



Weight-Wise Shopping Tips

Simple food swaps and strategies to help you get — and stay — slim **By Susan Burke March, MS**

What to eat? It seems like a simple question, but it's one that can vex even the most savvy eater, especially when you're trying to make sense of food packaging. How many times have you browsed the grocery aisles trying to discern the "best" pasta, cereal, or bread? Most healthy eaters know the obvious (like there is no fruit in Froot Loops). But what about those items labeled as "whole grain," "all natural," or "healthy"?

Shop armed with information to help you read beyond the packaging and make weight-wise choices. Always shop with a list, never shop when you're hungry, and read the ingredient label first: These three smart strategies will help you stay focused on healthy, good-for-you foods. Making weight control second nature means shopping purposely, refusing to be swayed by advertising, and taking the time to enjoy the flavor of real food. Your payoff will be better taste, improved nutrition, and good health. Here are some helpful tips to shop smart amid clever wordage:

Natural The USDA states that this means the food does not contain any artificial or coloring ingredients, or chemical preservatives, and — in the case of meat and poultry — is minimally processed. "Naturally raised," however, doesn't mean the animal isn't raised on a factory farm or that it has access to the outdoors.

Multi-grain This term means that the product contains an undefined amount of different types

of grains. Look for "100% whole grain," so you're assured that you're getting all of the nutrition from that grain's kernel, including vitamin E, magnesium, and fiber. Some packages distract you by touting impressive amounts of vitamins, minerals, and fiber — just be sure the first ingredient is "100% whole" — either wheat or another grain.

Low glycemic index The glycemic index ranks foods based on how quickly they elevate blood sugar levels compared to the same quantity of a reference food (pure glucose or white bread). The GI, though, does not consider the amount of food usually eaten, or the amount of fiber in the food. A medium baked potato has a higher GI (85) than a Snickers bar (55) — who'd say that a candy bar is better for you than a baked potato? Also, the quantity of food represented by the GI ranking is always 50 grams, regardless of how much food volume it takes to make 50 grams. It's easy to eat 50 grams of cookies (seven small cookies) in one sitting, but much tougher to eat 50 grams of carrots (five cups).

Organic sugar is sugar. Organic or not — high fructose corn syrup, honey, cane sugar, white sugar, maple syrup, or agave nectar all have approximately 16-20 calories per teaspoon (one teaspoon equals four grams) and are empty calories. Organic toaster pastries have just as much sugar as conventional toaster pastries; being organic doesn't make them lower in calories or higher in fiber. If you're looking for a healthy breakfast that's convenient

The folks at **Mother Earth's Storehouse** — with locations in Saugerties, Kingston, and Poughkeepsie — help take the guesswork out of labels. Here they offer their picks for the healthiest choices of items you may use most.

Microwave Popcorn:
Bearitos

As close to air-popped as you'll get in a microwave, this popcorn is organic and salt- and oil-free.

Granola:
New England Naturals

This wholesome, organic, low-sugar granola can be found in the bulk-food section.

Breakfast Cereal:
Familia Swiss Muesli
No Sugar Added

This traditional Swiss breakfast cereal packs a big fiber punch with no added sugar.

Instant Oatmeal:
Old Wessex

A canister of this instant oatmeal contains nothing but 100% organic, whole grain instant oats.

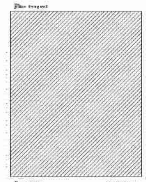
Juice:
Lakewood Fresh Pressed
 No claim of special powers, and made from nothing but fruit.

Energy Bar:
Larabar
 These tiny gluten-free wonderbars contain just dried fruit and nuts, and come in crave-worthy flavors like Cherry Pie and Lemon.

Yogurt:
Oikos by Stonyfield Farm
 This creamy, organic Greek-style yogurt is rendered fat-free by a special straining method.

Tortillas and Taco Shells:
Little Bear
 These shells contain only two ingredients: organic stoneground corn masa and expeller pressed oil.

Whole Grain Bread:
The Baker
 A New Jersey bakery uses only all-natural, unrefined, whole-grain ingredients to make their old-fashioned bread and rolls.



and portable, choose a toaster waffle made with whole grains.

“Free” foods Foods labeled “low-fat” or “fat-free” are not calorie-free. Manufacturers add sugar to increase texture and bulk lost from removing fat; a fat-free cookie may have a similar calorie count to a regular cookie. “Fat-free” means less than half a gram of fat per serving; “low-fat” or “light” means less than three grams of fat per serving; and “reduced fat” means 25 percent less than the reference food. Mayonnaise illustrates this perfectly: Original mayo has 10 grams of fat in a one-tablespoon serving. The reduced fat version has 7.5 grams of fat per serving — still not a low-fat food. Choose a “low-fat” or “light” version, and you know it has three grams or less of fat per serving.

Consider this representative list of some surprisingly unhealthy foods:

Yogurt Plain low-fat or nonfat yogurt is a healthy food because it’s a delicious source of calcium, vitamin D, magnesium, and protein. But many manufacturers have taken liberties with yogurt, loading it up with excess, unwanted calories. Yogurt should have but two ingredients: milk and live cultures.

Tortillas and taco shells Though usually made from corn or wheat and generally low in fat, be sure to read the ingredient labels for these items first. Many brands are quite high in fat, and are made with hydrogenated or trans fat (hydrogenated oils). Trans fat can raise bad cholesterol *and* lower “good” HDL cholesterol.

Instant oatmeal We know not to choose sugary cold cereals, but convenient packages of instant oatmeal shouldn’t be in your cart either. Buy whole oats, microwave for one minute in a glass dish, stir in a quarter-cup of raisins, and cook one more minute.

Granola Granola is typically a calorie-dense food, and not nutritionally desirable if it’s full of oil and sugar. Some brands may sound healthy, but sugar is sugar, and is recognized by your body as just more calories. Stick with a high-fiber, low-sugar cereal, and use granola sparingly as a topping on yogurt or fruit parfait.

“Miracle” juices The package appeals to your quest for good health with words like “immune promoting” and “antioxidants.” But the proof is in the fiber — and reading the nutrition facts label shows that juice contains just about none. There are no studies that show drinking juice will prevent disease, and

the calories are equivalent to those in soda. Eat whole fruit for more energy and fiber.

“Energy” bars Another name for “energy” is “calorie,” and most bars are more akin to candy bars than nutritious snacks. The first ingredient is usually refined flour (not whole grain), then sugar, sugar, and more sugar, in a myriad of guises including corn syrup, molasses, or honey. For sustainable energy, grab a cup of 100-calorie yogurt and stir in a cup of crunchy low-sugar cereal; make a fresh fruit smoothie with nonfat yogurt, milk, and berries; or pack a tuna sandwich on whole wheat with an orange.

Microwave popcorn Popcorn is a great snack, but not when it’s loaded with trans fat, artificial flavors, and preservatives, which make it high in fat calories relative to volume. For a heartier snack, toss hot air-popped popcorn with some grated cheddar cheese.

Rice cakes Although they’re lower in calories than potato chips, rice cakes offer little nutritional value or fiber, and are often high in sodium and sugar if they’re flavored. Try whole-wheat pita chips with some hummus or peanut butter instead. To make your own, slice a pita into quarters, spray with cooking spray, and toast.

You survived the store. Now get weight-wise in the kitchen:

Stock up on nonstick pans to avoid using oil in favor of healthier options like cooking spray, wine, water, or fruit juice.

Bake, broil, grill, or poach your proteins (meat, poultry, fish). Baste with flavorful vegetable broth, white wine, or orange juice.

To reduce the amount of fat and sugar in your baking recipes, replace half the oil with applesauce or fruit purée and use one-third less sugar. Switch to nonfat or one-percent dairy. Nonfat evaporated milk has a creamy consistency and works well as a condensed milk substitute in sauces, pies, ice cream, tea, and coffee. Substitute two egg whites for one whole egg and cut the fat, cholesterol, and calories.

When cooking, double the recipe and freeze half in a convenient, microwave-safe container. Take to work, pop in the microwave, and enjoy your own healthy frozen entrée. ●

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