



Ingredient list gives ingredients in descending order (ingoing weight). Example of an ingredient list on packaged stir-fry meal:

Ingredients – pork (30%), wheat flour (10%), capsicum, pineapple, green beans, sweet corn, sugar, tomato paste, pineapple concentrate, water, thickener (1422), acidity regulators (270, 260), soy sauce, salt, flavours, thickener (415).

Date marking ‘use by’ – must be eaten before a certain time. ‘best before’ – safe to eat for a short time after the date but it may have lost nutrition and quality.

Food additives must be identified by an international system of class name and individual name or code number (refer to Ingredient List). Look

for food additives under quick links on www.foodstandards.gov.au

Nutrition claims such as ‘low fat’, ‘reduced salt’ or ‘good source of vitamin C’ can be used as a general guide for comparing foods. Foods with claims indicating a low content of one nutrient eg fat, may be high in another eg sugar.

Storage and cooking instructions are required when specific storage or cooking conditions are required for a product to keep until its ‘best before’ or ‘use by’ date.

Country of origin in Australia must be on all packaged, and some unpackaged foods. In New Zealand, only applies to wines.

Allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) can be caused by peanuts, tree nuts (eg cashews, almonds, walnuts), shellfish, finned fish, milk, eggs, sesame and soybeans. All must be declared on the label however small the amount. Gluten (Coeliac Disease) must also be declared. As must sulphite preservatives (asthma) if there is more than 10 mg/kg. ‘may be present’ means traces may be present due to the manufacturing process. Further information: Anaphylaxis Australia Inc www.allergyfacts.org.au

Advisory statements must be on foods which may cause problems. Sweetener aspartame (contains phenylalanine); quinine; guarana (caffeine); margarine, dairy products and breakfast cereals containing cholesterol reducing plant sterols; cola beverages (caffeine), and unpasteurised egg, milk products.

Genetically Modified (GM) foods must be labelled if genetic material or protein introduced by gene technology is present in the final food.

Novel foods are those with insufficient knowledge in the community to ensure safe use. Include synthetic ingredients used to replace fats and sugars, and extracts of plants, animals or micro-organisms. An approval condition of novel foods is preparation instructions on the label. An advisory statement may also be required

Food irradiation can only be used if there is no other safe method. Irradiated food is assessed by FSANZ and must be labelled as irradiated.

Choose the
RIGHT STUFF

A pocket guide to food labels



Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) has designed this consumer guide as a quick reference to food labels. Detailed information is in ***Choosing the Right Stuff - the official shoppers' guide to food additives and labels, kilojoules and fat content*** published by Murdoch Books (Aust) & Allen & Unwin (NZ).

Food labels provide a wide range of information to make healthier choices easier but remember some of the healthiest foods may be unlabelled – fresh fruit, vegetables, nuts, lentils, beans, fresh meat and fish.



Nutrition Information Panels (NIP) must show the amount per serve and per 100g or 100ml if liquid. Exceptions include food: unpackaged; delivered packaged eg pizza; sold at a charity fund raiser; individual serves sold in a large package; tiny packages; no significant nutritional value eg tea, and made at the point of sale eg bread. FSANZ's Nutrition Panel Calculator is available under Quick Links at www.foodstandards.gov.au.

Serving size is determined by the manufacturer. What is your 'usual' serving size?

Per 100g is handy to compare products. Same as % eg 20g fat listed in the 'per 100g' column means 20% fat.

Energy/kilojoules is the total amount of kilojoules from protein, fat, carbohydrate

and alcohol released when food is used by the body. (4.19 kilojoules = approx 1 calorie)

Protein is important for growth and development. Daily serve (75-100g or $\frac{3}{4}$ cup) from meat, eggs, fish, dried peas, beans, lentils or nuts. Vegetarians need to have beans, legumes and cereals. As these are bulkier, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of each is needed to get enough daily protein.

Fat is listed in the NIP as total fat (trans fatty acids, polyunsaturated fats and monounsaturated fat) and as saturated fat. May include: animal oil, beef fat, butter fat, copha, lard, milk solids, palm oil, shortening, tallow, vegetable oil.

Saturated fats - main type in dairy, fatty meats, fried and many processed foods. Not essential to a healthy diet. Tends to raise bad cholesterol (LDL).

Trans fatty acids occur naturally in foods such as meat and dairy, and in manufactured foods such as margarines when vegetable oils are hydrogenated to make them solid. Should be less than 1% of kilojoules/day.

Monounsaturated fats can help lower blood cholesterol. Sources include olive, canola and macadamia oils, avocados, nuts, and some margarine.

Polyunsaturated fats - omega 6 and omega 3 fatty acids - essential diet components. Omega 6 - sunflower, safflower, soy, sesame oils and polyunsaturated margarines. Omega 3 - canola oil and margarine, fish and other seafoods.

Cholesterol can raise blood cholesterol level. Avoid offal, fatty meats, full fat dairy products, and egg yolks.

Carbohydrates are in bread, cereals, vegetables and fruit. Carbohydrate in the nutrition information panel includes starches and sugars.

Fibre intake should be 30-35g a day. Eat more fruits, vegetables and cereal foods.

Sugars in the NIP include natural sugars (fruit), as well as added sugar listed as sucrose, brown sugar, caster sugar, dextrose, fructose, glucose, golden syrup, honey, lactose, malt, maltose, maple syrup, molasses, and raw sugar.

Sodium (salt) is linked to high blood pressure. Adult daily consumption should be less than 2300 mg, about 1 teaspoon. Look for 'low', 'reduced' or 'no added salt'. NIP may include baking soda, celery or garlic salt, monosodium glutamate (MSG/additive number 621), rock or sea salt, sodium bicarbonate.