



Lifestyle Letter

Wellness News

How to read Food Labels

Food labels can often be confusing, can you decode what you're eating?

Here's what you really need to know about some common food labels.

Organic Food Labels. Organic produce is grown without using most pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, fertilizers made from sewage sludge, or irradiation. Also, the animals raised for organic poultry, meat, eggs, and dairy products aren't given antibiotics or growth hormones. There are four different ways to classify organic foods. Here is the breakdown:

100 percent organic. All of the ingredients are organic. Food manufacturers who meet the criteria may put the green and white USDA organic seal on the front of the package.

Organic. At least 95 percent of the ingredients are organic. Food manufacturers may also use the green and white USDA organic seal if their products meet the criteria.

Made with organic ingredients. At least 70 percent of the ingredients are organic, meaning they were grown without the use of most pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, fertilizers made with sewage sludge, or irradiation. If it's an animal product, the animals weren't given antibiotics or growth hormones. Manufacturers are required to identify the organic ingredients on the label.

Some organic ingredients. Less than 70 percent of the ingredients in these foods are organic. The organic ingredients must be identified on the label.

Grass-Fed, Cage-Free, and More

Natural. Not to be confused with organic, The USDA doesn't regulate the use of the term "natural" on

food labels, except when it comes to meat and poultry. It's a broad term that refers to food that has been minimally processed. Food labeled natural don't contain synthetic preservatives, hydrogenated oils, artificial sweeteners, or other artificial additives, stabilizers, or emulsifiers.

Hormone-free. Technically, meat can't be hormone-free - all animals have hormones. But the US government doesn't allow the administration of hormones to poultry and pork. If a manufacturer uses a "hormone-free" label on pork or poultry, it must also add "Federal regulations prohibit the use of hormones". When it comes to beef, the label can say "No hormones were administered", if the USDA was given documentation that shows the animals weren't given hormones.

Cage-free. Eggs are often labeled as cage-free - but what does that mean? The hens may not be confined to cages, but they could be on a crowded hen house floor. On the other hand, pasture-raised hens, which are labeled, do roam outside, eat an organic diet without hormones, and aren't given antibiotics.

Grass-fed. Meat that comes from grass-fed cattle means that the animal had access to fresh air and sunlight and freedom to graze, but doesn't mean the cow was only feed grass. The animal may have been given a diet of soybean and corn in addition to grass.

Grass-finished. Meat that's labeled "grass-finished" comes from cattle exclusively fed grass for at least 90 days and up to 160 days before they were slaughtered.



Be Fit.

Fun Fitness. Exercise that doesn't feel like work!

Who said fitness has to be dull? There are many activities that will make you break a sweat without feeling like drudgery.

Activities that combine fun and fitness are:

Competitive sports. The camaraderie and the group setting help you have fun and forget you're working your heart and lungs. Soccer, tennis and racquetball are just some of the competitive sports that can help improve your fitness.

Martial arts. Classes that teach karate, jujitsu, judo, tae kwon do, or kickboxing provide a workout aimed at improving your fitness, coordination and mental discipline.

Dance classes. Dance styles like salsa, meringue and mambo can be lots of fun while keeping you in shape.

Acrobatics. Activities such as tumbling, headstands, and somersaults can condition your body and make you feel like a kid again.

Nintendo Wii. This video game ups the fun factor for fitness. It gets people up and moving while bringing the family together!

You can make any fitness activity more fun by recruiting a workout buddy or joining a group. It's always more fun when you have company!

Think Well.

Ways to Transform stress and Protect Your Heart

People in general, but especially those with health concerns need to be careful about managing the different sources of stress in their lives. The body's natural response to stress can cause an increase in your heart rate, raise your blood pressure, and release stress hormones. Stress also forces the heart muscle to work harder. Stress can put a strain on blood vessels and may predispose a person to heart disease.

There are a variety of techniques that can help you transform the stress in your life.

Recognize your stress triggers. Learn to identify things in your life that trigger stress - the workload at your job, driving in traffic, fear about health - and try to figure ways to avoid those triggers or to cope better with them. Try deep breathing exercises, anger management or even talk therapy.

Schedule Time-Outs. Make an effort to take time out of your day to relax. Take a 20 minute walk, read, or practice some yoga.

Soothe Your Soul with Music. Turn on your favorite songs, playlists, or station on the radio. Listening to calming music may help lower your blood pressure.

Learn How to say No. Set boundaries with family members and friends. Plan your schedule so you have the time you need to get things done.

Eat Right.

Curried Chicken with Fresh and Dried Cranberries

Ingredients

- 3 teaspoon oil, olive, divided
- 2 pounds chicken, breast, boneless, skinless, trimmed of fat and cut crosswise into 1/2 inch-thick slices
- 3 tablespoon curry powder, mild or medium-hot, divided
- 2 teaspoon butter
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 tablespoon mustard seed, yellow
- 1/4 teaspoon cardamom, ground, or cloves, (generous scoop)
- 15 ounce(s) tomatoes, canned, diced, with green chilies
- 1 1/2 cup(s) broth, reduced-sodium chicken
- 1 1/3 cup(s) cranberries, dried, sweetened
- 1 cup(s) cranberries, fresh, or frozen, thawed, coarsely chopped
- 1 tablespoon ginger, fresh, minced
- 1/4 teaspoon salt, or to taste
- cilantro, fresh, chopped, for garnish

Preparation

1. Heat 1 1/2 teaspoons oil in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat until hot but not smoking.
2. Add half the chicken pieces and sprinkle with a generous 1/2 teaspoon curry powder. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the chicken is beginning to brown, about 5 minutes. Transfer to a large plate.
3. Add the remaining 1 1/2 teaspoons oil to the pot and heat until hot. Add the remaining chicken; sprinkle with another generous 1/2 teaspoon curry powder and cook, stirring occasionally, until beginning to brown, about 5 minutes. Transfer to the plate.
4. Add butter, onion and mustard seeds to the pot; cook, stirring, until the seeds pop and the onion begins to brown, 2 to 4 minutes. Return the chicken and any accumulated juices to the pot, sprinkle with the remaining curry powder and cardamom (or cloves); stir to coat the chicken with the spices. Cook, stirring, for 1 minute.
5. Stir in tomatoes, broth, dried and fresh cranberries, ginger and salt. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to a simmer and cook, uncovered and stirring occasionally, until the mixture reduces slightly and the chicken is cooked through, 10 to 12 minutes more. Serve garnished with cilantro.

Makes 8 servings.

Per Serving: Cal. 251., Sat Fat. 2g, Fiber 4g, Carbs. 25g, Protein. 25g.

Be sure to visit "My CreatingWellnessSpace" for more recipe ideas!