

# THE HEAPING HARVEST

## *Nutrition Label Guide*

Here to help you enjoy food & thrive!

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Hello, friends!

I'm so happy you decided to read my Nutrition Label guide and learn more about your health!

The first thing I want to make sure you are aware of is that I in no way want you to use this guide as the end-all-be-all. In other words, I don't want you to obsess over nutrition labels and cause yourself more harm than good. I simply want to equip you to take control of your health and notice foods that help you thrive and foods that don't.

Foods that help you thrive are full of pure, non-toxic, whole-food ingredients, while foods that don't help you thrive are full of fake, deceiving, or synthetic materials. Reading Nutrition Labels is the key to distinguishing foods that help you thrive and foods that don't. There are a plethora of different ways ingredients can be hidden by companies that want to deceive you. I want to help you pin-point these ingredients so that you can become an educated consumer!

### *In this guide you will learn:*

1. The Basics of a Nutrition Label
2. Nutrient Specifics: Total fat, carbohydrates, protein, etc.
3. Daily Values: What they are and how they can help you
4. Ingredients: Pure Ingredients
5. Vitamins: Summary and Overview

Please, please, please, do not use this guide to be an avenue to negativity towards food. I want this to truly inform you, but not take over your mind. Use this guide as education, not as a way of life!

In my experience as a Nutritionist, it really isn't about the calories, the fat, or the numbers — it's more about if the food is real, whole, and made to help you thrive. It's also about balance, moderation, and exercise. For true health, it takes a plethora of different aspects contributing to a healthy mind, body, and heart! I hope this guide helps you identify the health of different products and also lend you valuable nutrition and insight.

Thanks, friend! Let's get into it!

*Made by: Jill Richter, Founder of The Heaping Harvest*

# 1 BASICS

First, let's start with the basics! Below you will see a picture of a Nutrition Facts Label color-coded in sections that point out the key components.

1. **Serving Information:** The serving information is the fundamental overarching concept in reading nutrition labels. It is so important because the rest of the nutrient numbers or daily values are associated with however big the serving is. It is easy to slip past these numbers because they can seem unimportant, but they are actually the culprit of a lot of deception from large companies. Since most people usually skim past it, it's an easy way for companies to put a low serving size, and therefore lower "looking" numbers on the rest of the label. I have seen labels where the serving size is a 1/4 cup of, say, cereal, and the reality is an average person would eat at least 1 cup! Although often times the serving sizes are correct, be very cautious! Identifying the serving size allows you to look throughout the rest of the label so as not to be deceived by "good numbers" and a false sense of the quantity that is actually portrayed.
2. **Calories:** Calories are the bane of my existence as a nutritionist. Calories can make you so obsessive over your meals and food intake that you only focus on counting calories/weighing yourself. Basically, diet culture isn't sustainable and creates bad associations. I believe in a whole-food approach which leans more on the side of not even looking at the calories. In my opinion, the most important thing is not whether the food has a lot of calories, but how REAL and PURE the food is. A lot of times a bag of cookies could be LESS calories than an avocado... but which one will help you thrive and improve your health more? Avocado! Calories can be deceiving so watch out for that and don't focus on them!

3. **Nutrients:** This is a very important part of a nutrition label. I love looking at how much dietary fiber, protein, and vitamins are in the products I consume. It can also allow you to identify harmful ingredients, which we will go into more in depth in the next section! The main takeaway though is that you are able to get a MAJOR snapshot of the nutrients in the product you are looking at and this can help you access the health of the item.

Nutrition Facts	
4 servings per container	
<b>Serving size</b>	<b>1 cup (227g)</b>
<b>Amount per serving</b>	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>280</b>
	<small>% Daily Value*</small>
<b>Total Fat</b> 9g	<b>12%</b>
Saturated Fat 4.5g	<b>23%</b>
Trans Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 35mg	<b>12%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 850mg	<b>37%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 34g	<b>12%</b>
Dietary Fiber 4g	<b>14%</b>
Total Sugars 6g	
Includes 0g Added Sugars	<b>0%</b>
<b>Protein</b> 15g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 320mg	25%
Iron 1.6mg	8%
Potassium 510mg	10%

\* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

4. **Daily Value Percentages:** I really have always been fascinated with Daily Values. I love them because they are a great summary of how much of each vitamin, mineral, fat, or protein you should be consuming each day. Of course, this changes with different body types, etc, but it's based on scientific studied nutrient values and how much of each nutrient you should have each day for optimal health. For instance, my Mom had a hemorrhage a few years ago. Believe it or

not, the food she had to eat the most of, to regain her blood, was “Mini Wheats.” Iron helps your body regain it’s healthy blood levels, and in this specific cereal there is 90% of your daily intake of Iron. This is AWESOME because most people are severely deficient in iron and don’t even know it. Low iron levels can make you very sleepy, and especially for woman and their period each month, having proper iron levels is essential. Although this specific product was processed, we could tell that it still had great health benefits in situations where high iron was needed. It goes to show that some processed foods can still benefit your health.

## 2 NUTRIENT SPECIFICS

Nutrients make up a lump sum of ingredient labels. They are also the gateway to understanding health and nutrition. Let’s go through each one!

- **Total Fat:** The total amount of regular fat, saturated fat, and trans-fat in a product. The type of fat is greatly determined by its chemistry and whether or not it is saturated or unsaturated. NOTE: Unsaturated fats are usually more liquid at room temperature (ie. olive oil), while saturate fats are usually more solid at room temperature (ie. butter, lard). For a more in depth description of fat, this 5 min TedEd talk is amazing: [Fat Video!](#)
- **Saturated Fat:** These fats are mostly from animal products. Seeing a lower amount of these saturated fats is good because usually these fats raise your cholesterol and decrease your lipid profile.
- **Trans-fats:** The biggest bullies to your body. I don’t like trans-fats because they are formed through an industrial process that adds hydrogen to vegetable oil, which causes the oil to become solid at room temperature. This partially hydrogenated oil is less likely to spoil, so foods made with it have a longer shelf life. But the worst part about it is that some restaurants use partially hydrogenated vegetable oil in their deep fryers, because it doesn't have to be changed as often as do other oils. EWW! Make sure that your products don’t have trans-fat in it because it may taste really good but it’s not really true food. Examples of this would be some french fries, processed fried items, etc. The best way to determine if there are trans-fats in your food is to look for the words “partially hydrogenated” on the ingredient label. The FDA also allows companies to claim they have 0g of trans-fat even if they have .5g per SERVING. And a serving, as I explained before can be very deceiving. This means: always check to make sure the words “partially hydrogenated oil” are not on the ingredient list of the product you’re purchasing.
- **Cholesterol:** Saturated fat has a large part to play on whether there is a lot of cholesterol in a product or not. Regardless, the American Heart Association says that your daily limit should be 300 milligrams. If a product has high cholesterol levels and it is close to maxing out your daily intake values, stay away.
- **Sodium:** I have a love hate relationship with salt. Used wisely and with moderation, it can bring a lot of flavor to your food and is actually healthy and essential to have it in your diet. Used poorly, it can make your body have high blood pressure and can be WAY overdone. Checking products for salt is essential to seeing if it has too much sodium, or if its just right.

Here are some values to keep in mind: 2,300 mg per day of sodium is the recommended intake for an adult in the United States. However, most Americans consume an average of 3,400 mg of salt per day.\*

- **Total Carbohydrate:** This is the total amount of carbs that are in the product: including fiber and sugars. Carbs have gotten a bad wrap for years. People have been saying things like, “Don’t eat Carbs!” “Carbs are BAD!” However, they failed to take into account that fruits and vegetables are carbohydrates! As well as a lot of other great grains and fibers. Carbs are suppose to take up 45-65 percent of your daily food values... that means that somewhere from 900 to 1,300 calories should be consumed from carbs alone. In other words, don’t be scared of them because they are essential to good health, as well.
- **Dietary Fiber:** SO GOOD! This means that the product is made with a lot of fibrous foods which helps your gut move smoothly, and often time it means there is more nutrients in the certain product. I love seeing a lot of fiber on a label because it can be associated with good health.
- **Total Sugar/Added Sugar:** This one is tricky because who doesn’t love sugar?! However, too much of a good thing can be harmful. The AHA Guidelines say that Men should have no more than 38g or 9 teaspoons of sugar per day, and women shouldn’t have more than 25g or 6 teaspoons of sugar. Checking your labels for excessive sugar can be helpful, especially if the product is suppose to be “better for you.” For example, most breakfast cereals have a lot of sugar in them, so I sometimes eat cereal at night as more of a dessert than a breakfast item.
- **Protein:** Protein is awesome to have in most products. It’s incredible to see how some products have a lot of good protein while some products have little to no protein. Protein keeps you full and sustained for long amounts of time. It is essential to have protein in the morning to help you get to lunch and like-wise lunch to dinner. In many cases the products have a lot of sugar and carbs but not a lot of protein. For example: if you like cereal, checking the protein content is important to keep you full throughout the morning.
- **Vitamins:** MY FAV! I love seeing what vitamins are in different products. The major ones that are displayed are usually Vitamin D, Calcium, Iron, and Potassium. Vitamins are great to see on ingredient labels because that means the product is either enriched with vitamins, or more natural. Its a good sign! More on Vitamins in the last section!

Now that I have gone over all the Nutrients on an Ingredient label, I want to go through, briefly, what daily values are and why they are a good benchmark.

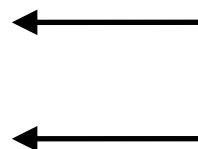
# 3 DAILY VALUES

Daily Values are otherwise known as Recommended Dietary Allowance: “The average daily level of intake sufficient enough to meet the nutrient requirements of nearly all (97%-98%) of healthy individuals.” (FDA) Basically, Daily Values are the recommended amounts of nutrients to consume or not to exceed each day. The % of Daily Values is how much a nutrient or a dietary supplement is in a single serving of an individually packaged food or contributes to your daily diet. For example, if the DV for a certain nutrient is 300mcg and a food product has 30 mcg in one serving, the “% DV” for that nutrient in a serving of the product would be 10%. If you ate one serving of the product, you would have met 10% of your need for that nutrient in a day and could consume other foods or supplements to get the other 90%. Overall, Daily Values are a great snapshot of your nutrient needs per day and which foods help you meet those requirements.

This table is a great snapshot of what men, women, and children should be consuming as their daily intakes per day. Daily nutrient values give you a great measurable number that can be helpful when determining whether or not to buy something. These values are beneficial to quantitatively visualize how much of each nutrient is in a specific product.

As stated above, however, this is a rough estimate based on the values of a average healthy individual. This number could very much change based on your individual health/ body type. In other words, its good to hold these numbers with loose hands— using them but not putting too much stake in them. As always, consult your healthcare professional for more details.

Nutrition Facts	
4 servings per container	
<b>Serving size</b>	<b>1 pie (283g)</b>
<b>Amount per serving</b>	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>630</b>
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 36g	<b>46%</b>
Saturated Fat 14g	<b>70%</b>
Trans Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 25mg	<b>8%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 1060mg	<b>46%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 59g	<b>21%</b>
Dietary Fiber 5g	<b>18%</b>
Total Sugars 6g	
Includes <1g Added Sugars	<b>2%</b>
<b>Protein</b> 17g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	<b>0%</b>
Calcium 52mg	<b>4%</b>
Iron 1.1mg	<b>6%</b>
Potassium 210mg	<b>4%</b>
* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.	



46% of your Daily Value means that for a healthy diet, you should only have 54% more sodium or fat in that same day because you ate almost half of your sodium in 1 meal.

## 4

## INGREDIENTS

Potentially the most important part of reading nutrition labels: the ingredient panel. It's so important because there are so many ways for companies to deceive you.

Another reason that ingredient lists are important is because companies are required to list their ingredients in order of weight: highest to lowest. Once you know this trick, it is so fun to look at the ingredients and see what the most heavy substance is. Here is an example:

— (photo on the right) The olive oil in this product/nutrition label is the heaviest item which means there is more olive oil in this product than anything else.

— Because we know that the olive oil is the heaviest substance, we can infer that that is why the total fat content is high as well as the cholesterol in this product.

I want to note another example from a granola bar nutrition label ingredient list below:

**INGREDIENTS:** Granola (whole grain oats, brown sugar, brown rice crisp [whole grain brown rice flour, sugar, salt], whole grain wheat, soybean oil, dried coconut, whole wheat flour, baking soda, soy lecithin, nonfat dry milk), corn syrup, semisweet chocolate chips (sugar, chocolate liquor, cocoa butter, soy lecithin, vanilla extract), brown rice crisp (whole grain brown rice flour, sugar, salt), sunflower oil, corn syrup solids, inulin, polydextrose, glycerin. Contains 2% or less of: calcium carbonate, invert sugar, salt, molasses, diacetyl tartaric acid ester of monodiglycerides, tocopherols (to preserve freshness), natural flavor, soybean oil.

**CONTAINS COCONUT, MILK, SOY AND WHEAT INGREDIENTS.**

**MAY CONTAIN TRACES OF PEANUT AND OTHER TREE NUTS.**

— In this label, the second heaviest ingredient is brown sugar.

Being able to see which ingredients are heaviest will help you be able to distinguish how much of each ingredient you are putting in your body.

— I also want to point out that the green highlighted names are all the different sugars that are disguised in this specific label.

Did you know that there are about 56 different words that companies use to describe sugar ALONE, in order to disguise it so it's unrecognizable? In fact, once you know this you can be shocked at how many ingredients are simply sugar in different products. Since I'm all about practical tools and streamline education, I created a list of all the different sugar names for you to have as you walk through the grocery store on the next page.

## Nutrition Facts

Serving Size about 2 tbsp (36g)

Servings Per Container 4

### Amount Per Serving

**Calories** 980      **Calories from Fat** 930

**%Daily Value\***

**Total Fat** 103g      **158%**

Saturated Fat 18g      **89%**

**Cholesterol** 20mg      **7%**

**Sodium** 400mg      **17%**

**Total Carbohydrate** 7g      **2%**

Dietary Fiber 3g      **11%**

**Protein** 13g

Vitamin A 15%      •      Vitamin C 6%

Calcium 30%      •      Iron 10%

Not a significant source of trans fat, sugars.

\* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.

**Ingredients:** Olive Oil, Parmesan, Pine Nuts, Basil, Garlic

**Contains:** Milk, Pine nut



# SUGAR NAMES:

Use this alphabetical list of sugar names to identify how many versions of sugar are in specific products.

1. Agave nectar\*
2. Barbados sugar\*
3. Barley malt
4. Beet sugar\*
5. Blackstrap molasses\*
6. Brown rice syrup\*
7. Brown sugar\*
8. Buttered syrup\*
9. Cane juice crystals\*
10. Cane sugar\*
11. Caramel\*
12. Carob syrup\*
13. Castor sugar\*
14. Confectioner's sugar\*
15. Corn syrup
16. Corn syrup solids
17. Crystalline fructose\*
18. Date sugar\*
19. Demerara sugar\*
20. Dextran
21. Dextrose
22. Diastatic malt
23. Diatase
24. Ethyl maltol
25. Evaporated cane juice\*
26. Florida crystals\*
27. Fructose\*
28. Fruit juice\*
29. Fruit juice concentrate\*
30. Galactose
31. Glucose
32. Glucose solids
33. Golden sugar\*
34. Golden syrup\*
35. Grape sugar\*
36. High-fructose corn syrup\*
37. Honey\*
38. Icing sugar\*
39. Invert sugar\*
40. Lactose
41. Malt syrup
42. Maltose
43. Maple syrup\*
44. Molasses\*
45. Muscovado sugar\*
46. Organic raw sugar\*
47. Panocha\*
48. Raw sugar\*
49. Refiner's syrup\*
50. Rice syrup
51. Sorghum syrup\*
52. Sucrose\*
53. Sugar\*
54. Treacle\*
55. Turbinado sugar\*
56. Yellow sugar\*

\*Contains fructose

The FDA considers sugar to be any one of the following six compounds: glucose, galactose, fructose, maltose (glucose-glucose), lactose (glucose-galactose), and sucrose (glucose-fructose).

# 5 VITAMINS

Did you know that your body can't absorb calcium unless your body also has Vitamin D? Additionally, your body can't absorb as much Iron if it doesn't have Vitamin C eaten along with it. I want to go over a few of these simple Vitamin facts to help you thrive in your health journey and identify these different vitamins on your next nutrition label!

To start, this 4min TedEd talk is fantastic at explaining Vitamins: [Vitamins Video!](#)

Since our bodies can't produce its own Vitamins, our bodies rely on our food and nutrition in order to function healthily. Have you ever heard of the story about how sailors use to get scurvy? Scurvy was a disease caused by a deficiency of Vitamin C, characterized by swollen bleeding gums and the opening of previously healed wounds, which hurt poorly nourished sailors until the end of the 18th century. This was because they didn't have access to fresh produce while on the water. Therefore, their scurvy went away when they started to eat fruits and vegetables again. Vitamins are essential to our well-being!

There are 2 types of vitamin classifications:

- **Water Soluble:** Vitamins C and Vitamins B. These vitamins make their passage through the body and get disposed of through the urine. They are absorbed and then peed out. This means that these Vitamins need to be replenished on a daily basis.
- **Lipid Soluble:** These vitamins are stored as reserves in fat cells and can be accessed whenever the body needs to replenish. They are often found in dairy, butter, and oils.

— Water soluble vitamins and lipid soluble vitamins take different forms in food. They are also transported differently once they are in the body.

Next, let's go through a quick snapshot of each of the major Vitamins:

- **Vitamin A:** Helps make white blood cells which is important to the body's immune system and general defense. They help shape bones and help you see clearly and well.
  - Foods: sweet potatoes, carrots, pumpkins, spinach, mangoes, beef, liver, eggs, shrimp, fish, fortified milk.
- **Vitamin B:** Make coenzymes which helps enzymes release the energy from food. Other B Vitamins help the body to use that energy. There are 8 B-vitamins in all:
  - **B1:** ham, soy-milk, watermelon, acorn squash.
  - **B2:** milk, yogurt, cheese, whole and enriched grains and cereals.
  - **B3:** meat, poultry, fish, fortified and whole grains, mushrooms, potatoes.
  - **B5:** chicken, whole grains, broccoli, avocados, mushrooms.
  - **B6:** meat, fish, poultry, legumes, tofu and other soy products, bananas.
  - **B7:** Whole grains, eggs, soybeans, fish.
  - **B9:** Fortified grains and cereals, asparagus, spinach, broccoli, legumes (black-eyed peas and chickpeas), orange juice.
  - **B12:** Meat, poultry, fish, milk, cheese, fortified soy-milk and cereals.
- **Vitamin C:** Helps boost your immune system, fight infection, and make collagen that makes bones and teeth and helps heal wounds.



- Foods: Citrus fruit, potatoes, broccoli, bell peppers, spinach, strawberries, tomatoes, Brussels sprouts.
- **Vitamin D:** Collects calcium and phosphorus so we can make bones.
  - Foods: Fortified milk and cereals, fatty fish
  - The Sun: Simply being in the sun for 15 minutes as a fair skinned person or 30 minutes as a dark skinned person can give your body all it's daily Vitamin D requirements. It's actually the best source of it!
- **Vitamin E:** Works as an antioxidant, getting rid of elements in the body that can damage cells.
  - Foods: vegetable oils, leafy green vegetables, whole grains, nuts.
- **Vitamin K:** Helps the ability to clot blood
  - Foods: Cabbage, eggs, milk, spinach, broccoli, kale.

Without a healthy dose of vitamins in your food, your body can become fatigued and disease can start. With knowledge of these vitamins, it helps you distinguish nutrition labels better, but more importantly it gives you education to help you thrive!

## CONCLUSION:

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Overall, I hope this Nutrition Label Guide was helpful, educational, and eye-opening! It isn't about having "bad" or "good" foods, it's about being informed and making educated food decisions based on that information.

I certainly love a good ol' cookie, scoop of ice cream, or bag of chips. However, with knowledge of these nutrition facts, I am able to distinguish which products I feel good about putting in my body and which ones I don't. This is up to everyone in their own individual health journey and no one can judge another for what they eat.

I hope this guide will help you walk in confidence, thrive, and enjoy food together! Thank you, friend!

I would love to hear what your thoughts are on this Nutrition Guide! If you feel inclined, please feel free to send me an email at [theheapingharvest@gmail.com](mailto:theheapingharvest@gmail.com)! Thank you!

## RESOURCES:

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Sugar Names: [link](#)

Vitamins: [link](#)

Sodium Value: [link](#)

Daily Values: [link](#)