

Alcohol Labelling in Canada

Overview of Alcohol Labelling:

Added allergens, gluten sources and sulphites (at a level of 10 ppm or more) **must be declared** when present in alcoholic beverages. This requirement applies to bourbon whisky, as well as standardized and unstandardized alcoholic beverages. Beer is no longer exempt from declaring food allergens, gluten sources and added sulphites.

Manufacturers must state the presence of gluten in one of two ways on the product label. It can be declared within the ingredient list if an ingredient list is provided, or, if no ingredient list is provided, it must be stated within a “Contains” statement.

Standardized alcoholic beverages includes whisky, rum, gin, brandy, liqueurs and spirituous cordials, vodka, tequila, mezcal, wine, icewine, cider and beer. These standardized alcoholic beverages are not required to show a list of ingredients on the label unless they contain food allergens, gluten sources or added sulphites.

Unstandardized alcoholic beverages: may be labelled as “alcoholic beverages,” “coolers,” “malt-based alcoholic beverages” or other such names. Unstandardized alcoholic beverages are required to display a list of ingredients and must, like all other prepackaged foods, clearly identify the presence of any food allergen source, gluten source and added sulphites on the product label.

Detailed Alcohol Information:

Distilled Alcohol:

Distilled alcohol is gluten free even if made with a gluten-containing grain. This is because the gluten protein cannot vaporize and does not pass through the distillation process. Distillation occurs in a large vat and during this process, the solid mass and alcohol separate. The alcohol goes on to evaporate and creates distilled liquor while the solid mass remains behind in the vat. The solid mass contains the gluten protein which does not evaporate; thus, the final distilled products have no gluten.

Examples of distilled alcohols include bourbon whiskey, brandy, gin, Irish whiskey, rum, rye whiskey, scotch whiskey, tequila and vodka.



Additional Note on Vodka:

Vodka can be made from other agricultural products other than potato and cereal grains (example – fruit, dairy, honey). If vodka is made from products other than just potatoes or cereal grain, it must be identified on the label using the statement such as “Produced from” in close proximity to the common name of "vodka" on the label. Canadian distillers have until December 13, 2022 to follow the new rules and make any applicable labelling changes.

Wine:

Wine is naturally gluten free and safe for those with celiac disease. Some expensive red wines may have been aged in oak barrels that have used a small amount of wheat paste to seal the head of the barrel. However, scientists have tested these types of wines using the highly sensitive R5 Elisa method, and no detectable gluten was found.

Beer:

Beer is no longer exempt from declaring food allergens, gluten sources and added sulphites. Brewers have a transition period until December 13, 2022, to update labels.

Beers are now required to declare any food allergens, gluten sources and added sulphites on the label. The manufacturer can do this either:

1. In the ingredient list when an ingredient list is provided.
2. If there is no ingredient list, then it must be declared in a "Contains" statement on the label

Gluten Free Beer:

Gluten-free beer that is safe for those with celiac disease must be made from gluten-free grains. This could include grains such as millet, sorghum, buckwheat, amaranth, rice or quinoa. When made from a gluten-free grain, these beers are permitted to state 'gluten free' on the label.

Gluten free beer cannot be made from gluten-containing grains including wheat, rye, barley or triticale.

Some examples of celiac safe varieties include: Glutenberg, Boxer, La Messagère, Bard's, New Grist, Green's, Ghostfish.

Gluten-Reduced Beers:

Gluten-reduced beers use an enzyme to reduce gluten levels in beers derived from gluten-containing grains. Unfortunately, this enzyme affects the ability of the highly



sensitive R5 Elisa test to accurately detect gluten in the finished products. Therefore, individuals with celiac disease should **avoid** this type of beer.

Gluten- reduced beers are permitted to be listed as “crafted to remove gluten,” “deglutinated,” “gluten reduced” or any equivalent statements that emphasize the removal of gluten from the product. However, these beers are **not allowed** to carry a ‘gluten-free’ claim.

It's important to recognize that restaurants, pubs, bars, or even waitstaff may incorrectly offer gluten-reduced beers as 'gluten-free' beers on menus. So always confirm before ordering/tasting a 'gluten-free' beer.

Examples of gluten-reduced beers include Daura Damm, Mongozo, Omission, Celia Lager. However, there are many other products on the market.

References:

1. Case, Shelley: Gluten Free: The Definitive Resource Guide www.shelleycase.com
2. Health Canada: <https://www.inspection.gc.ca/food-label-requirements/labelling/industry/alcohol/eng/1392909001375/1392909133296?chap=1>
3. Health Canada: <https://www.inspection.gc.ca/food-label-requirements/labelling/industry/allergens-and-gluten/eng/1388152325341/1388152326591?chap=2#s6c2>
4. Health Canada: <https://www.inspection.gc.ca/food-label-requirements/labelling/notice-to-industry-2019-06-26/eng/1561471058273/1561471058538?fbclid=IwAR12VwrZU-R-ru0e4TLoloU- cYrgACSCDfs6t6XtbRSbv2yQYXFiflcoX8>
5. Health Canada: <https://www.inspection.gc.ca/food-label-requirements/labelling/industry/alcohol/eng/1392909001375/1392909133296?chap=4>
6. Health Canada: <https://www.inspection.gc.ca/food-label-requirements/labelling/industry/alcohol/eng/1392909001375/1392909133296?chap=0#s14c9>