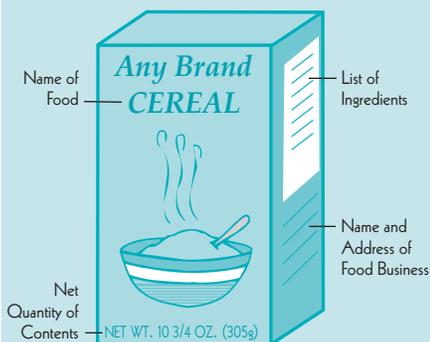


# Food Labels

Food labels allow consumers to compare one product to another. They give instructions for safe handling and storage, as well as identify the firm responsible for the product. Labels list ingredients to help consumers choose foods with ingredients they want or need to avoid. Food label regulations are enforced by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and dictate the type of information that must be on the label and where the label can be placed on the package. Exact requirements for your package size and type can be confusing. Before you have labels printed, share a draft version with a Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture sanitarian or the FDA small business representative in your region to make sure you have met all labeling requirements.



### Four Basic Label Requirements

All food packages must display the following information:

- Name of the food
- Net quantity of contents
- Name and address of the food business
- List of ingredients

A single label may be used to display all required information. However, it is common to have two distinct label areas on the container, the principal display panel and the information panel.

### Principle Display Panel (PDP)

The PDP is the portion of the package label that is most likely to be seen by the consumer at the time of purchase. It is usually on the front of the package and shows the name of the product and the net contents of the container. Approved type style and minimum character size depend on the area of the PDP.

### Name of the Food

A statement of identity for the product must be clearly displayed by its common or usual name (e.g. salsa, apple sauce, vanilla wafers). It must be in bold type and in a size that is larger and more prominent than other label information.

### Net Quantity of Contents

The net quantity statement gives the actual weight, volume, or number of pieces of food in the package and should be located on the bottom 30 percent of the PDP. Weights and volumes must be displayed in both U.S.

and metric units—for instance, 1 lb. 8 oz. (680 g) or 1 gal. (3.79 L).

### Information Panel (IP)

The IP is the label panel immediately to the right of the PDP as you face the product. This area is reserved for the list of ingredients, the name and address of the food business, and nutritional information.

### Name and Location of the Food Business

The name, address, city, state, and zip code of the business must be printed so that consumers are able to contact the manufacturer for any reason. If the business is not the actual manufacturer, a qualifying phrase must be present that states the firm's relation to the product, such as "manufactured for" or "distributed by." A street address is not required if it is in a current city or telephone directory.

### List of Ingredients

Packaged foods that consist of two or more ingredients must be labeled so that ingredients are displayed in descending order (i.e., the ingredient that weighs the most is listed first, and the ingredient that weighs the least is listed last); for example, "Ingredients: pinto beans, water, and salt." In most cases, only common or usual names that are familiar to consumers can be used. For instance, use the term "sugar" instead of its scientific name "sucrose." If you are selling unpackaged items in bulk to stores for resale, you must supply the retailer with a list of ingredients.

New regulations developed to help consumers avoid food allergic reactions require that foods containing milk, eggs, fish, crustacean shellfish, peanuts, tree nuts, wheat, or soy must declare the presence of the ingredient in plain language on the ingredient list.

## Other Label Information

### Nutritional Labeling

Large food manufacturers are required by federal regulations to display nutritional information on the label. However, small businesses with fewer than 100 full-time equivalent employees and that produce fewer than 100,000 units of product per recipe per year are exempt from nutrition labeling, unless a health or nutrient claim is made. Exempt companies may still include nutritional information on the label as long as the Nutrition Facts panel format is used. Nutrient information must be presented on a per-serving basis (the typical weight or number of pieces eaten) and must include calories, total fat, cholesterol, sodium, carbohydrates, protein, vitamins A and C, calcium, and iron. To determine the amount of nutrients in your product, have your product

tested in a commercial laboratory, purchase nutrition-labeling software to calculate nutrient values based on USDA reference values, or hire a consultant to do the whole job.

### Nutrient and Health Claims

Federal regulations limit the kind of claims you can make about the nutritional content of your product or any health benefits for consumers. If you make a nutrient claim, such as "high in vitamin C" or "low-fat," you must declare the actual amount of that nutrient on the Nutrition Facts panel and your product must meet minimum and/or maximum nutrient content levels in order to qualify for the claims. Claims that your product may have a beneficial effect on a disease or health-related condition are limited to those approved by government scientific experts. For example, you may claim that because your product is low fat, high fiber, or high in fruit and vegetable content, it can reduce risks from cancer or heart disease. You should weigh the benefits of making a health or nutrient claim against the cost of creating a Nutrition Facts panel before you proceed with this option.

### Product Dates

Many packaged foods are labeled to indicate the last date that the food should be sold for optimum quality or safety. "Sell by" or "best before" dating is not required by regulations for most packaged foods. In Pennsylvania, only fluid dairy products, raw eggs, infant formula, and reduced-oxygen packaged meats require dating. Typically, wholesale customers may require you to date your product so they can better manage their inventory. Check with your potential customers to determine if they require product dating.

### UPC Bar Coding (UPC).

Although not a regulatory requirement, most large grocery store chains require UPC labels. So, if you plan to have your product sold at these outlets, you should look into having UPC labels made. However, if your sales will be strictly limited to small specialty food stores, farmers' markets, your own retail store, or over the Internet, the extra expense may not be worth the cost.

**For more information,** contact your regional PDA office or the cooperative extension office in your county or visit [www.PaFoodVentures.psu.edu](http://www.PaFoodVentures.psu.edu).

*"When I changed the recipe for a new product, I not only had to change the label, I had to change jars so the new label would fit."  
—Pa. food business owner*

Collaboration of Penn State Cooperative Extension, PENNTap, and Penn State Department of Food Science.

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Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences research, extension, and resident education programs are funded in part by Pennsylvania counties, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

This publication is available from the Publications Distribution Center, The Pennsylvania State University, 112 Agricultural Administration Building, University Park, PA 16802. For information telephone 814-865-6713.

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Produced by Ag Communications and Marketing

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Code # UK153

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