

## Know your ingredients! 6 simple steps to healthier food shopping

Special report from ElizabethBorelli.com



### Nutrition Facts

Amount per 1/2 muffin (57g)

Servings Per Container 2

Amount	1/2 Muffin	1 Muffin
<b>Calories</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>420</b>
<b>% Daily Value*</b>		
<b>Calories</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>Total Fat</b> 11g, 22g	<b>17%</b>	<b>34%</b>
Saturated Fat 3g, 6g	<b>15%</b>	<b>30%</b>
Trans Fat 4g, 8g		
<b>Cholesterol</b> 40mg, 80mg	<b>13%</b>	<b>27%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 200mg, 400mg	<b>8%</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 24g, 48g	<b>8%</b>	<b>16%</b>
Dietary Fiber 1g, 2g	<b>4%</b>	<b>8%</b>
Sugars 17g, 34g		
<b>Protein</b> 3g, 6g		
Vitamin A	0%	0%
Vitamin C	4%	8%
Calcium	2%	4%
Iron	4%	8%

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

Did you know, “low-fat” labels on the front of a package lead people to eat 16-23% more calories? It’s true! Yet here’s the even more ironic part. A recent study revealed that women who read the nutrition panel on the *side* of the box weigh an average of 8 pounds less than non-panel readers. Confused yet? If so, welcome to the world of packaged foods!

Like it or not, you probably can’t cook everything from scratch (or some days anything), but you don’t want to pump your family full of empty calories or unhealthy additives. Yet, you can’t count on food manufacturers or even the “healthy” food stores to deliver nutritious products. Their goal is to entice you to buy it, using attractive benefits like “low fat”, which as we’ve seen, can actually make things worse. In light of former Whole Foods CEO John Mackey’s enlightening “*We sell a bunch of junk*” statement, it’s truly the shopper’s job to become informed.

Unfortunately, reading those side panels can be daunting for most people. A 2012 Food & Health Survey conducted by the International Food Information Council found that ½ of those polled believe it is easier to do their taxes than to figure out how to eat healthfully. Meanwhile, leading nutritional science expert Brian Wansink suggests, “The best diet is the one you don’t know you’re on”. So it’s time to stop prioritizing low fat, and take time to understand those nutrition labels on the side panels to avoid too much salt, sugar and phony food additives that really undermine your health.

Food labels are confusing by design. It’s easy for manufacturers to make unsubstantiated health claims on the front of the package, and easier still if the Nutrition Facts on the side make no sense. For example, where you see the number of grams of fat grams per serving listed on the package, they’re actually calculated by weight, not as a percentage of the product you’re purchasing. Consequently, 1% milk contains 25% fat; the fat just weighs 1% per serving. Make sense? I didn’t think so.

Food labels are not only confusing, they're tiny! But reading them is important, because when you must eat processed (and at least some of the time, many of us must) you don't have to eat junk. By making it hard to read and understand the information, manufacturers give themselves plenty of latitude when it comes to ingredients. So even if you can barely make out the words, take the time and do the legwork to source your goods. You'll be able to navigate the grocery store aisles more easily once you know what to look for.

Fortunately for us, [Beanalicious Living](#) author [Elizabeth Borelli](#) has boiled things down to some simple rules of thumb so if you have to buy packaged foods, at least there's less of a risk factor. And even if you go no further and remember nothing else, it will always benefit you to keep in mind this inconvenient truth and rule #1 : never believe the claims you read on the front of the package. If you're interested in discovering easy tips for healthier food selection by understanding nutrition labels, here are some tips for healthier food selection:

1. Beware of serving sizes. Not all serving sizes are the same, nor do they necessarily make sense. Bottled beverages, even those that look like they're meant for one, often use this tactic to make calorie counts seem lower than they really are. Even clearly individually packaged items like sports bars and muffins sometimes list two servings per piece, so it always makes sense to check.
2. In the US, we consume on average 22.2 teaspoons of added sugar per day (more than 4 times the 5 teaspoons the American Heart Association recommends for women), so attempting to reduce when possible is a good idea. Avoid products containing sugar of any kind in the first five ingredients and you're on the right track. The most common tactic manufacturers use to sneak it in? Mixing the names of different sweeteners so the weight is spread out among several forms of sugar. Some to look out for: honey, dextrose, corn syrup, high-fructose corn syrup, maple syrup, molasses, sucrose, fructose, maltose, and lactose.
3. Sodium content should never exceed the number calories; look for a 1:1 ratio. If a serving of Pop Chips contains 100 calories, be sure it also contains less than 100 grams of sodium. Simple! It's also healthier to avoid products containing sodium nitrate, a preservative that's commonly used in processed meats like bacon, jerky, and lunch meats. Studies link nitrates to diabetes and heart disease.
4. Shift your focus from fat grams per serving, since serving sizes are quite subjective. Fat content should be no more than 20% of the total calorie content and should contain no trans fats. How to tell? Read the Nutrition Label on the back of the package, find the total calories per serving, and divide by 5. If fat calories are less than 20% of total calories, or if it contains hydrogenated anything, put it back.
5. Make sure you're buying whole grains. Claims announcing "Whole-wheat" or "Multi-grain" on the front are not the same thing. Read the Nutrition Label carefully to make sure the word "whole" precedes every grain listed, or look for the "100% whole-grain" claim. This is one term regulated by the FDA to ensure that all grains used in the product are, in fact, whole.
6. Finally, beware of words you don't know or recognize in the ingredients. If you wouldn't stock them in your kitchen, it's because they don't belong in your food! Of course it's important to

focus on what to include, and not just what to avoid. For a comprehensive shopping list of healthy foods to include in your diet, visit <http://elizabethborelli.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/BeanaliciousShoppingList.pdf>

Updating your shopping habits with nutritious choices will make a tremendous difference in your energy level, mental clarity, weight and overall health. It's a step-by-step process, and involves a new level of awareness and commitment. But once you start experiencing the benefits of a better diet, you may be surprised to learn your favorite thing about your new diet is how amazingly delicious that real, healthy food can be!

### **References:**

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