

Food labels

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- To understand how the information on food labels can help in making important choices about food
- To understand the range of information on a food label
- To understand and use the format of labels to find information



RESOURCES

- Food items with labels removed or blanked out (Engage activity)
- Copies of Resources 1, 2 and 4
- Enlarged version of Resource 2
- Selection of food labels
- Scenario cards prepared from Resources 3A and 3B
- Copies of Resource 5 (optional, Activity 3)

- Sticky notes
- Computer access (optional, Activity 3)

RELATED THEMES

- Food groups (pages 4–12)
- Nutritional information (pages 24–33)
- Food date safety (pages 62–68)

HEALTH SKILLS

Food labels are often complex, but they contain lots of information and advice that are important. Learners may look at labels for different reasons: many will look for storage and cooking information, some for dates and weights, and for others the ingredients and nutritional information will be important, especially if they need to check that the food does not contain certain items. People rarely need to read the whole label, but it helps to know what information it contains and how to find what you need.

Related health information

www.eatwell.gov.uk/foodlabels/understandlabels/

SKILLS FOR LIFE

In order to find and understand what they need from the wide range of information included on food labels, learners need to:

- understand the purpose of the label
- understand what to look for and how they can find it
- understand the format and language used.

Core curriculum

Activities in this theme will contribute to learning in the following curriculum areas:

- understand what information can be found on labels (L Rt/E2.2)
- recognise the words and phrases used on food labels (L Rw/E2.2)
- use the format and features of labels to locate information (L Rt/L1.4)
- use different reading strategies to find and obtain information (L Rt/L1.5)
- recognise and use different date formats seen on labels (N MSS1/E2.3).

- Bring in a bag of popular food items appropriate to the group but take off or blank out the labels. Empty the items out and ask learners to identify them.
- Discuss how labels help you to make choices about the food you buy and to prepare food correctly. Ask learners ‘How can I tell what’s in this packet?’
- Use Resource 1 to get learners talking about food and labels.
- To support less confident learners, it might be useful to provide name cards or sticky notes which they can match with the food items.

How do labels help you to choose food?

ACTIVITY 1

Be aware of the information on food labels and discuss how it can be used

- Ask learners to talk about some favourite recipes. Working in pairs or small groups, ask them to choose one of the recipes which they think could sell on a commercial basis and decide on a name for it. Share ideas.
- Discuss with learners the kind of information they would need to include on the label. List ideas on a flipchart, checking that the list includes all the following: a list of ingredients, nutritional information, allergy information, suitability for vegetarians, ‘Use by’ or ‘Best before’ date, storage and preparation instructions, cooking methods and times.
- Refer to the enlarged version of the food label on Resource 2. Ask learners to locate the different types of information from the list on the flipchart (e.g. list of ingredients, allergy advice, instructions on how to prepare the food and instructions on how to cook it).
- As you locate the information, focus on the text features (headings, bold type, capital letters, bullet points, picture symbols, tables, instructional text, etc.), pointing out how manufacturers use these to organise information and to draw attention to particular parts of the label.
- Give practice in finding different features and text types such as capital letters and bold text. Discuss contents as you explore the label. Emphasise different aspects of labels according to the level and interests of the group, e.g. some learners may need to spend some time on date formats, others may be more concerned about the ingredients.
- Discuss the question on Resource 2 and why it is important to follow the advice in order to keep healthy. Focus the discussion by asking questions such as ‘What could happen if you don’t cook the food for long enough?’, ‘What does “Use by date” mean?’, ‘Does it matter how long you store food?’

What information do you normally expect to find on food labels?

Why do we need all this food information?

Support

Some learners will need support to cope with the quantity of text on the page; however, this activity is about identifying types of text and navigating the label. Reduce the load by concentrating on one aspect of a label (e.g. Use by dates) and practise this one feature with many labels. Labels can be cut up to make this easier.

ESOL

- Some ESOL learners may be familiar with text features in their language but not know the words in English, e.g. 'heading', 'bold type', 'capital letter', etc. Demonstrate the words and / or write them on cards so that learners can find and label examples in the text.
- Ask learners to highlight any unknown words in the headings, e.g. 'storage', 'oven from frozen', 'allergy advice'. Be prepared to discuss their meaning, giving simple explanations in everyday words.

ACTIVITY 2

Locate and use the information on food labels

- Go through an example of a scenario card prepared from Resources 3A and 3B, demonstrating how to use the information on the label to answer the question.
- Give learners copies of Resources 2 and 4 so they have all three food labels (Vegetable Lasagne, Minestrone Soup and Moroccan Chicken). Check learners are able to pronounce the names. Give learners one of the scenario cards and ask them to use the format of the labels, including subheadings, bold type, capital letters and picture symbols, to locate information on the food labels to answer the question.
- Pick out key words or phrases in the scenarios to match with the headings on the label. For example, 'today's **date**' and 'Use by **date**'.
- Continue with learners taking turns to choose cards and answer the questions or complete in small groups.

Support

- Give learners scenario cards that require them to find the same information from each of the three food labels, or different types of information from the same food label.
- Give support by questioning, and help learners to identify and look for key words in order to locate information. Highlight these words or headings in the same colour on the scenario and the label.
- Learners who are unable to read this level of text will need additional support and may be better working with partners.
- Consider concentrating on the more basic and essential aspects of labels.

ESOL

- Discuss the scenarios with learners, asking questions to check they understand. As necessary, explain words and expressions they are unfamiliar with, such as 'cook from frozen', 'film', 'lid', 'pierce', 'vegetarian'.
- This is an opportunity for practising language used for instructions (e.g. verbs such as 'remove', 'place', 'serve', etc.).

How is the information grouped on a food label?

What are the key headings on a food label?

TIP

It pays to stop, look and think before choosing and cooking prepared foods. Look for key words like 'not', 'do', 'must', 'warning', 'best before' on the label first.

ACTIVITY 3

Use knowledge of labels to construct a label using a template

- Collaboratively as a whole group and then working in pairs or small groups, design a label (that follows the food labelling conventions shown in the tasks) that could be used to package food produced from a favourite healthy recipe.
- Learners may cut out information from existing labels, and use it in conjunction with their own information to create a new label. A label writing frame is provided (Resource 5), but learners may prefer to use the flipchart headings from Activity 1 and devise their own layout. Remind learners to think about text features and ways to draw attention to particular parts of the label.
- Learners will not be able to complete the nutritional information accurately, but might be able to use headings on existing food labels as a starting point. This can provide a good focus for further work.
- Note: learners from some cultures may be used to buying food from market stalls, not packaged and labelled.
- ICT can also be used here if available to construct labels or to add graphics.

Support

- Begin from learners' own experience. Ask them to name a familiar food item, and use this name as the main heading.
- Ask direct questions about the other information that will be essential for the label. You can write learners' answers down for them on separate cards, pieces of paper or sticky notes so that the information can then be sorted onto the label writing frame.
- Reduce the amount of information required.

ESOL

- Where possible, encourage learners to work with first-language speakers of English.
- Learners may need access to bilingual dictionaries, if available, to check words they want to use on the label.

What information do you want to see on a food label?

How can you make important information stand out?

Action

- Ask learners to check food labels for particular features at home or when shopping. They can give feedback on this to the group.
- Encourage learners to bring in labels from food items they have at home. Ask them to highlight any information on the labels that they use on a day-to-day basis. Use this to decide on a list of information that is important to the whole group and discuss how these items can be located using key words or text features.

What's in your cupboard?



Food labels contain lots of important advice.

Which advice will keep you healthy?

Vegetable Lasagne

Roasted vegetables with layers of fresh pasta and a creamy cheese sauce.

Serving suggestion: Serve hot with fresh salad and crusty garlic bread.



Oven
from fresh

35–40
minutes

200 °C / 400 °F / Gas mark 6

- Remove outer packaging and film lid.
- Place on a baking tray in a pre-heated oven for 35–40 minutes.
- Serve immediately.



Oven
from frozen

45–50
minutes

200 °C / 400 °F / Gas mark 6

- Follow conventional oven instructions above, adjusting cooking times to 45–50 minutes.
- All appliances vary. These are guidelines only.
- Adjust times according to your particular oven. (For fan-assisted ovens, cooking times should be reduced. For best results refer to manufacturer's handbook.)
- Check food is **piping hot** throughout before serving.
- **Not suitable for microwave cooking.**

STORAGE

- Keep refrigerated.
- Use by: See date on pack.
- Suitable for home freezing.

FREEZING GUIDELINES



- Freeze on day of purchase. For freezing guidelines refer to manufacturer's handbook.



IMPORTANT: If food has thawed, do not refreeze.

Ingredients: tomatoes, courgettes, onions, aubergines, wheat flour, whey powder, cheese, garlic, vegetable oil, salt, flavour enhancers, preservatives.



Allergy advice: contains **milk, wheat** and **gluten**.



Suitable for vegetarians.

Nutrition		
	per 175 g serving	per 100 g
calories	253	145
protein	13.6 g	7.8 g
carbohydrate	17.8 g	10.2 g
fat	11 g	6.3 g
fibre	4.3 g	2.5 g
sodium	1.57 g	0.9 g

Additional information
2 servings

Made in UK for
Ready Foods Ltd

350 g e

Use by: 09/08/06

a You find the **vegetable lasagne** in your **fridge**.

Today's date is **12 August**.

Is it **safe to eat**?



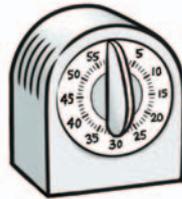
b A friend who is coming for lunch has a **nut allergy**.

Is it safe to give him the **vegetable lasagne**?



c You are cooking the **vegetable lasagne** from **frozen**.

How **many minutes** will it take to cook?



d You have friends coming for lunch.

Is the **vegetable lasagne** big enough to feed **three people**?



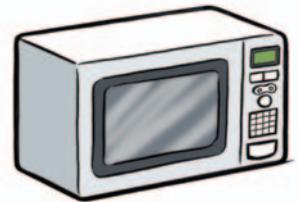
e The **vegetable lasagne** has been in your fridge for **three days**.

Is it safe to **freeze it**?



f You want a quick snack.

Can you cook the **minestrone soup** in the **microwave oven**?



g You find an unopened carton of **minestrone soup** in your **fridge**.

Today's date is **9 August**.

Is it **safe to eat**?



h In the fridge, you find some **minestrone soup** that you opened **three days ago**.

Today's date is **11 August**.

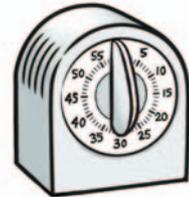
Is it **safe to eat**?



i Your friend, Anji, is a **vegetarian**.
Is the **minestrone soup** suitable to give to her?



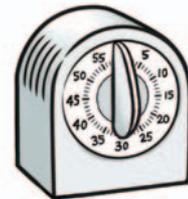
j How many **minutes** does it take to cook the **minestrone soup**?



k You find the **Moroccan chicken** in your **fridge**.
Today's date is **11 August**.
Is it **safe to eat**?



l How many **minutes** will it take to cook the **Moroccan chicken** in your **750 watt microwave oven**?



m You want to cook the **Moroccan chicken** in the **oven** from **frozen**.
What **temperature** will you set the oven at?



n A friend who is coming for lunch has a **nut allergy**.
Is it **safe to give him the Moroccan chicken**?



o You are about to cook the **Moroccan chicken** in the **microwave oven**.
Will you **remove the film lid**, or will you **pierce it**?



p Do you **boil the minestrone soup**?



Minestrone soup

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

Typical values	per 100 g
Energy	221 KJ (53 kcal)
Protein	0.8 g
Carbohydrate (of which sugars)	5.1 g 1.6 g
Fat (of which saturates)	3.9 g 0.4 g
Fibre	0.3 g
Sodium	0.5 g

NO ARTIFICIAL COLOURS

INGREDIENTS

Water, Vegetables (44%) (Potatoes, Carrots, Onion, Red Lentils, Courgettes, Red Peppers), Tomato Puree, Spaghetti, Bacon, Modified Maize Starch, Salt, Yeast Extract.

Contains approx 4 servings.

READY IN 8–10 MINUTES

Preparation Guidelines

1. Shake well before opening.
2. Pour contents into a saucepan.

To Cook

Heat through gently on a low heat. Stir continually. Do not boil.

NOT SUITABLE FOR MICROWAVE COOKING

Storage Instructions

KEEP REFRIGERATED

Once opened, eat within 24 hours.



Allergy advice

Contains wheat and gluten.

USE BY: 21 Aug

400g e

Moroccan Chicken

Nutrition:

	per serving	per 100 grams
Energy	2955 KJ (705 kcal)	1970 KJ (470 kcal)
Protein	30.0 g	20.0 g
Carbohydrate Of which sugars	70.0 g 9.0 g	46.6 g 6.0 g
Fat Of which saturates	35.0 g 17.0 g	23.3 g 11.3 g
Monounsaturates	15.5 g	10.3 g
Polyunsaturates	3.0 g	2.0 g
Fibre	2.0 g	1.3 g
Sodium	2.3 g	1.5 g

Ingredients:

Chicken (30%), onion, mushroom, red and green pepper, carrot, raisins, sliced almonds, chick peas, vegetable oil, modified corn starch, flavouring (with yeast extract), celery, honey, basil, parsley, chicken stock, sugar, malt extract.

This pack contains **2 servings**.

Allergy advice: contains nuts.

Cooking instructions



To oven cook (not from frozen): Remove outer packaging and lid. Place on a baking tray in the centre of a pre-heated oven 190 °C / 375 °F Gas mark 5 for 20–25 minutes.



To oven cook from frozen: Follow conventional oven instructions above, adjusting heating times to 35–40 minutes.



To microwave: Remove outer packaging. Pierce film lid several times.

	650 w	750 w	850 w
Full power	12 mins	10 mins	8 mins
Stand	1 min	1 min	1 min

Not suitable for microwave cooking from frozen.

Storage instructions: Keep refrigerated

Freezing guidelines: Freeze on day of purchase.

USE BY: 14 AUG '06

300g e

Name of product

Ingredients

How to prepare it

How to cook it (e.g. oven, hob, grill, fry, microwave, temperature and cooking times)

Allergy information

Suitability for vegetarians

Nutritional information

How to keep or store it

Use by

There are no audio scripts for this theme.

ANSWERS**ACTIVITY 2 / Resource 3**

- a** no
- b** yes
- c** 45–50 minutes
- d** no
- e** no
- f** no
- g** yes
- h** no
- i** no
- j** 8–10 minutes
- k** yes
- l** 10 minutes
- m** 190 °C / 375 °F or Gas mark 5
- n** no
- o** pierce it
- p** no