made with malt extract contained less than 20 ppms. But there is also a study that found that the amount of gluten in malt syrup and malt extract ranged from 1,800 to 2,000 ppm.

The proposed definition would allow an ingredient made from wheat, barley, or rye that has been processed to remove gluten to be used in a product labeled gluten free if it does not cause the finished food to contain 20 ppm. If ingredients made from malt met that requirement, they could be used in a product labeled gluten free.

Joe Hickenbottom, vice president of sales and marketing for Malt Products Corp., said the malt extract and malt syrup made by the company is tested and has less than 20 ppm of gluten. He said gluten protein is removed during the processing.

Look for more detailed information about ingredients made from malt in our next issue.

## Q. Is brown rice syrup gluten free?

**A.** Brown rice syrup is a sweetener made by fermenting brown rice with enzymes to disintegrate the starch content, according to manufacturer AG Commodities Inc. Then the fermented liquid is strained and cooked until it becomes syrup.

The enzymes are the key to whether the brown rice syrup is gluten free. Barley enzymes, which are often used, make brown rice syrup that is not gluten free. However, if fungal enzymes are used, then the brown rice syrup is gluten free.

Several brands are labeled gluten free, including Lundberg Farms' Sweet Dream, Nature's Flavors' organic brown rice syrup and Suzanne's Specialties' Genmai organic brown rice nectar. Lundberg Farms purposely switched from a cereal enzyme to a fungal enzyme to make their brown rice syrup gluten free.

You will sometimes see brown rice syrup listed as an ingredient in processed foods. If it's used in a product that is labeled gluten free, like Erewhon brown rice cereal or Enjoy Life Foods' Cocoa Loco snack bars, you can assume it is gluten free.

But if brown rice syrup is used in a mainstream product, it can be harder to tell. Some companies note the use of barley or barley malt in their brown rice syrup, but the allergen labeling law does not require them to. If you see brown rice syrup on a mainstream label, but the source is not listed, the only way to be sure is to check with the food maker.

## Q. Could you please send me a list of your gluten-free yogurts?

**A.** In general we do not provide lists of gluten-free products. Sometimes, as in the question about rice syrup, we might mention a few that are gluten-free but we have always stayed away from comprehensive lists.

First, products can change at any time and it's possible that by the time we compile and print a list, it would be out of date. The best way to determine whether a product is gluten free is to learn about ingredients and go by the ingredient list on the package.

The second reason we don't do lists is that they imply that every gluten-free brand is on them and that any that aren't listed contain gluten. That can be misleading. It's nearly impossible to list every single national and regional brand of a product.

But here is some general information about yogurt. Plain yogurt is gluten free and most flavored yogurt is gluten free. Some companies will only claim their plain yogurt is gluten free. That's because they are concerned that the natural flavors might contain gluten.

But if the gluten was from wheat, it would have to be listed on the label according to the allergen labeling law. That law would not apply if it was barley. But even if barley is used to make the ethanol, the ethanol would be distilled. Everything we know about distillation indicates the flavoring would be gluten free.

Brown Cow and Stonyfield Farm yogurts are certified gluten free by the Gluten Intolerance Group. Fage yogurt is labeled gluten free. The companies that make Yoplait and Breyers have policies of always listing all sources of gluten on their labels. Dannon says only its plain yogurt is gluten free due to concerns about flavoring.

Send your questions to  
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