

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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What's to Believe on a Food Label

Many people are willing to take a food package at face value. If it says "Sugar Free" or "Fat Free" then it's great for a diet. But if you're a smart shopper you have probably looked at a "New! Sugar Free" label and thought "Yeah, right! So what else is in there?" Smart you! There might not be any pure, white sugar in there, but there can still legally, honestly, be lots of other high calorie ingredients. Here's a quick rundown on a few to look for.

First, remember that the most honest places on a package are the Nutrient Facts box and the Ingredient List. Other than that, there's a lot of advertising going on. So just what do they mean by some of those hopeful sounding words?

Start with the Nutrient Facts box. The first thing to do is check the serving size. They might be planning that you share that tiny little package with a friend or two! If the bag says "Servings per container - 4" and you eat the whole bag, you have to multiply all the rest of the numbers by 4. Anything that has more than 10 g of sugar on the Sugar line of the Nutrient Facts box is considered a high sugar food.

"Sugar Free" - If it says this on the package, then a serving has less than half a gram of plain white sugar. But there could be sugar alcohols, which have calories. There could be concentrated fruit juice, molasses, or sorghum, all of which have lots of calories. Anything that ends in -ose is a sugar, but "Sugar Free" only refers to pure sucrose sugar.

"Reduced Sugar" - This is not quite as hopeful as sugar free, and rightly so. This

only means that there is at least 25% less sugar than in another similar product. If they are comparing it to a very high sugar product, then reduced sugar could still have a lot of sugar. What does the Sugar line say in the box?

“Sugar Alcohols” - Most of the time these are hidden in the ingredients list, but occasionally you’ll find them in the Nutrient Facts box. These were sugars, but were modified either naturally or chemically to turn them into alcohols. They are not technically sugar. They have half as many calories per teaspoon or gram as sugar does. In the ingredient list they will show up as something that ends in -ol, such as mannitol, xylitol or sorbitol. Erythritol is a strange one that is related to vitamin C. They will not make you drunk like alcohol does, but if you eat too much of them they can give you diarrhea. Most of them have a minty sweet flavor, so they are used in gum and candy. If they are used in a ‘sugar free’ food, then they must be listed on the Nutrient Facts panel.

What about “Fat Free”? A product that has less than half a gram of fat in a serving can be called fat free. If you eat a lot of it, you might get enough fat to measure. If you only eat one serving, then the tiny bit of fat is not significant.

But, if you are a diabetic you must read the label of fat free foods extra carefully. Some fat substitutes, things that are added to make a food taste or feel like it has fat in it, are made from starch. The starch has less than half the calories of fat, but if you must manage the carbohydrate in your menu to match the medications, then these foods could wreck your plans.

You can look at all the pretty advertising words on the front of the package, but for the truth, or when in doubt, read the Nutrient Facts and Ingredient List.

Our recipe for the week is one you can prepare in the morning and refrigerate

until dinner. You can bake it in the oven or do it on the grill. You can even get the kids to help you put it together! If you prefer Mexican flavors, use salsa instead of barbeque sauce. And it only takes half an hour to cook. Wonderful!

Wrapped Up Chickens

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| 4 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves | 1 large sweet onion |
| 4 medium red tomatoes, sliced | 3 small carrots, shredded |
| 1 cup of frozen whole kernel corn, thawed | 3 small zucchini or yellow squash |
| ½ cup ketchup (no salt added) | ½ cup barbecue sauce |
| 4 teaspoons Parmesan cheese | |

Cut 4 sheets of aluminum foil, 12 by 18 inches. Spray the foil lightly with pan spray. Mix the ketchup and barbecue sauce in a small bowl. Put one chicken breast on each sheet of foil. Put 2 Tbsp of sauce on each breast. Cut the onion and squash into 1/4 inch slices. Put a slice of onion on each piece of chicken. Divide the potatoes, carrots, squash and corn onto the chicken. Divide the rest of the sauce onto the sheets. Fold and roll the foil to seal it, but leave some space inside for the heat to circulate. When ready to cook, preheat oven to 450° F or the grill to medium high. Bake for 20 minutes, or grill with the top down. Check to be sure the chicken is done. Sprinkle the cheese over the veggies. Serves 4.

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