

Whole Foods Spectrum

A whole food is something that is more of a product of nature than a product of industry.

The food group examples below serve as a general guide to enhance understanding of the level of processing in different common foods. The further up on the list the better. In general, the MORE that has been added to it, the LESS natural it is. The more that is added to the food beyond what it may have been in "nature" makes it less and less a natural food. See the back for a list of food additives and byproducts to steer away from. *How* it was prepared is another indication of its wholesomeness.

Dairy Foods: Milk, Yogurt, Cheese

**Unprocessed
to minimally
processed**



Natural dairy products: milk, yogurt, cheese

- Grass-fed, organic, whole fat, plain, and no sugar
- Organic, whole fat, plain, and no sugar
- Non organic, whole fat, plain, and no sugar-
- Non organic, reduced fat, fruited, flavored, and/or other additives

**Moderately
Highly
Processed**

Soy milk, almond milk, whey-based powdered milk/protein powders
Processed cheese slices, cheese spreads, yogurts with sugar, flavored milk

Protein: Beef, Poultry, Pork, Lamb, Seafood, Eggs, Beans

**Unprocessed
to minimally
processed**



Fresh cut meats Beef, Poultry, Pork, Lamb, Seafood, Eggs

- Grass fed, organic, pastured, free range, wild fresh cut meat or eggs
- Organic fresh cut
- Non-organic, fresh cuts, without hormones, antibiotics, nitrates, etc.

**Moderately
Highly
Processed**

Protein powders (soy, hemp, pea), tofu, liquid eggs
Deli meats cut from whole meats
Deli meats cut from sectioned processed meats i.e., reformed, or meats processed via curing, salting, smoking, drying or canning

Vegetables and Fruits

**Unprocessed
to minimally
processed**



Fresh vegetables and fruits

- Organic
- Non organic
- Precut/bagged fresh produce
- Frozen, no sugar or additives
- Canned no sugar or additives

**Moderately
Highly
Processed**

100% fruit juice
Canned or frozen with sugar or other additives
Juice with sugar
Chips, ie potato, corn, vegetable

Fats & Oils

**Unprocessed
to minimally**

Raw Seeds & Nuts & Olives / Butter from grass-fed cows
Cold-pressed/extra virgin/organic/unrefined; olive, avocado, coconut oil

Moderately

Regular or refined; olive oil, avocado oil, coconut oil
Mayonnaise

**Highly
Processed**

Vegetable oils; corn, soybean, canola, safflower, sunflower, etc. (be aware of most bottled salad dressings!)
Partially hydrogenated vegetable oils (margarine and shortening)
Trans fats foods containing industrially processed liquid vegetable oils (i.e., corn, soy, canola, safflower, sunflower, oleic)
Fried foods

Grains, Seeds

wheat, oats, rice, corn, barley, sorghum, rye, and millet, quinoa, buckwheat, and amaranth, flours

**Unprocessed
to minimally**

Whole grains that are cooked whole, cracked, sprouted grains
Sprouted grain bread

Moderately

Steel cut oats, oat groats
Whole grain bread, pasta
Refined grains breads, pasta, quick oats
Instant oats, instant rice
Most "shelf-stable" foods

**Highly
Processed**

- Crackers, pretzels
- Boxed rice and grains
- Microwave popcorn, "movie" popcorn

Extruded grains; most cold breakfast cereals (many of which contain trans fats too), rice cakes
Chips, muffins, snack cakes, pastries, granola bars, energy/protein bars

A good whole food "rule" is to look at the label's list of ingredients and AVOID unhealthy additives and byproducts like:

- Sugars; like fructose, sucrose, glucose, dextrose, (if ends in "ose"=sugar), corn syrup
- Artificial sweeteners, flavors, colors and "natural" flavors and colors
- MSG, potassium bromate, sodium benzoate, sodium nitrite, sodium sulfite, sulfur dioxide, propyl paraben, BHA and BHT
- Anything hydrolyzed, autolyzed, or extracted or genetically modified
- By products of processed fats. Trans fats- vegetable fats that have been heated in cooking process or fried, i.e. partially hydrogenated fats, hydrogenated fats, trans fatty acids.