

Food Labels What do they mean?

Cooking with...

1. Nutrition information panel:

Nutritional information is only required to be present on the label of a foodstuff when a claim has been made relating to the nutritional properties of the packaged product i.e. High in Fibre. The information must be presented in a standard format which shows the amount per recommended single serving and per 100 g (or 100 ml if contents are liquid). Examples of a Typical Nutritional Information panel and the nutrients that have to be listed in the nutrition information have been outlined below:

	Per 100 g / ml	Per single serving
Energy (kJ)		
Protein (g)		
Glycaemic carbohydrate (g)		
Of which total sugar (g)		
*Trans fat		
**Mono/poly/Omega 3 fatty acids		
***Cholesterol		
Dietary fibre (g) #		
Total Sodium (mg)		
* Any other nutrient or food component to be declared in accordance with the Regulation		
* In alphabetical order, vitamins, mineral, others		
*Nutrient reference values for individuals 4 years and older		
# indicate method of analysis used to determine dietary fibre		

2. Nutrient claims:

As from June 2010, the labelling and advertising of foods can no longer make the following claims "X% Fat Free"- this applies to energy (kJ content), fats, cholesterol, sodium and in particular alcohol.

3. Percentage labelling (QUID - Quantitative Ingredient Declarations)

Where the label places special emphasis on the presence of one or more valuable characterising ingredients, the packaged food label shall show the percentage value of the ingredient in "brackets" after each characterising ingredient listed in the list of ingredients. An example of characterising ingredients would be the % of cocoa solids in chocolate or where the ingredient appears in the name of the food i.e. Chicken & Mushroom Pie. Some foods such as "white bread" and "cheese" do not have any characterising ingredients so a percentage label would not be present.

4. Name or description of the food:

On the main panel of the label of a pre-packaged food, the name of the foodstuff shall be clearly visible together with an appropriate description i.e. Fruit yoghurt must contain fruit, however if the yoghurt was flavoured with fruit rather than contain pieces of the fruit, the label should read "Fruit flavoured Yoghurt". The name of the foodstuff on the main panel shall appear in letters not less than 4 mm in height. Information required to appear on the label shall be in letters of not less than 1 mm in height for lower case vowels. The letter type shall be of uniform size, colour, font and prominence throughout and the first letter may be a capital letter.

5. Food recall information:

Considering the number of pre-packaged foodstuffs available both local and imported, recalls of unsafe or unsuitable food products are uncommon. However food labels must have the name and physical address of the manufacturer, importer or seller clearly printed on the label. The label must also contain the batch identification number so that a specific batch can be easily identified and traceable in the event of a food product recall.

- 4. Name or description of the food
- 9. Labels must tell the truth
- 11. Legibility requirements
- 8. Ingredient list



- 1. Nutrition information panel
- 7. Date marking
- 2. Nutrient claims
- 6. Information for allergy sufferers
- 10. Food additives
- 3. Percentage labelling
- 5. Food recall information
- 13. Country of origin

6. Information for allergy sufferers:

Some foods, food ingredients or components of an ingredient can cause severe allergic reactions in some members of the population who are allergic to these substances. Foods such as peanuts, tree nuts (eg. cashews, walnuts, almonds), shellfish, finned fish, milk, eggs, soya and wheat (gluten), can cause severe allergic reactions and must be clearly declared on the label, however small the amount. The presence of goats milk in a foodstuff shall be labelled in the same way as milk would be labelled. For more information on food allergies see www.factsa.com.

7. Date marking:

All food products shall be clearly marked with a date marking. The date shall be preceded by the appropriate words "Best Before" and / or "use by" and / or "sell by" depending on the nature of the products. The only permitted abbreviation is "BB" for "best by". Foods that should not be consumed after a certain date for health and safety reasons must have a "use by" date. The date shall be indicated in the order "Day-Month-Year". Annexure 4 of the regulation governing labelling and advertising of foodstuffs has a list of foods exempted from a date of durability.

8. Ingredient list:

Ingredients of blended, compounded or mixed foodstuffs including mixtures of herbs and spices sold as such shall be listed on the label in descending order of mass as present in the end product. Added water shall also be declared in the list of ingredients in the appropriate order.

12. Directions for use and storage

9. Labels must tell the truth:

Manufacturers and suppliers must label food products with accurate weights and measures information that shall be declared as net contents of the container in the relevant SI-units. Labels may not be false or misleading, for example food with a picture of strawberries on the label must contain strawberries.

10. Food additives:

Food additives have many different purposes including making processed food easier to use or ensuring food is preserved safely. Food additives may come from a natural or synthetic source. All additives shall be indicated in the list of ingredients. Where a foodstuff contains a flavouring of an ingredient, but not the real ingredient itself, the words "flavouring" or "flavoured" shall accompany the name or descriptor of the product to clearly indicate that only a flavouring was used and not the real ingredient. Any foodstuff containing the colourant Tartrazine shall declare this colourant in full in the list of the ingredients together with its descriptor E102 or Yellow 5. Monosodium glutamate shall be indicated in the list of ingredients as monosodium glutamate or the abbreviation MSG followed by the words "flavour enhancer". Some additives are derived from common food allergens which must also be identified on the label e.g. lecithin (soy).

11. Legibility requirements:

Any labelling requirement legally required in terms of Regulation 146 of the Foodstuff, Cosmetic and Disinfectants Act must be legible, prominent and distinct from the background in English and where possible, at least one other official language of the Republic of South Africa. The size of the type in warning statements must be at least 3 mm high, except in very small packages.

12. Directions for use and storage:

Where specific storage conditions are required in order for a product to keep until its "Best Before Date" or "Use By Date". This information must be clearly stated on the label panel in bold, uppercase lettering of not less than 3 mm in height.

13. Country of origin:

The country of origin of a foodstuff shall be declared on the label as follows:
A) "Product of (Name of Country) if all main ingredients, processing and labour used to make the foodstuff are from one specific country.
B) "Produced in (name of Country)", "Processed in (name of country)", "Manufactured in (name of country)", "Made in (name of country)", or similar words when a foodstuff is processed in a secondary country which changes its nature, or;
C) The words "Packed in (name of country)" may be used in addition to the requirement of (a) and (b).

