



best packaged foods

Photography by John Rintoul

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Fresh is best. Who knew? OK, you did. But packaged foods serve a purpose – who doesn't love a ready-to-scoff meal in the time it takes to send a Snapchat? Trouble is, manufacturers often sneak ingredients (we're looking at you, sugar and stabilisers) to boost taste and texture, says *WH* nutrition expert Kristen Beck. We decipher the marketing speak and nutritional claims for your healthiest shopping list ever...



HOW WE PICKED 'EM

- 2000kJ (or less) for meals
- 800kJ (or less) for snacks
- No more than 6g fat per serve
- No more than 20g sugar per serve
- As much fibre as possible
- Exceptions: nuts, oils, chocolate, and cheese

Fruit and veg

WE LOOKED FOR: vitamins and minerals; zero or minimal sugars, salt, preservatives and other nasties; retains fibre

1 LOGAN FARM CHOPPED LEAF SPINACH

Frozen foliage is an easy addition to any soup, casserole or green smoothie. It's packed full of antioxidants, magnesium, and iron, while low in kilojoules. Sold. Per serve (100g): 102kJ, <1g fat (<0.1g sat fat), 2.5g carbs (1.7g sugar), 2.8g protein, 140mg sodium

2 FRESHLIFE FRUIT SALAD Sweet-toothers rejoice – pair this antioxidant and fibre-rich dried fruit snack with a handful of almonds or brazil nuts for a new take on boring trail mix. Per serve (50g): 543kJ, 0.2g fat (<0.1g sat fat), 28.8g carbs (24.6g sugar – go easy), 3.7g fibre, 1.1g protein, 21mg sodium

3 GOURMET GARDEN GARLIC PASTE Fresh garlic from a tube can make the simplest meal even easier and healthier. The best bit? The smelly stuff is naturally rich in immune-boosting properties to ward off colds and flus.

Per serve (5g): 44kJ, 0.5g fat (0.1g sat fat), 0.8g carbs (0.5g sugar), 0.2g protein, 152mg sodium

4 BIRDS EYE FIELD FRESH AUSTRALIAN GARDEN PEAS These green balls of goodness are grown and snap-frozen in our very own backyard to retain maximal nutrients. Did you know that a whopping 60 per cent of households keep frozen peas in the freezer? Might be time to dig 'em out.

Per serve (75g): 192kJ, 0.3g fat (0.05g sat fat), 4.8g carbs (2g sugar), 4.8g fibre, 3.6g protein, 1mg sodium

5 VAL VERDE PEELED ITALIAN TOMATOES

Tinned tomatoes are rich in the potent antioxidant lycopene, which has been shown to protect against various forms of cancer. What's not to love?

Per serve (200g): 166kJ, 0.6g fat (0.2g sat fat), 6.8g carbs (6.8g sugar), 2.2g protein, 60mg sodium

6 ANGAS PARK DRIED APRICOTS The old-school lunch box faves are still a healthy treat (naturally sweet, rich

in iron, vitamin C and fibre) and they're also a great post-workout snack.

Per serve (50g): 478kJ, <0.5g fat (<0.5g sat fat), 22.2g carbs (20.3g sugar), 4.6g fibre, 2.2g protein, 19mg sodium

7 MCCAIN HEALTHY CHOICE STRAIGHT CUT OVEN BAKE CHIPS These 'tatoes are a healthier choice if you're craving hot chips, since they're 97 per cent fat free. Impressive.

Per serve (100g): 519kJ, 2.9g fat (0.6g sat fat), 20.8g carbs (<1g sugar), 2.5g protein, 60mg sodium

8 EDGELL SLICED BEETROOT Nutritional lowdown: low in salt and full of immune-boosting nutrients. A quick way to up the health qualities of your salad or sambo.

Per serve (60g): 109kJ, <0.1g fat (<0.1g sat fat), 5.2g carbs (5.2g sugar), 0.7g protein, 168mg sodium

9 SARA LEE MIXED FROZEN BERRIES Nutritional carriers of antioxidants, vitamin C and fibre, these guys are great on their own, with yoghurt or ice-cream, or used as a base for a healthy after-dinner treat. Per serve (75g): 176kJ, 0.2g fat (0.1g sat fat), 7.4g carbs (6.3g sugar), 0.8g protein, 1mg sodium

10 CREATIVE GOURMET SMOOTHIE CUBES, FRUIT & VEG ANTIOXIDANT These frozen cubes of blueberries, banana, ginger and green tea (among other things) deliver a third of your daily serve of vegies. Just add your favourite fresh juice for a speedy brekkie option.

Per serve (60g): 140kJ, 0.1g fat (<0.1g sat fat), 6.8g carbs (4.6g sugar), 15g fibre, 0.5g protein, 29mg sodium

11 HEINZ STEAM FRESH BROCCOLI, CARROTS & SUGARSNAP PEAS Fun fact: frozen vegies often keep more of their natural B and C group vitamins than fresh produce, so you're doing your health a favour with this mix.

Per serve (150g): 210kJ, 0.3g fat (0g sat fat), 5.2g carbs (4.2g sugar), 4.7g fibre, 4.2g protein, 35mg sodium



Sweeteners

WE LOOKED FOR: low GI and/or additional nutritional value such as key vitamins and minerals (rather than simply empty kilojoules)

12 PUREHARVEST ORGANIC RICE MALT SYRUP

For folks on the no-sugar or low-sugar caper, rice malt syrup has a sweet taste but contains mostly complex carbs (not energy-spiking simple sugars), so it's good. Per serve (10g): 137kJ, 0.02g fat (0.01g sat fat), 8g carbs (5.5g sugar), 0g protein, 0.6mg sodium

13 CSR LOW GI LOGICANE CANE SUGAR

Looks and tastes like normal raw sugar but has the massive nutritional advantage of being low GI (provides a longer lasting source of energy and more balanced blood sugar levels – a must for dieters and health-conscious alike). Per serve (4g): 68kJ, 0g fat, (0g sat fat), 4g carbs (4g sugar), 0g protein, <0.1mg sodium

14 POWER SUPER FOODS ECUADORIAN ORGANIC CACAO POWDER

Full of antioxidants, magnesium and trace minerals, this powder is cold-pressed to retain maximum antioxidant goodness. Use in smoothies, sprinkle on a banana or try making your own home-made healthy chocolate. Gourmet. Per serve (15g): 264kJ, 1.6g fat, (1g sat fat), 8g carbs (0.1g sugar), 4g protein, 1mg sodium

