

You ARE EAT what you Read the Label

by Margy Squires

Eating fresh, organic foods every day (especially prepared by your own private chef) is one way to make sure you eat right. But we live in the real world and saving a little time and energy is what makes convenience foods, well, *so convenient*. Before you plop that box, bottle or can into your grocery cart, a quick peek at the label will help you choose better fare for your fridge, pantry and your health.

Thanks to a concerted effort between the Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Nutrition Labeling and Education Act makes reading food labels a whole lot easier. The Nutrition Facts is either on the back or side of the package and must include items such as serving size, calories, percent of daily value and information on cholesterol, fats, fiber, sodium and sugar content. Plus, any claims for organic, light sodium, sugar free and other qualifying statements have to meet specific criteria. All food ingredients must be listed, including color. Visit the websites listed below for all the details.

If you're ready for *Reading Food Labels 101*, let's look at one of my favorite frozen entrees, Amy's Vegetable Lasagna.



5 FRONT
Attractive packaging says "Buy me!" But what's inside?

6 BACK
Ingredients are listed in descending order by weight. The more additives, the more processed the food (away from nature).
6a Certified Organic.

1

START HERE -SERVING SIZE
Nutrition Facts are based on serving size. The serving size is one for this product. If you eat half the serving size, you need to half the nutrition facts (1/2 the calories would be 150, for example).

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 Lasagna (269g)	
Servings Per Container 1	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 300	Calories from Fat 110
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 12g	19%
Saturated Fat 4.5g	24%
<i>Trans Fat 0g</i>	
Cholesterol 20mg	7%
Sodium 680mg	28%
Total Carbohydrate 35g	12%
Dietary Fiber 5g	20%
Sugars 5g	
Protein 14g	
Vitamin A 50% • Vitamin C 15%	
Calcium 25% • Iron 10%	
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:	
	Calories 2,000 2,500
Total Fat	Less than 65g 80g
Sat Fat	Less than 20g 25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg 300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg 2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g 375g
Dietary Fiber	25g 30g
Calories per gram:	
Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4	

2

THESE ITEMS NEED TO BE LIMITED.
Fat, Saturated Fat to less than 30% of your calories.
All labels must list Transfat in January 06. Per the FDA, TF's are linked to heart disease
Cholesterol to less than 200 mg daily
Sodium if you're hypertensive
Carbs & Sugars if watching your weight

3

AMERICANS DO NOT GET ENOUGH OF THESE NUTRIENTS
Fiber, Vitamin A, C, Calcium and Iron
Aim for 100% of the Daily Value.

4a

4b

THIS SECTION IS FOR COMPARISON.
Look at the % of Daily Value box (4a) above and the recommended amounts here (4b). This Lasagna has 19% or 12g of fat compared to 65g that the FDA suggests for a 2,000 calorie diet, making it a good "low" fat entree.

That's all there is to reading a label! You've passed the course with enough time to go shopping, cook what you bought and still have energy left over to sit down and enjoy it!

For more information, go to www.fda.gov, www.nhlbisupport.com, www.americanheart.org