

Reading Food Labels

Get the inside facts when you read the label.

Labels on cans and packages serve as windows. They give you the inside facts and help you buy the product that is right for you and your family.

Reading labels helps you buy products for their intended use. If you're making soup, you don't need to buy whole fancy tomatoes. You can buy a less expensive kind because appearance won't be important.

Reading labels helps you buy products that fit your budget and the amount needed for your family. Even though a large size may cost less per ounce, it won't be a bargain unless you use all of it.

Ingredient order is important.

Reading labels lets you know what ingredients you're actually paying for in the package. The first ingredient listed is the one which occurs in the greatest amount. Be careful about products listing water as the first ingredient.

Are you buying convenience?

Reading labels helps you know how much convenience you're buying. Some pre-packaged dinners can be heated and served. Others need more ingredients.

By reading and using nutrition labeling, you can plan better meals, give your family a balanced diet, and select products suited to special dietary needs.



Nutrition and diet benefits...

Labels give other valuable information, too. Nutrition labeling must appear on all fortified foods and all foods which make a nutritional claim. Many other foods carry nutrition labeling, too. Nutrition information includes calories, amount of protein, carbohydrates and fats and percentages of seven vitamins and minerals needed for health and well being.

Most shoppers are concerned about the quality of the food they buy. The concept of open dating gives you a general guide to product use. Most dates on products are a "pull" date, the last permissible day of sale for that item from its normal shelf position. After that date, the item must be pulled from regular sale. This doesn't mean it is not good; it means the product may not be at peak quality.

To get the best results from food products, shop carefully. Read labels and transport and store foods properly.

For more information on reading food labels contact your local county Extension office.