

# WHAT DOES CROSS-CONTAMINATION MEAN?

## Definition, causes & prevention

**Contaminated foods are products that are contaminated with residues, such as pesticides, or with foreign bodies. Residues are substances that were used during agricultural production or storage and are still present in the food. Contamination means that a substance has accidentally got into or onto the food. Contamination can occur at the producer, but also in the catering industry during further processing.**

The cereal oat represents a clear example of this. Oat is a gluten-free cereal. However, if oat comes from conventional cultivation, it usually has a very high level of contamination with wheat or barley. **This may be due to mixing these cereals during cultivation or even further processing.** Conventional oat products are therefore contaminated and can no longer be considered gluten-free. Meanwhile, though, it is also possible to buy products made from gluten-free, non-contaminated oats labelled with the Crossed Grain symbol. Food businesses, i.e. both manufacturers and caterers, must prevent contamination and are obliged to carry out their own checks.

If you produce gluten-free products in your business, these must never be contaminated by products containing gluten. In the catering industry, you have a personal responsibility in preventing contamination through avoiding gluten-containing residues. Indeed, contamination risks can be found in all catering areas - starting from the purchase of raw materials, through storage and preparation, up to guest service.

### RISKS

Typical sources of hazard during preparation are dust, dirt, crumbs and poorly cleaned machines or kitchen utensils. To effectively prevent contamination, the cooperation of all staff at all stations is required, from waiters to kitchen staff. Here is a brief overview of possible sources of danger and how to prevent them:

**Purchase** of food specially produced for people suffering from coeliac disease.

**Separate work areas** for the preparation of gluten-free and gluten-containing food.

**Separate storage rooms** or cupboards for gluten-containing and gluten-free products.

**Clear labelling** of gluten-free products and dishes to minimise the risk of confusion.

#### References:

- 1) Lebensmittelsicherheit verstehen | Fakten und Hintergründe, Bundesministerium für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft, Oktober 2018
- 2) Hafer in der glutenfreien Ernährung, Stellungnahme der Deutschen Zöliakie-Gesellschaft e.V., Wissenschaftlicher Beirat der Deutschen Zöliakie-Gesellschaft e.V., Mai 2016
- 3) Lebensmittelkontamination, Lexikon der Ernährung, Copyright 2001 Spektrum Akademischer Verlag, Heidelberg <https://www.spektrum.de/lexikon/ernaehrung/lebensmittelkontamination/5201>

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