Food for Life

Processed food

Processed food is any food that has been changed during its preparation. Foods can be altered in different ways, including drying, baking, pasteurising, freezing, canning, washing, cutting, heating or filtering.

Foods can be categorised according to how much they have been processed.

- **Unprocessed** foods are whole foods that have not been changed, such as unpackaged potatoes.
- **Minimally-processed** foods have been changed slightly, for example, by packaging or cutting, but the nutritional content has not been changed, such as packaged apple slices.
- **Processed** foods have had ingredients added or have been changed in other ways, such as cooked, tinned tomatoes.
- **Ultra-processed** foods have had artificial ingredients added and have been changed in other ways. They are usually low in nutrients, such as sweets and cakes.

Additives

Some processed foods have ingredients added to them, called 'additives.' Additives include preservatives to make the food last longer and artificial flavourings and colourings. Some foods contain added vitamins and minerals to make them more nutritious.

Advantages of processed food

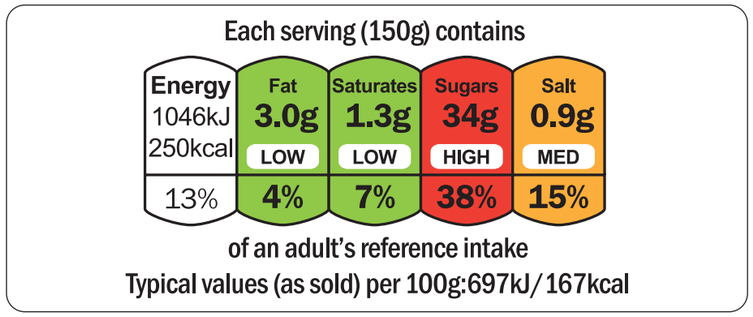
- convenient
- additives can provide essential vitamins and minerals
- some processes can make foods safer to eat
- longer shelf life
- available all year round
- easier to transport and store

Disadvantages of processed foods

- reduced nutritional value
- can be high in fats, salt and sugar
- can be addictive
- more likely to become contaminated with other foods

Food labels

Food labels can inform consumers about a food's nutritional value. Colour-coded labelling shows the amount of fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt in the food and what percentage of the recommended daily intake each serving contains.



Bread

Bread is a processed food. Shop bought bread contains additives to give it an appealing texture and make it last longer. Bread can also be made at home using simple ingredients including flour and water, and yeast to make it rise. Shop-bought bread can have a different taste, texture and shelf life to homemade bread.

Whole foods

Whole foods are foods that have not been changed from their natural form. These include many fruits and vegetables and some meats and fish. Whole foods contain nutrients important in a healthy, balanced diet. Some whole foods are organic, meaning they are grown or reared without synthetic fertilisers, pesticides or animal feed additives.

Advantages of whole foods

- minimal processing
- free of chemical additives
- high in nutrients
- high in fibre
- lowers the risk of some illnesses

Disadvantages of whole foods

- can take time to prepare and cook
- shorter shelf life

Glossary

shelf life	The length of time a food product can be kept and remain usable.
yeast	A simple organism used to make bread rise.

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