



Deciphering Food Labeling Codes

Part III

What does it all mean?

Additional Terms

- **High, Rich In, or Excellent Source of:** Contains 20% of the daily value for a certain nutrient per serving.
- **Good Source of:** Contains 10% of the daily value of a certain nutrient per serving.
- **Helps Maintain:** Manufacturers can't say that a product "helps reduce the risk" of something without FDA approval. So instead they'll say that the product "helps maintain" something.
- **100% Organic:** This is a term you'll see on packaged foods. If a packaged food is 100% organic that means it only contains organic ingredients. If it just says organic, it contains at least 95% organic ingredients.
- **Natural:** If you see this term on anything other than meat, it's basically useless. The FDA doesn't regulate this term so manufactures use it as a marketing ploy.
- **Low-Carb:** This is another unregulated term that is used to drive sales of packaged items.

Instead of looking for processed foods with artificially supplemented fiber, go for foods that are naturally high in fiber. Think whole grains, fruits and veggies.

High Fiber: Contains at least 5 grams of dietary fiber per serving.

Sugar

I think we can all agree that cutting down on our sugar intake is a good thing. But be wary of items marked *sugar free* or *reduced sugar*. Manufacturers often replace processed sugar and high fructose corn syrup with artificial sweeteners that can be detrimental to your health.

- **Sugar Free:** Contains half a gram or less sugar per serving.
- **No Sugar Added:** No sugar was added during processing but may still contain natural sugars from fruit or milk.
- **Less Sugar and Reduced Sugar:** Contains 25% less sugar than the standard item
- **Made with Real Fruit:** Contains some form of real fruit as a sweetener. This term is often used on items like candy, fruit snacks, juice blends etc. *Don't let the marketing fool you!* Read the ingredient list and you'll often find that the only real fruit in that product is a tiny bit of juice from concentrate.

Grains

It can be very difficult to find 100% whole grain products. Always read the labels on bread, pasta etc. to make sure you aren't getting lots of nasty additives.

- **Whole Wheat or Whole Grain:** Contains some form of whole wheat or whole grain. Keep in mind, something can be labeled this way even if it is 99% bleached flour with a tiny bit of whole wheat. Some products labeled whole grain use caramel to mimic the brown color that results from the use of 100% whole grains. Other deceiving buzzwords to look for are *stoneground*, *cracked wheat* and *multigrain*.
- **100% Whole Wheat or Whole Grain:** Contains only whole wheat or whole grain. Keep an eye out for the 100% Whole Grain Stamp from the Whole Grains Council.
- **Gluten-Free:** Contains no gluten. Remember that just because something is gluten-free that doesn't mean it's healthy!
- **Sprouted Grain:** This is a term you'll usually see on bread. Sprouted bread is a type of bread made from whole grains that have been allowed to sprout (germinate.) This is generally a healthy option, but check the ingredient list to make sure the bread doesn't contain bleached flour.

Meat

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There are so many confusing terms when it comes to animal products! Everyone tends to have different priorities when it comes to choosing good quality meat. Depending on your preferences you may want to look for meat that has more than one of the labels below

- **Organic:** In order to be certified organic, a product must meet the U.S. Department of Agriculture guidelines. For meat, that means it contains no antibiotics or growth hormones.
- **Natural:** Contains no artificial ingredients.
- **Cage-Free:** Livestock and poultry that freely roamed an enclosed area with unlimited access to food and fresh water during the production cycle.
- **Free-Range:** Livestock and poultry with unlimited access to the outdoors, food and fresh water during the production cycle. Free-range animals generally have a better environment than cage-free.
- **Grass-Fed:** Animals received most of their nutrients from grass. However, the animal may be fed a grain diet at some point during their life cycle.
- **Grass-Fed/Grass-Finished:** Animals have received 100% grass diet during their life cycle
- **No Added Hormones:** *This is important only for beef and dairy products as federal regulations prohibit hormones in poultry and pork.*
- **No Antibiotics:** *You'll see this on red meat, poultry, and milk to indicate that the animals were raised without being routinely fed antibiotics to keep them healthy.*
- **Lean:** *In a 3-ounce portion, there are less than 10 grams of total fat and fewer than 4.5 grams of saturated fat.*
- **Extra Lean:** *Less than 5 grams of total fat per serving and few than 2 grams of saturated fat.*

Produce

- **Organic:** In order to be certified organic, a product must meet the U.S. Department of Agriculture guidelines. For produce, that means it was not grown with pesticides and the seeds were not genetically modified.

If you want to buy organic produce but have a hard time stomaching the high prices, check out your local farmers market! Sometimes small farms don't have the time and means to become certified organic but still avoid using pesticides. At farmers markets you can talk directly to the farmers and find out just how they grow their produce.

- **GMO-Free:** The product was not grown from seeds that have been genetically modified. Look for products that have the Non-GMO Project seal on their packages. Keep in mind however, that just because something is non-GMO it doesn't mean that product is organic.