

# nutrition:

## BEYOND THE NUMBERS

**A NUTRITION FACTS LABEL TELLS YOU ONLY PART OF THE STORY ABOUT A FOOD. LEARN TO USE ALL OF THE CLUES ON A FOOD PACKAGE TO INTERPRET THE NUMBERS YOU SEE.**

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Even if you do all of your grocery shopping at a natural foods store, you can't assume everything on the shelves is good for you. Food makers know our taste buds still drive many purchasing decisions, despite the possible cost to our health.

Checking the Nutrition Facts panel on products is a start, but it's often not enough to determine whether a food is healthy or not. That's not because the numbers lie—they just don't

provide enough details, such as where ingredients came from, how they were processed and how much of each was used.

Additionally, you can't necessarily apply the same nutrition rules to every food product. For example, 14 grams of fat per serving is the norm for cooking oil but would be really high for a serving of crackers. We've reviewed a sampling of natural and organic food products to give you insight into how a nutritionist would evaluate them during a trip to the store.

### Wheat-Free, Dairy-Free Fig Cookies



If you have to follow a gluten-free diet, watch out for products that aren't made with wheat but still contain gluten. In the example of wheat-free fig cookies, the ingredients panel shows the main ingredient is **barley flour**, which is a nutritious but gluten-containing grain.

**Fruit-Filled**

Although the front of this package says these cookies are "fruit filled," the high sugar content per serving (in this case, 12 grams of sugars) is a clue they contain more sugar from refined sweeteners than natural sugars from fruit. A check of the ingredients will reveal refined sweeteners, such as organic sugar or corn syrup (the latter of which is likely genetically modified).

**SUGARS**  
12g

SERVING SIZE	CALORIES	FIBER	CALCIUM
2 cookies	110	2g	2%

Peek at the serving size and consider whether you want to "spend" 110 calories on two small cookies. For

about the same number of calories, you could eat five dried figs. That amount would supply 4 grams of fiber, which is twice what you'd get in these cookies, and 7 percent of the Daily Value (DV) for calcium, compared with just 2 percent DV in the cookies. You'd also be eating closer to nature, which is always smart. ➔

## Buttery Spread made with Olive Oil

TOTAL FAT	SATURATED FAT	TRANS FAT	POLYUNSATURATED FAT	MONOUNSATURATED FAT
9 g	2.5 g	0 g	2.5 g	3.5 g

Instead of only looking at the amount of total fat grams in a product, look at the *types* of fat, which is generally more important—although a higher number of fat means more calories, regardless of the source. For heart health, seek out products (such as this plant-based buttery spread) that contain more unsaturated fats in proportion to saturated fats. Additionally, because some (but not all) scientific evidence suggests **polyunsaturated** fats, although heart-healthy, are more vulnerable to oxidation and may promote inflammation, look for oils and spreads that contain more **monounsaturated** fats, such as this one.

“Expeller-pressed” means the oils are extracted by pressing without the use of chemical solvents, such as hexane, which is a chemical commonly used. Also, notice that these oils are non-GMO, which is important to check when you’re buying products made with commonly genetically modified oils, including canola, soybean, corn and cottonseed oils.

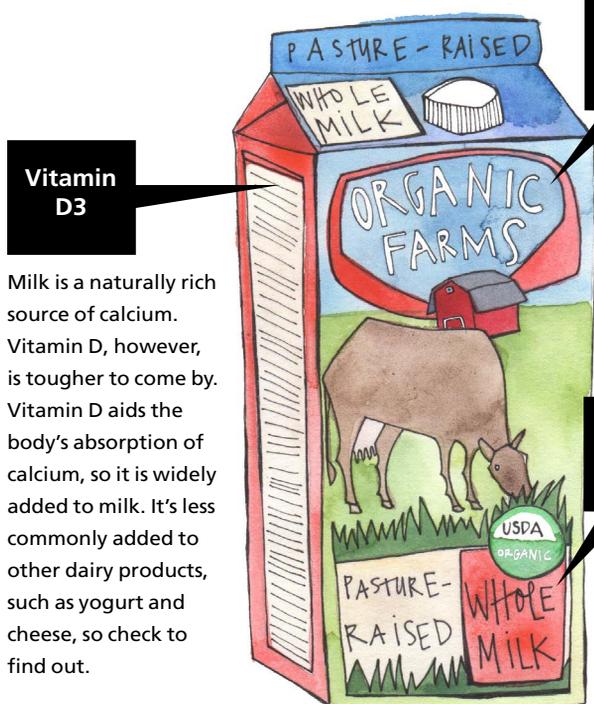
**Expeller-Pressed Oils**



**Made with Olive Oil**

Despite what’s promoted on the front of the package, don’t assume olive oil is the main oil. Based on the order that oils are listed in the ingredients of this spread, olive oil is only the fourth most abundant ingredient (by weight). So, you’re probably not getting much olive oil in this spread, and the little you are getting isn’t the most beneficial kind—extra-virgin olive oil (EVOO). If you’re looking for the heart-health benefits of olive oil, consider drizzling your toast with EVOO instead.

## USDA Certified Organic Whole Milk



**Vitamin D3**

Milk is a naturally rich source of calcium. Vitamin D, however, is tougher to come by. Vitamin D aids the body’s absorption of calcium, so it is widely added to milk. It’s less commonly added to other dairy products, such as yogurt and cheese, so check to find out.

**Organic**

When you buy organic milk, you’re assured the cows were raised without recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH), which is an artificial growth hormone manufactured using genetically engineered bacteria. Organic milk is often pasture-raised, which means the cows sometimes graze on certified-organic pasture (grass) but are also fed organic grains. This shouldn’t be mistaken for milk from 100-percent grass-fed cows, which never receive grains; this variety is less widely available. Grass-feeding increases levels of heart-healthy omega-3 fats in cows’ milk.

**Whole Milk**

Some people who once shunned whole milk are returning to it, based on emerging research that the fats in dairy products may be good for health. For example, dairy fat is the main dietary source of odd-chain saturated fats, which have been linked to reduced diabetes risk. Even so, the majority consensus among heart experts is that plant-based fats (think avocados or nuts) are much more beneficial. Also, be prepared for the extra calories in higher-fat milk. ➔

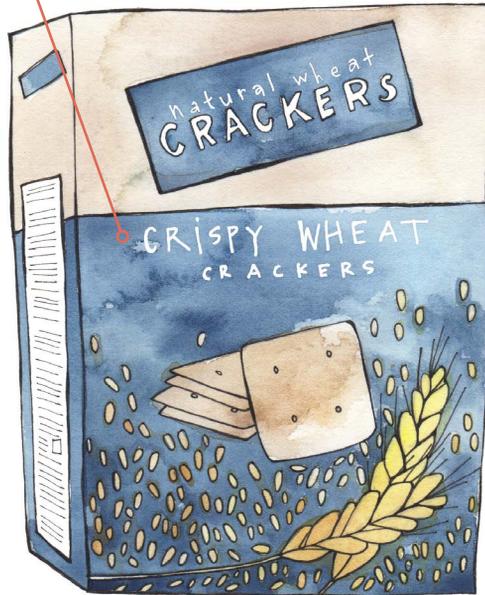
TOTAL FAT	SATURATED FAT
8 g	5 g

## Natural Wheat Crackers

### Wheat Crackers

It's common to mistake "wheat crackers" to mean "whole-wheat crackers." The first ingredient, and the only flour, in these crackers is "unbleached, enriched flour."

So despite these crackers' earthy, brown appearance, they're made only with refined grain. Also, although the flour is "enriched" with vitamins and minerals, only a few of the nutrients lost in the refining process are required to be added back to flour.



SERVING SIZE <b>17</b> crackers (30 g)	CALORIES <b>130</b>
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Look at the number of crackers you get in a serving, which the FDA

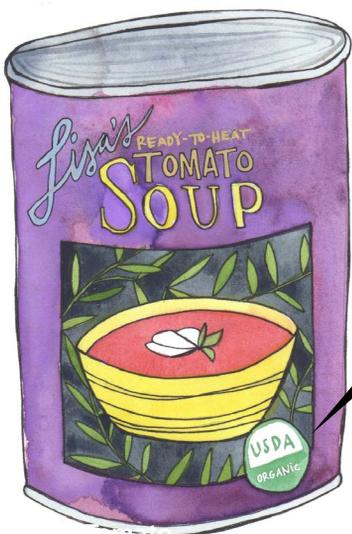
specifies is 30 grams (about 1 ounce). It varies widely depending on the size and weight of the crackers. You may find it more satisfying (at least mentally) if you get a greater number of smaller crackers rather than just a few big crackers.

TOTAL CARBS <b>22</b>	DIETARY FIBER <b>1g</b>
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Take a look at the amount of fiber. The fact that these crackers contain

no whole-grain flour is a big reason they're so low in fiber. As a guide, follow the **10-to-1 rule**: For every 10 grams of total carbohydrate in a grain-based product like crackers, bread or cereal, there should be at least 1 gram of fiber. These crackers contain 22 grams of carbohydrate per serving but only 1 gram of fiber—they need at least 2 grams of fiber to meet the rule.

## Organic, Ready-to-Heat Tomato Soup



SERVING SIZE <b>1</b> cup	SERVINGS PER CONTAINER <b>2</b>
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Although you may heat and eat an entire can of soup, check the number of servings per can, which is often two. The nutrition information is based on one serving, which is 1 cup. So, if you eat the entire can (about 2 cups), double all of the nutrition numbers you see on the label. Amounts that sound reasonable for one serving may be excessive if you actually eat two servings.

Organic

Sodium amounts are often high in canned soup, including this one, despite the fact that it's organic. Look for soup that's "light in sodium," which means 50 percent less sodium than usual, or "reduced sodium," which means at least 25 percent less sodium than usual. A reasonable limit is 480 mg of sodium per cup of soup.

SODIUM  
**680 mg**

SUGARS  
**14g**

What's sugar doing in your soup? A glance at the ingredients reveals there is cane sugar in this soup, however, it's fairly low on the ingredients list. Some of the sugars are coming from the natural sugars in tomatoes. For example, ½ cup of puréed tomatoes contains about 6 grams of natural tomato sugars. New Nutrition Facts labeling required by July 2018 will specify the amount of "Added Sugars" from refined sweeteners, which will make it easier to determine if sugars are added or natural. ➔

## Organic Grape Juice Drink Pouch

When you're trying to feed your kids well, "juice" may seem like a good choice, but many products contain more than juice. In this product, the phrase "juice drink" is a quick clue that it's not 100 percent juice. In fact, this one contains only 30 percent juice. Read on to find out why that's not necessarily a bad thing ....

### Organic Juice Drink

#### CALORIES

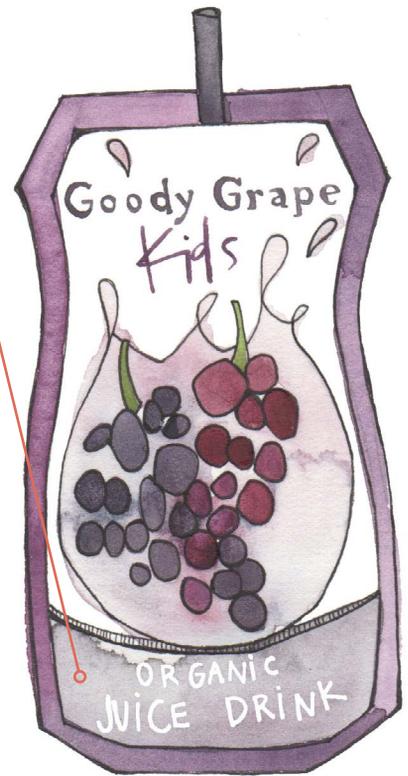
40

The manufacturer diluted the calories in this juice with water (and didn't add refined sweeteners, which is a plus). So, a single-serve pouch contains only 40 calories, versus about 125 calories that you'd get in the same amount of 100 percent grape juice. Although you could accomplish the same thing by diluting grape juice yourself, it's not as convenient.

#### VITAMIN C

100%

What's the biggest benefit of this juice drink? Perhaps the hydration it provides, plus vitamin C, which has been added. What this drink doesn't offer is the satisfaction of chewing, which can control appetite. For the same amount of calories as this drink offers, your child (or you) could enjoy 12 grapes—chased down with a calorie-free glass of water. 



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†Relieves occasional anxiety and stress.

\*THESE STATEMENTS HAVE NOT BEEN EVALUATED BY THE FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION. THIS PRODUCT IS NOT INTENDED TO DIAGNOSE, TREAT, CURE OR PREVENT ANY DISEASE.

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