
UPDATE: Food Products in Canada and US

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COVID-19 Update

Update on US-destined products containing barley that may be on retail shelves

CCA continues to consult with and monitor Health Canada regarding the announcement that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has made steps to address potential disruption in Canada's food supply including temporarily suspending enforcement of certain food labelling requirements.

"Currently, the CFIA's action allows products made in Canada that were originally destined for foodservice use in the U.S. to be sold at retail in Canada, under certain conditions." Given that the food market has stabilized, the likelihood is low but we recommend consumers should still be alert.

Manufacturers who decide this route have been instructed by Health Canada to follow enhanced labelling requirements and to be cautious of barley-based ingredients such as **malt flavour or extract and yeast extracts (especially autolyzed yeast extract)**.

Here are some tips to help identify these products:

- Large or over-sized packages (These products would have been normally sold for food service and restaurants)
- English only labels
- Products with an over-label, may include bilingual text

We have included the text from Health Canada below from our last alert for further detail.

If you have seen any of these products, please share them with CCA by taking a photo of the product, where and when you purchased it to ccaintern@celiac.ca.

FDA in United States allowing changes during COVID-19

Changes have been made in the US to food labelling of pre-packaged food allowing for substitutions of minor ingredients that are not to impact the health and safety of the product without changes to labels.

These products are NOT allowed to be sold in Canada. Given there is no cross-border travel to the US yet, Canadians should NOT be impacted. CCA will continue to monitor the situation with our US counterparts especially when borders open.

Original Alert from Health Canada

"On April 6, 2020, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) announced steps that it was taking to address potential disruption in Canada's food supply and to support the economy during the COVID-19 pandemic, including temporarily suspending enforcement of certain food labelling requirements.

On this date, the Agency posted a notice to industry for labelling of foodservice products for sale at retail. Currently, the CFIA's action allows products made in Canada that were originally destined for foodservice use in the U.S. to be sold at retail in Canada, under certain conditions.

We heard your (CCA and Coeliacque Quebec) concerns that ingredients such as **malt flavour or extract and yeast extract do not have to clearly identify that they contain barley in the US**, since the US does not have the same enhanced labelling regulations for gluten sources that Canada does. We recognize that consumers with celiac disease rely on food labelling and have come to expect that foods available for sale in Canada always declare the presence of barley and other gluten sources on their label. We have worked with the CFIA to address your concern and have determined that the requirements for gluten sources to be clearly identified on food labels should still apply to any foods with US labelling sold in Canada, similar to the way food allergen labelling requirements do, because of their health and safety impact for people with celiac disease or gluten sensitivity.

This means that any foods containing ingredients like malt flavour or extract or yeast extract should indicate the presence of barley as part of the product information available to consumers. While declaration of Canada's priority allergens and gluten sources will continue to be required, there is still a potential risk that some products originally labelled for the US market might not identify barley as required. **As a precautionary measure Health Canada is preparing an advisory that will be posted on the Health Canada website reminding consumers with celiac disease or gluten sensitivity to read the list of ingredients carefully and to watch for ingredients like malt flavour or extract or yeast extract during the pandemic period.**

Note that gluten free labelling requirements are almost identical in Canada and the U.S., which means that any foods represented as "gluten free" have to meet strict criteria and cannot contain gluten above 20 parts per million."

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