Food Labels

What Do They Mean?

FOOD STANDARDS Australia New Zealand
Te Mana Kounga Kai – Ahitereiria me Aotearoa

Food labels are a useful source of information. In December 2000, Australian and New Zealand Health Ministers decided that labels on most packaged food would be improved.

1. Nutrition labelling. All manufactured food have a nutrition information panel so you can make a comparison between them. There are a few exceptions such as very small packages and foods like herbs and spices, tea, coffee and foods sold unpackaged (if a claim is not made) or foods made and packaged at the point of sale.

Nutrition information panels provide information on the levels of energy (kilojoules), protein, total fat, saturated fat, carbohydrate, sugars and sodium, as well as any other nutrient about which a claim is made on the label. Nutrition information can help you make informed food choices which can lead to better nutrition for you and your family.

Note: All quantities listed in the Nutrition Information Panel are average quantities.

NUTRITION INFORMATION

Servings per package: 3
Serving size: 150g

	Quantity per Serving	Quantity per 100 g
Energy	608 kJ	405 kJ
Protein	4.2 g	2.8 g
Fat, total	7.4 g	4.9 g
– saturated	4.5 g	3.0 g
Carbohydrate, total	18.6 g	12.4 g
– sugars	18.6 g	12.4 g
Sodium	90 mg	60 mg
Calcium	300 mg (38%)*	200 mg

* Percentage of recommended dietary intake

Ingredients: Whole milk, concentrated skim milk sugar, strawberries (9%), gelatine, culture, thickener (1442).

2. Percentage labelling. Packaged foods carry labels which show the percentage of the key or characterising ingredients or components in the food product, if they are present. This enables you to compare similar products. The characterising ingredient for this strawberry yoghurt is strawberries and you can see from the ingredient list that it has 9% strawberries. An example of a percentage of a characterising component would be the amount of milk fat (a component of milk) in ice cream. In some foods, such as plain bread, there are no characterising ingredients.

3. Name or description of the food. Foods must be labelled with an accurate name or description. Labels or descriptions must not mislead consumers, therefore this strawberry yoghurt must contain strawberries.

4. Food recall information. Although recalls of unsafe or unsuitable foods are rare, labels must have the name and business address in Australia or New Zealand of the manufacturer or requirement is for supplier - which also includes packer and vendor importer, as well as the lot and batch number of the food (or date coding). This makes food recalls more efficient and effective.

5. More information for allergy sufferers. The main foods, food ingredients or components of an ingredient that can cause in some individuals severe adverse reactions - such as peanuts and other nuts, seafood, fish, milk, gluten, eggs and soybeans - must be declared on the label however small the amount. In the case of this yoghurt it is the milk. This declaration is usually in the ingredients list. There must also be an advisory statement on the label where people may be unaware of a possible health risk posed by unpasteurised milk, unpasteurised egg, aspartame, quinine, caffeine in kola beverages and guarana contained in foods and warning statements where people may be unaware of a severe health risk posed by an allergen in a food, for example a warning statement for the bee product, royal jelly, which can cause severe reactions in asthmatics.

6. Date marking. Foods with a shelf life of less than two years must have a 'best before' date. It may still be safe to eat those foods after the best before date but they may have lost quality and some nutritional value. Those foods that should not be consumed after a certain date for health and safety reasons must have a 'use by' date. An exception is bread which can be labelled with a 'baked on' or 'baked for' date if its shelf life is less than seven days.



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IMPROVED
1. Nutrition labelling.

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2. Percentage labelling.

IMPROVED
7. Ingredients list.

9. Food additives.

12. Country of Origin.

4. Food recall information.

11. Storage requirements.

10. Legibility requirements.

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5. More information for allergy sufferers.

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6. Date marking.

8. Labels must tell the truth.

7. Ingredients list. Ingredients must be listed from greatest to smallest by ingoing weight including added water. Where there are very small amounts of multi-component ingredients, (under 5%) it is permitted to list the 'composite' ingredient only, for example the chocolate (rather than cocoa, cocoa butter and sugar) in a choc chip cookie or the tomato sauce (rather than tomatoes, capsicum, onions, herbs) on a frozen pizza. This does not apply to any additive or allergen which must be listed however small the amount.

8. Labels must tell the truth. Suppliers must label food products with accurate minimum weights and measures information. Weights and measures declarations are regulated by Australian State and Territory and New Zealand Government fair trading agencies. Fair trading laws and food laws in the States and Territories and New Zealand require that labels do not mislead, for example, if the label says it is strawberry yoghurt then it must contain strawberries.

9. Food additives. Food additives have many different purposes, including making processed food easier to use or ensuring food is preserved safely. They may come from a synthetic or a natural source. For example, emulsifiers prevent salad dressings from separating into layers and preservatives help to keep food safe or fresh longer. All food additives must have a specific use, must have been assessed and approved by FSANZ for safety and must be used in the lowest possible quantity that will achieve their purpose.

Food additives must be identified, usually by a number, and included in the ingredients list. This allows those people that may be sensitive to food additives to avoid them. A thickener has been used in this yoghurt- its additive number is 1442. A full list of numbers and additives can be obtained from the FSANZ website. Some additives are derived from food allergens which must be identified, for example lecithin (soy).

10. Legibility requirements. Labels must be legible, with prominent type which is distinct from the background, and in English. The type in legal warning statements must be at least 3mm high, except on very small packages.

11. Directions for use and storage. Where specific storage conditions are required in order for a product to remain safe until its 'Use-by' or 'best before date', manufacturers must include this information on the label, for example this yoghurt should be kept refrigerated at or below 4°C. Other foods which require preparation to ensure they are safe will need to provide directions.

12. Country of Origin. The country of origin requirements differ between Australia and New Zealand. In Australia, packaged, and some unpackaged, foods must state the country where the food was made or processed. This could just be identifying the country where the food was packaged for retail sale and, if any of the ingredients do not originate from that country, a statement that the food is made from imported or local and imported ingredients. In New Zealand, country of origin requirements only apply to wines and some cheeses. This matter is currently under review for both countries. Also Australian legislation lays down rules about 'Product of Australia' which means it must be made in Australia from Australian ingredients and 'Made in Australia' which means it is made in Australia with some significant imported ingredients.

This poster has been produced as a guide to consumers only. Industry and enforcement agencies should refer to the Food Standards Code.

Need more information? You can contact Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) by calling **(02) 6271 2222 in Australia** or **(04) 473 9942 in New Zealand** or by emailing **info@foodstandards.gov.au** or **info@foodstandards.govt.nz**. The website address is **www.foodstandards.gov.au** or **www.foodstandards.govt.nz**. In New Zealand, the New Zealand Food Safety Authority, NZFSA, is responsible for food safety, which includes the correct labelling of food. Further information is available at **www.nzfsa.govt.nz** or **0800 693 721** or email **info@nzfsa.govt.nz**. **For expert nutrition and dietary advice:** Contact your doctor or an accredited practising dietitian. **In Australia:** Visit the 'Find a Dietitian section' of the Dietitians Association of Australia Internet site www.daa.asn.au, or call 1800 812 942 to find an Accredited Practising Dietitian or contact Nutrition Australia at www.NutritionAustralia.org. **In New Zealand:** Visit the Find a Dietitian section of the New Zealand Dietetic Association internet site at www.dietitians.org.nz. Or contact the New Zealand Nutrition Foundation on (09) 575 3419 or email nznf@cybernet.co.nz.

About FSANZ Food Standards Australia New Zealand, FSANZ, is an independent bi-national organisation. FSANZ is the result of a partnership between Australia's Commonwealth, State and Territory governments and the New Zealand Government. FSANZ's primary role is to protect the health and safety of the people of Australia and New Zealand by maintaining a safe food supply.

Reprint October 2004
Product design and graphic design by artdirection.com.au