

A Primer on Food Label Terms

A food label is a government-regulated “fact sheet” about the product inside. Some label information is obvious: the type of food; quantity; food manufacturer’s name and contact information; bar code used at check-out. Labels may also include recipes, microwave instructions, freshness date, Kosher or Halal symbols, food grading and inspection symbols, safe handling instructions and more.

Food labels provide reliable nutrition information, too. The goal: information you can trust, as you make smart food and beverage choices. Use this primer to boost your food label savvy.



Chops-on-Top Pork & Stuffing Supper

- **Good source:** supplies 10% to 19% of the Daily Value of a nutrient for a government-standardized serving (the technical term is “Reference Amount Customarily Consumed” or “RACC”). Similar terms: *contains, provides.*
- **High:** supplies 20% or more of the Daily Value of a nutrient in a RACC serving. Similar terms: *excellent source of, rich in.*
- **Light:** a term with several meanings: 1) a food with at least 1/3 fewer calories and/or 50% less fat than the traditional food or 2) a low-calorie or low-fat food with 50% less sodium. Similar term: *lite.*
- **Low:** an amount in a RACC serving that’s defined for each term. For example, for individual foods, *low-calorie* is 40 calories or fewer; *low-fat* is 3 grams or less of fat per serving; and *low sodium* is 140 milligrams or less of sodium per serving. Similar terms: *few, little.*
- **Reduced:** an amount (of calories, fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sugars or sodium) that’s at least 25% less per RACC serving than in a similar “reference” food. Similar terms: *fewer, lower, less.*

Nutrient Content Claims

What they are: Nutrient content claims are quick clues about the amount of a nutrient, (e.g., fiber, cholesterol, calcium) or calories in a food. They must meet government-regulated criteria, so these claims mean the same thing wherever they appear. Here’s an example of a nutrient content claim:



How they’re used: Want *low-sodium* products to help manage your blood pressure, or *calcium-rich* products for strong bones? Nutrient content claims help you spot foods that match your nutrition goals and make product comparisons. Want specific calorie or nutrient amounts? Look at the Nutrition Facts panel on the side or back of the package.

What they mean for you:

Free: an amount that’s too small for any probable health effect. Examples: fat-free yogurt, sugar-free gelatin. Other terms: *insignificant source of, no, negligible amount of, zero.*

Health Claims

What they are: Health claims describe how a particular food substance may help lower the risk of a disease or health-related condition. Health claims are backed by strong scientific evidence and are strictly regulated by the government. Here’s an example of a health claim:



How they’re used: Trying to reduce your risk for a disease or other

health condition, perhaps heart disease, cancer or osteoporosis? Use health claims to make the connection between food and health. Since health claims aren't required, other foods may meet the same criteria. Again, check the Nutrition Facts for nutrition specifics on foods with—or without—health claims.

What they mean: Health claims are a quick reminder of a food's link to certain health benefits. Smart food choices are just one of many factors that promote health and perhaps reduce the risk for disease. Other factors include being physically active, achieving or maintaining a healthy body weight, not smoking and genetics.

Ingredient List

What it is: It's a basic "recipe" for the product with all of its ingredients listed in order by weight, from the most to the least. Required by law, the ingredient list must be accurate, even as food products change. Trust the ingredient statement, rather than product descriptions in books, websites or other sources that may become outdated. Here's an example of an ingredient list:

Potassium	3,500mg	3,500mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g	375g
Dietary Fiber	25g	30g

INGREDIENTS: WHOLE WHEAT, SOYBEAN OIL, SALT, MONO- AND DIGLYCERIDES.

CONTAINS: WHEAT.

How it's used: Use the ingredient list to find products that match your nutrition goals: perhaps bread made with whole-grain flour, breakfast cereal with less added sugar or snacks with less fat. An ingredient list also is useful if you have a food allergy, perhaps to nuts or wheat; you're sensitive to sulfites, lactose or gluten; you avoid any food for religious or cultural reasons or you're a vegetarian, trying to avoid meat, chicken, fish or dairy foods.

Food Allergen Labeling

What it is: If a food contains one or more of the 8 major food allergens or a protein from one of these allergens, the allergen must be identified in consumer-friendly terms, for example, "CONTAINS EGG, MILK, WHEAT" or "WHEY (FROM MILK)." Egg, fish, crustacean shellfish (e.g., shrimp, lobster, crab), milk, peanuts, soybeans, tree nuts and wheat represent

about 90% of all food allergens. Here's an example of food allergen labeling:

Potassium	3,500mg	3,500mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g	375g
Dietary Fiber	25g	30g

INGREDIENTS: WHOLE WHEAT, SOYBEAN OIL, SALT, MONO- AND DIGLYCERIDES.

CONTAINS: WHEAT.

How it's used: Have a food allergy? **Every time** you buy and eat a food product look for the presence of food allergens in the ingredient list. Product ingredients and the way allergens are referenced can change over time.

Chops-on-Top Pork & Stuffing Supper

Prep: 15 min.

Total: 35 min.

- 6 boneless center-cut pork chops (1-1/2 lb.), 1/2 inch thick, well trimmed
- 2 Tbsp. GREY POUPON Dijon Mustard
- 1 Tbsp. oil
- 1-1/2 cups water
- 1/4 cup KRAFT Light CATALINA Reduced Fat Dressing
- 3 large carrots, thinly sliced
- 2 large unpeeled red apples, coarsely chopped
- 1 pkg. (6 oz.) STOVE TOP Stuffing Mix for Chicken

COAT chops with mustard. Cook chops in hot oil in large deep nonstick skillet on medium heat 6 min. on each side or until browned and cooked through (160°F). Remove chops from skillet; cover to keep warm.

ADD water, dressing and carrots to skillet. Cook 6 to 8 min. or until carrots are tender, stirring occasionally. Stir in apples and stuffing mix.

RETURN chops to skillet; cover. Turn off heat. Let stand 5 min.

Makes 6 servings.

Nutrition Bonus:

This delicious low-calorie low-fat meal is rich in vitamin A from the carrots.

Nutrition Information Per Serving: 340 calories, 8g total fat, 2g saturated fat, 55mg cholesterol, 870mg sodium, 40g carbohydrate, 4g dietary fiber, 17g sugars, 26g protein, 160%DV vitamin A, 6%DV vitamin C, 4%DV calcium, 10%DV iron.

Exchange: 2-1/2 Starch, 1 Vegetable, 2 Meat (L), 1 Fat

Dietary Exchanges based on *Choose Your Foods: Exchange Lists for Diabetes* © 2008 by the American Diabetes Association.