

By [Toni B. Snyder](#)

How do you create a gluten-free pantry and refrigerator if you have gluten intolerance or celiac disease? Follow the five steps below to ensure a safe, gluten-free kitchen for you and your family.

1. Sorting Space

To prepare for your adventure, clear off a large, clean space near the kitchen for sorting food from your pantry and refrigerator. Separate this area into three sections: Keep, Toss, and Not Sure. Having a designated sorting space will help you organize and manage the food items more efficiently.

Familiarize yourself with what gluten is: wheat (including durum, kamut, semolina, spelt), barley, rye, triticale, malt, and oats that are not certified gluten-free. Remember that wheat-free is not gluten-free!

Thankfully, most food companies now list common allergens and what their foods are manufactured with on their labels. This will be very useful as you sort through your pantry and refrigerator.

2. Food to Keep

A basic gluten-free diet focuses on natural, fresh, whole food. Carefully read the labels on all packaged, boxed, and canned edibles to make sure they don't contain gluten. Some of your food packaging may actually state it is gluten-free. Lucky for you!

These items belong in the "Keep" section:

- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Fresh meats, poultry, fish, eggs (no basting or flavoring)
- Natural dairy products: milk, butter, cheese (no blue cheese)
- Pure, gluten-free grains and flours: quinoa, corn, millet, buckwheat, sorghum, rice, amaranth, teff, Montina, potato, bean, flax, nut
- Natural herbs and spices (spice mixes may contain gluten -- read labels!)
- Distilled alcohol, wine, vinegar
- Any food specifically labeled "gluten-free" and/or absolutely does not include gluten-containing ingredients

3. Food to Toss

Throw out or donate food that has obvious gluten ingredients and does not clearly state "gluten-free" on the label. Double-check the following for your "Toss" pile:

- Flours, breads, cookies, cereals, pastas, breading, coating mixes, croutons, bakery items
- Preserved, processed and imitation meats, lunchmeats, sausage, cheeses
- Soups, soup mixes, bullions, condiments, sauces, gravies, dressings, marinades, thickeners, spice mixes, flavorings, beer
- Baking powder (often contains gluten unless labelled gluten-free)
- Nutritional supplements (herbals, vitamins, minerals)
- Drugs and medications

If you are uncertain or can't make sense of the ingredients, then move on to the "Not Sure" section.

4. Food - Not Sure

If you just can't decipher the label, even if the food appears safe, then put it in the "Not Sure" pile. Questionable substances include:

- Artificial, natural, caramel, or smoke flavoring
- Artificial coloring
- Modified food starch
- Monosodium glutamate (MSG)
- Hydrolyzed or hydrogenated ingredients
- Anything you can't pronounce!

These ingredients may or may not have gluten depending on how and where they are processed. Don't be shy...If you are not sure if the food is safe to eat, contact the food manufacturer by website, email, or phone to find out exactly which of their foods are gluten-free. Some of their websites even have gluten-free lists and charts! However, if the company hesitates to give to you an acceptable answer, consider the food unsafe and pitch it or give it away.

5. Clean and Organize

Now that everything is out of the pantry and refrigerator, scrub down the shelves, drawers, and surfaces with hot soapy water, vinegar, or your choice of disinfectant. Think of gluten like glue -- it adheres to surfaces and gets stuck in grooves and crevices. Take the time to thoroughly sanitize to make your kitchen a safe eating environment.

You may have to arrange your clean kitchen into gluten-free and gluten areas. Give the gluten eaters their very own lower shelves in the pantry and refrigerator to prevent their food from cascading down onto your safe edibles. Label their gluten foods and provide your loved ones with their own condiments and dressings. Be sure to discuss the importance of keeping this area clean and free of crumbs to minimize the risk of cross-contamination.

Put all your safe, gluten-free provisions into the pantry and refrigerator. Bag up the unsafe food to throw away or donate. Follow up with the "Not Sure" pile. Now it's time to whip up something yummy!

Toni B. Snyder invites you to visit www.glutenfreehowto.com for more information on gluten-free living. Dr. Snyder is a nutrition consultant specializing in the management of common nutrient deficiencies and related health concerns associated with food sensitivities and

allergies. Take her

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