



SHOP SMART EAT WELL

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...a quarterly bulletin from the UC CalFresh Nutrition Education Program

You Can't Always Judge Food by the Package



On your weekly trip to the grocery store, you're trying to stick to your budget and still serve your family healthy meals. Reading the nutrition facts label takes time, but insures you know what is in the foods you chose. But what about the claims on the front of the food package? Even the most educated eaters have a tough time because certain descriptions can make a product sound good for you, but really be high in calories, sugar, and fat.

This concept is known as the "health halo" effect. What this means is we overestimate the healthfulness of a certain product based on a single word. Read on to learn about two of today's sneakiest health halo terms.

All Natural

This is a tricky term; all natural (or 100% natural) products are defined by the FDA as those made without artificial or synthetic ingredients that would not normally be expected in that food. There is no agency that monitors the use of this term though, and the vague definition leaves room for the manufacturer to interpret what that means.

While many products labeled as all natural truly are healthy and nutritious, others can contain high amounts of calories, sugar, fat, or salt, leaving you, the consumer, confused. Products, such as potato chips and fried chicken are technical "all natural" as they can be produced without any synthetic ingredients. Other all natural products include ice cream, mac n' cheese, and sweetened beverages.



(continued on back page)

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Organic

Why this is a tricky term: organic products have very strict USDA production and labeling requirements. The term organic refers to the way a food product was grown, manufactured and produced, and covers three labeling categories:



1. 100% Organic - every single ingredient in a product must be certified organic.
2. Organic - at least 95% of the ingredients in a product must be certified organic.
3. Made with Organic - at least 70% of the ingredients in a product must be certified organic.

Just because a food has an organic label does not automatically mean it is healthy. Organic is used on a variety of products with little or no nutritional quality, such as a chocolate sandwich cookies and chocolate/peanut butter cups.

Take a closer look at food labels—especially when it comes to packaged, processed foods—to understand what you're really putting in your body.

Once Around the Garden Skillet

Serves: 4

A great way to use your end of the season produce.

Ingredients

- 4 small zucchini, sliced
- 1 medium onion, thinly sliced
- 1 bell pepper, chopped
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper
- 2 tomatoes, sliced
- Parsley and parmesan cheese (optional)

Directions

1. Heat oil and garlic in skillet.
2. Add zucchini, onion, bell pepper, and spices.
3. Cook until vegetables are crisp-tender, about 5 minutes.
4. Add tomatoes. Cover and heat through, about 3 minutes.
5. Sprinkle with parmesan cheese and parsley, if desired.

Optional: Add leftover chopped chicken and pasta for a delicious main dish.

Recipe from NDSU Extension Service

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