

FPO

# FIND HEALTHY FOODS—*FAST!*

Cheat sheets to help you speed-read labels

**Y**ou have a long list of things to do on the weekend, and spending all day in the supermarket comparing labels so that you can buy the best foods for your family is not up there with a relaxing mani/pedi. But with so many seemingly similar products out there, how else do you sort the health winners from the losers? Easy—you just need to know how to speed-read labels. We've laid it out for you in our aisle-by-aisle guide so that you can quickly make smart choices. And on page 43, you'll find a clip-out cheat sheet to help you zip through the supermarket like a nutrition pro.

CREDIT HERE



# Cereal

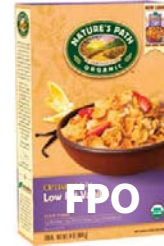
## cheat sheet

Look for (per serving):

- 2 grams fat or less
- no partially hydrogenated fat
- 4+ grams fiber
- 10 grams sugars or less
- 6+ grams protein
- whole grains listed as first ingredient

This is one of the toughest aisles in the supermarket to navigate because scads of choices are available, and almost all of the boxes are plastered with front-of-package health info. Don't buy it! Go straight to the back of the box to get the real lowdown. Then start strategically reading labels using our cheat sheet. Because the government requires that all ready-to-eat breakfast cereals be fortified with iron and vitamins B1, B2, B3, and folate (some manufacturers also throw in vitamins A and D, calcium, and other nutrients), you can skip that data and pay attention to the areas where cereals tend to differ, which is in protein, fiber, fat, and sugar content. Don't worry about calories, either. Those lowest in sugars and fat and highest in fiber and protein will steer you to the healthier choices. Manufacturers have been lowering sugar and increasing whole grains, but there are still plenty of poor choices to rule out. Also make sure to check portion sizes when comparing nutrition info—dense cereals like granola and bran nuggets have significantly smaller serving sizes than flaked or puffed cereals.

### GOOD EXAMPLES



**NATURE'S PATH ORGANIC OPTIMUM SLIM LOW FAT VANILLA**  
It's protein packed.

**BOB'S RED MILL 7 GRAIN HOT CEREAL**

A high-fiber, low-sugar choice.



### Leave these on the shelf

- **BEAR NAKED FRUIT AND NUT GRANOLA** 7 grams of fat in ¼ cup!
- **KELLOGG'S CRACKLIN' OAT BRAN** Twice the cal's of most cereals.
- **QUAKER HONEY GRAHAM OH'S** Low in fiber, loaded with sugar.



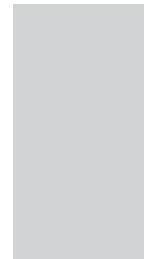
# Bread

## cheat sheet Look for (per serving):

- 100 or fewer calories
- 2 grams fat or less
- 0 saturated fat
- 150 milligrams sodium
- or less
- 2+ grams fiber
- whole-grain flour listed as first ingredient

Skip white breads, including sourdough, Italian, and potato breads, and avoid breads with "Country," "Classic," and "Original" in their names—they are often the least nutritious. But be warned: Breads (and crackers) labeled "multi-grain," "stone-ground wheat," "100% wheat," "cracked wheat," "seven-grain," "made with whole wheat," or "bran" are not usually whole-grain products, so save label-reading time and just focus on finding the word "whole" in the ingredient list, as in "whole-oat flour" or "100% whole-grain flour." Also zero in on your brand's sodium and fiber counts. Bread and rolls contribute more sodium to our diets (about 7.5 percent of daily intake) than any other food. And fiber varies widely. Most whole-grain breads have 2 to 4 grams per slice; high fiber or "double fiber" breads can pack up to 6 grams per slice.

### GOOD EXAMPLES



**RUDI'S ORGANIC 14 GRAIN BREAD**  
Lots of grains and a short ingredient list.

**PEPPERIDGE FARM WHOLE GRAIN ANCIENT GRAINS** Has a healthy 5 grams of protein per slice.

### Leave these on the shelf

- **STROEHMANN DUTCH COUNTRY PREMIUM POTATO BREAD** Made with white flour and high-fructose corn syrup.
- **WONDER CLASSIC WHITE BREAD** 1 gram of fiber in 2 slices.



## cheat sheet

Look for (per serving):

### MILK

- 1% fat (fat-free or skim)
- reduced fat, if flavored
- fortified with vitamin D and calcium, if a nondairy milk

### CHEESE

- reduced-fat, low-fat, 2%, or part-skim
- skip whole-milk cheeses and cottage cheese with more than 4% fat
- 400 milligrams sodium or less

### YOGURT

- low-fat or fat-free
- 30 grams sugars or less
- Skip “light” varieties if trying to avoid artificial sweeteners.

# Dairy

Dairy foods are loaded with important nutrients including vitamin D, calcium, and protein. Too bad they often come with a hefty dose of artery-clogging saturated fat and sometimes added sugar and sodium. Look for reduced-fat versions (defined as 25 percent less fat); low-fat (3 grams or less) is even better. When it comes to fat-free options (less than 0.5 grams fat), you might want to weigh the calorie savings against the longer list of additives often used to make some products look and perform like the real thing (sour cream and cheese)—though fat-free yogurt can make a good slimming snack. Also scan dairy labels for sodium counts, especially on cheeses. Or use this time-saving shortcut:

Look for softer cheeses such as Swiss, goat, ricotta, and cream cheese. They’re usually lower in sodium than harder, aged varieties such as cheddar and blue. Or find lower-sodium cheeses (140 milligrams per serving) such as those made by Alpine Lace, which also makes reduced-fat cheeses sold in the deli and dairy cases. Cabot’s also makes 50 percent reduced-fat and 75 percent reduced-fat cheeses. And part-skim mozzarella works just as well in recipes as whole-milk mozzarella, as does part-skim ricotta in most cases. If you’re shopping for soy-, rice-, and coconut-based dairy alternatives, not all are equal to dairy in calcium and vitamin D content. Be sure to read the labels.

### GOOD EXAMPLES

**BREAKSTONE 2% MILKFAT COTTAGE CHEESE** Doubles the protein of full-fat version.



### ORGANIC VALLEY REDUCED FAT CHOCOLATE MILK

Has more protein and calcium than regular chocolate

### Leave these on the shelf

- **KRAFT AMERICAN DELUXE CHEESE** “Deluxe” means more fat and calories.
- **OAKHURST SUPER PREMIUM CHOCOLATE MILK** Contains 9 grams of fat in just one cup.
- **TRIX YOGURT** They pack a lot of additives.
- **YOCRUNCH YOGURT** Sugar overload!



**FAGE TOTAL 0% GREEK YOGURT** Provides one-third the daily value (DV) of protein.

### SARGENTO REDUCED FAT SWISS CHEESE

More protein and less fat than regular Swiss.



# Meat

## cheat sheet

### Look for:

#### BEEF

- ground beef labeled 90% or more lean
- “select” or “choice” meats, which are leaner than “prime”
- Cuts with “loin” or “round” in the name are most often the leanest.

#### POULTRY

- Ground chicken or turkey labeled “extra lean” or specified as ground breast meat
- Skinless poultry when available.
- Frozen chicken portions should be plain (prepared without breading, marinades, sauces, or stuffings) or grilled.

#### FISH

- When buying frozen fish, choose plain pieces that aren't pregrilled or seasoned with sauces or marinades, especially if you're trying to keep a lid on sodium.
- Low-contaminant species, such as pollack, Pacific flounder and sole, wild Alaskan salmon, and tilapia. Avoid or limit fish that has been linked to mercury and other contaminants, including tuna, grouper, and catfish. (For more info, go to [montereybayaquarium.org/cr/seafoodwatch.aspx](http://montereybayaquarium.org/cr/seafoodwatch.aspx) and click on Seafood Recommendations.)
- Ignore “organic” labels on fish. The U.S. has no organic certification program for fish.



Meat labels—when you find them—can be confusing. Processed meats (hot dogs and cold cuts) and branded items (Perdue and Tyson) are required to have nutrition labels on the package, but labels are not required to be on packages of fresh meat. Instead, you'll usually see a poster or leaflet near the meat counter with nutrition info. But the cuts on the posters don't always match what the store is selling. To make smart and speedy choices, go for the leanest cuts—look for words like “loin” or “round” on meats. For ground meat and poultry, look for “90 percent lean” or “extra lean.” For ready-to-cook choices, avoid marinated, fried, or crumb-coated products, which have added salt and calories. Meats and poultry with the USDA organic seal are a good choice because they can't contain hormones or antibiotics, among other things. Fish labels are a little trickier: Some fish, such as yellowfin tuna, might be misidentified in stores, our recent tests showed.

### GOOD EXAMPLES



**APPLEGATE FARMS ORGANIC TURKEY BURGERS** Minimal ingredients and no added sodium.



**PERDUE SIMPLY SMART GRILLED CHICKEN STRIPS** It's protein-packed and low in fat and sodium.

**TRADER JOE'S SALMON BURGERS** Few ingredients and only 110 calories.

### Leave these on the shelf

- **BANQUET SKINLESS CRISPY CHICKEN** It's skinless but still loaded with fat.
- **GORTON'S LEMON BUTTER FILLETS** The very long ingredient list is a bit off-putting.
- **VAN DECAMPS BEER BATTER FISH FILLETS** They have 10 times the fat of plain pollack.

# Convenience foods

## cheat sheet

Look for (per serving):

### SOUPS

- 250 or fewer calories
- 3 grams fat or less
- 1.5 grams saturated fat or less
- 500 milligrams sodium per serving
- BPA-free cans or soup in boxes or cups

### PASTA SAUCES

- 80 or fewer calories
- 3 grams fat or less
- 1 gram saturated fat or less
- 300 milligrams sodium or less

### RICE/GRAIN MIXES

- 300 or fewer calories
- 4 grams fat or less
- 1 gram saturated fat or less
- 400 milligrams sodium or less
- 3+ grams fiber
- whole grains (see facing page)

Heat-and-eat soups, sauces, and other convenience items are great mealtime time-savers, but if you don't pick and choose carefully, they can be sky high in fat and sodium. When shopping, remember: The plainer the food and the fewer ingredients the better. Red sauces, broth-based soups, and rice mixes without sauces are your best bets overall. Watch out for fat traps: Think twice about foods with cheese, white sauce, or cream. Also bypass noodle mixes; they're usually not made with whole-grain or multi-grain noodles, and most pack lots of unhealthy fat and sodium. Instead focus on whole-grain sides and rice mixes that are unseasoned or lightly seasoned. You'll have to read labels to make sure whole grains dominate the ingredient list; some mixes



might be teamed with nutritionally wimpier white rice or noodles. Also seek out lower-sodium versions whenever you can. If they need a little extra flavor, simply add some herbs and spices. And if you end up adding a pinch of salt to your food, you'll still get less sodium than the typical amounts in many of the regular versions of these products.

## GOOD EXAMPLES



**EDEN ORGANIC OLD ITALIA SPAGHETTI SAUCE** Has tk grams of something

**WALNUT ACRES GARLIC PASTA SAUCE** This is one of the lowest-sodium sauces we found.

## Leave these on the shelf

- **BUITONI ALFREDO SAUCE** It's a saturated fat trap with more than 35 percent of a day's fat in ¼ cup!
- **BARILLA SPICY MARINARA ARRABBIATA SAUCE** Packs about one-quarter of the day's sodium in just ½ cup of sauce.
- **UNCLE BEN'S WHOLE GRAIN MEDLEY** (chicken flavor) Consider one serving a sodium overload.
- **NEAR EAST RICE PILAF** (roasted chicken and garlic) Skip pasta-containing pilafs and go for those made from all whole grains instead.
- **CAMPBELL'S SELECT HARVEST NEW ENGLAND CLAM CHOWDER** Choose the 98 percent fat-free version instead and save yourself a hefty 7.5 grams of fat per

**KASHI 7 WHOLE GRAIN PILAF**  
A serving provides a day's worth of whole grains.



**SEEDS OF CHANGE SEVEN WHOLE GRAINS**  
You get a nice hit of protein along with 6 grams fiber.



**UNCLE BEN'S WHOLE GRAIN BROWN READY RICE** Almost as healthy as brown rice from scratch.



**CAMPBELL'S LIGHT CONDENSED SOUPS**  
Only 80 or fewer calories per serving.

**PACIFIC NATURAL FOODS ORGANIC LIGHT SODIUM SOUP** Just 360 milligrams of sodium per cup.



# Packaged snacks

The snack aisle is one of the trickiest in the supermarket, which makes finding a healthy packaged treat to tuck in a lunch box or stash in a gym bag a challenge. To help speed your way through this crowded aisle, you probably already walk right by the fried stuff—chips, pork rinds, those cheesy puffs—and focus on baked and lightly salted versions to lighten the calorie and sodium load. But also consider single-serve bags to maintain portion control. If you're snacking tastes run to crackers and snack bars, choosing wisely is a bit trickier. Skip those front-of-the-box health claims and check the ingredient list; healthier options will list the first ingredient as whole-grain. Anything with more than 2 grams of fiber per serving is pretty good; some crackers and snack bars pack more. And compare labels for calories, fat, sugar, and protein.

**cheat sheet** Look for (per serving)

<b>CRUNCHY GRANOLA BARS</b>	less
■ 200 or fewer calories	■ 0 grams trans fat
■ 6 grams total fat or less	■ 2+ grams fiber
■ 2 grams saturated fat or less	■ 12 grams sugars or less
■ 0 grams trans fat	■ 2+ grams protein
■ 3+ grams fiber	■ First crust ingredient listed is whole-grain.
■ 10 grams sugars or less	<b>CRACKERS</b>
■ 3+ grams protein	■ 120 or fewer calories
■ whole grain listed as first ingredient	■ 3.5 grams fat or less
<b>CEREAL BARS</b>	■ 250 milligrams sodium or less
■ 120 or fewer calories	■ 3+ grams fiber
■ 3 grams total fat or less	■ whole grain listed as first ingredient
■ 1 gram saturated fat or	

**GOOD EXAMPLES**



**KASHI CHERRY VANILLA CEREAL BAR** Only 9 grams of sugar makes it a good cookie sub.



**AK-MAK 100% WHOLE WHEAT SESAME CRACKERS** Each low-fat cracker packs lots of fiber.

**KELLOGG'S SPECIAL K MULTI-GRAIN CRACKERS** 24 crackers in a 120-calorie



**CLIF ALL NATURAL CRUNCH GRANOLA BAR** Whole grains are listed first in ingredients.

**Leave these on the shelf**

- **CHICKEN IN A BISKIT** You can eat a homemade biscuit for the same amount of fat.
- **NABISCO TOASTED CHIPS—DAIRYLAND CHEDDAR** A long ingredient list plus a hefty amount of fat.
- **RITZ** Made with all white flour; no fiber whatsoever.
- **SUNBELT STRAWBERRY FRUIT & GRAIN BAR** You get a big helping of sugar (16 grams) and only 1 gram of fiber per 140-calorie bar.



**Searching for whole grains?**

- Look for these words in the ingredient list:
- brown rice
  - buckwheat
  - bulgur
  - millet
  - oatmeal
  - quinoa
  - rolled oats
  - whole-grain barley
  - whole-grain corn
  - whole-grain sorghum
  - whole-grain triticale
  - whole oats
  - whole rye
  - whole wheat
  - wild rice



# Frozen entrées

## cheat sheet

**LOOK FOR ONE WITH AT LEAST FOUR OF THESE ATTRIBUTES (PER SERVING):**

- 400 or fewer calories
- 10 grams fat or less
- 4 grams saturated fat or less
- 0 grams trans fat
- 600 milligrams sodium or less
- 3+ grams fiber
- 10-20 grams protein
- whole grains

Before you stock your freezer, root out the worst diet offenders by skipping the huge Hungry Man meals, the fatty macaroni-and-cheese entrées, and the fried-chicken dinners. Then zero in on those good-for-you entrées—the ones that are vegetarian, organic, and/or lower sodium. Check to make sure they have at least 10 grams of protein and 3 grams of

fiber and don't overdo it on fat and sodium (see cheat sheet at left). Also scan ingredients to make sure protein sources and vegetables are high on the list and not buried under a lot of additives. And don't forget to pick up some salad fixings as a side dish; most frozen entrées don't supply enough food for a complete satisfying meal.

## GOOD EXAMPLES

### AMY'S LIGHT IN SODIUM VEGETABLE LASAGNA

Just 340 milligrams of sodium plus organic vegetables.

### KASHI BLACK BEAN AND MANGO WITH WHOLE GRAIN PILAF

Only 340 cal and chock full of whole grains and fiber.

### LEAN CUISINE APPLE CRANBERRY CHICKEN

Has a lean 5 grams of fat and a hefty 6 grams of fiber.

## Leave these on the shelf

### MARIE CALLENDAR SWEDISH MEATBALLS

Almost half of its 540 calories are from fat.

### SWANSON'S STUFFING BAKED TURKEY

Has a third of a day's worth fat and sodium.

### ZATARAIN'S RED BEANS AND RICE WITH SAUSAGE

One entrée has half a day's worth of fat and sodium.

Catherine Broihier June 19, 2012 8:28 AM

A1--Welch's nutrition facts

A2--Mayo Clinic on grape juice/wine

Catherine Broihier June 19, 2012 9:10 AM

E--Dr. Sears rec to avoid juice cocktails and drinks--there are other articles re what juice cocktails are online, as well as the USDA article I saved under "F"

Catherine Broihier June 19, 2012 8:31 AM

B--Wyman's product description. Their website has lots of health info too.

Jonea: I think we should say in the blurb "Mix with seltzer for a bubbly juice drink"--it's not necessary, and the way it reads now it's like you're supposed to do that when really it's just a suggestion.

Catherine Broihier June 19, 2012 8:38 AM

C1 & C2--Sunny D nutritionals

Catherine Broihier June 19, 2012 9:08 AM

D--Veryfine info

Catherine Broihier June 19, 2012 9:12 AM

F--USDA fruit juice/drink info



# Juice

## cheat sheet

Look for

- 100% juice
- no added sweeteners
- no watered-down "light" or "diet" juices

As soon as you hit the juice aisle, narrow your choices by eliminating brands that aren't 100

percent juice (fruit drinks, juice "cocktails," and fruit punches are likely offenders). Scan ingredients for added sugar and corn syrup—juice is sweet enough, and who needs the extra calories? Don't be fooled by a label that touts "100% of Vitamin C"; it's frequently added to drinks that are not 100 percent juice to make them seem more healthful. And 100 percent juices provide a wider array of beneficial nutrients than just vitamin C. If you want a lower-calorie juice, skip the watered-down "diet" and "light" versions and simply dilute 100 percent pure juice yourself at home with water or seltzer for some sodalike bubbles. You'll avoid unwanted artificial sweetener and save money.

## GOOD EXAMPLES



### WYMAN'S WILD BLUEBERRY JUICE

No added sugar or preservatives; mix with seltzer.



### ORANGE JUICE TK

A serving provides more than 100 percent the DV of

**WELCH'S 100% GRAPE JUICE** Has many of red wine's antioxidants plus vitamin C.

## Leave these on the shelf

### SUNNYD

It has little juice; it's mostly water, corn syrup, and artificial sweeteners.

### VERYFINE RUBY RED JUICE COCKTAIL

"Cocktail" is code for watered down and sugared up.

8 CONSUMER REPORTS SHOPSMART

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# Cheat sheet *to go*

What to look for (per serving) on food labels—and what to skip

## CEREALS

- tk or fewer calories
- 2 grams fat or less
- no partially hydrogenated fat
- 4+ grams fiber
- 10 grams sugars or less
- 6+ grams protein
- whole grains listed as first ingredient

## BREAD

- 100 or fewer calories
- 2 grams fat or less
- 0 grams saturated fat
- 150 milligrams sodium or less
- 2+ grams fiber
- Whole-grain flour should be the first ingredient.

## DAIRY

### MILK

- 1% fat (fat-free or skim)
- fat-free, if flavored
- fortified with vitamin D and calcium, if it's a nondairy milk

### CHEESE

- reduced-fat, low-fat, 2%, or part-skim
- Skip whole-milk cheeses and cottage cheese with more than 4% fat.
- 400 milligrams sodium or less

### YOGURT

- low-fat or fat-free
- 30 grams sugar or less
- Skip "light" varieties if trying to avoid artificial sweeteners.

## JUICE

- 100% juice
- skip added sweeteners
- Skip watered-down "light" or "diet" juices.

## MEAT

### BEEF

- ground beef labeled 90% or more lean
- leaner "choice" or "select" meats
- "Loin" or "round" in the name—they're most often the leanest.

### POULTRY

- ground chicken or turkey labeled "extra lean" or specified as ground breast meat
- skinless
- plain frozen chicken (avoid breading, marinades, sauces, and stuffings) or grilled.

### FISH

- Plain pieces that aren't pregrilled or seasoned with sauces or marinades when buying frozen fish, especially if you're trying to keep a lid on sodium.
- Low-contaminant species, such as pollack, Pacific flounder and sole, wild Alaskan salmon, and tilapia. Avoid or limit fish that has been linked to mercury and other contaminants, including tuna, grouper, and catfish.

## CONVENIENCE FOODS

### SOUPS

- 250 or fewer calories
- 3 grams fat or less
- 1.5 grams saturated fat or less
- 500 milligrams sodium per serving
- BPA-free cans or soup in boxes or cups

### PASTA SAUCE

- 80 or fewer calories
- 3 grams fat or less
- 1 gram saturated fat or less
- 300 milligrams sodium or less

### RICE AND GRAIN MIXES

- 300 or fewer calories
- 4 grams fat or less
- 1 gram saturated fat or less
- 400 milligrams sodium or less
- 3+ grams fiber
- whole grains (such as brown rice, wild rice, quinoa, and millet) listed as main ingredients

## PACKAGED SNACK FOODS

### CRUNCHY GRANOLA BARS

- 200 or fewer calories
- 6 grams total fat or less
- 2 grams saturated fat or less
- 0 grams trans fat
- 3+ grams fiber
- 10 grams sugars or less
- 4+ grams protein

- whole grain listed as first ingredient

### CEREAL BARS

- 120 or fewer calories
- 3 grams total fat or less
- 1 gram saturated fat or less
- 0 grams trans fat
- 2+ grams fiber
- 12 grams sugars or less
- 2+ grams protein
- first crust ingredient listed is whole-grain

### CRACKERS

- 120 or fewer calories
- 3.5 grams fat or less
- 250 milligrams sodium or less
- 3+ grams fiber
- whole grain listed as first ingredient

## FROZEN ENTRÉES

### LOOK FOR ONE THAT HAS AT LEAST FOUR OF THESE ATTRIBUTES

- 400 or fewer calories
- 10 grams fat or less
- 4 grams saturated fat or less
- 0 grams trans fat
- 600 milligrams sodium or less
- 3+ grams fiber
- 10-20 grams protein
- whole grains listed in ingredients