What the Label Doesn't Tell You

BY MICHAEL F. JACOBSON & BRUCE SILVERGLADE

It has been nearly 20 years since the government overhauled food labels. Since then, companies have come up with new schemes to trick consumers. And some older problems were never fixed the first time around.

Here's how the food label can trip you up...and what a new, improved label might look like.

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MOCHA CHERRY

Double Chocolate Layer Cake

A food with 5 grams of saturated fat per serving shouldn't be allowed to boast that it has 0 grams of trans fat.

The government should require symbols that give shoppers a quick snapshot of the food's key nutrients.

Snapshot

350 CALORIES Per Serving

SERVINGS

5 a

HIGH Saturated Fat

Added Sugars 30 g (HIGH)

MED Sodium 290 mg

More Information on Side Panel

The label shouldn't count polydextrose, maltodextrin, or similar isolated fibers as equal to the intact, natural fiber in whole grains, beans, or vegetables.

The claim should reveal what percent of the grain is whole.

If a food is made with coffee, caffeine, or guarana, the label should tell you how much caffeine is in a serving.



Any food that contains highfructose corn syrup is not all natural.

Some foods make an immunity claim because they contain a vitamin or two. That's deceptive and shouldn't be allowed.

When an ingredient appears on the label or in the food's name, the label should reveal how much of the ingredient the food contains.

Many labels claim that a food or ingredient can "support," "enhance," or "maintain" your joints, bones, heart, breasts, prostate, digestive health, etc. Most claims aren't backed by much evidence.

CONTAINS CHERRIES Helps maintain healthy joints!

Label Makeover

Current Label

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1/14 Cake (107g)

Servings per Container 14					
Calories 350	Calorie	s from Fat	180 /		
Amoun	t/serving	% Daily V	alue*		
Total Fat	14g	;	22%		
Saturated Fat	5g		25%		
Trans Fat	0g		$\overline{}$		
Cholesterol	30mg		10%		
Sodium	290mg		12%		
Amount/serving % Daily Value*					
Total Carbohydra	ate 53g		18%		
Dietary Fiber	5g		20%		
Sugars	36g		_		
Protein	4g				
Vitamin A 0%	Vit	amin C	0%		
Calcium 4%	• Iro	n	15%		
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*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:

	Calories: \	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Sat Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrat	е	300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g
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Calories per gram:

Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4

INGREDIENTS: ENRICHED BLEACHED FLOUR (WHEAT FLOUR, NIACIN, IRON, MIAMIN MONONITRATE, RIBO FLAVIN, FOLIC ACID), SUGAR, SKIM MILK, VEGETABLE OIL (PALM, SOYBEAN AND/OR COTTONSEED OILS), WATER, COCOA PROCESSED WITH ALKALI, EGGS, CORN SYRUP, HIGH FRUCTOSE CORN SYRUP, CHERRIES, WHITE GRAPE JUICE CONCENTRATE. CONTAINS 2% OR LESS OF EACH OF THE FOLLOWING: WHOLE WHEAT PLOUR, CARAMEL COLOR, POLYDEXTROSE, LEAVENING (BAKING SODA, SODIUM ALUMINUM PHOSPHATE, MONOCALCIUM PHOS-PHATE), SALT, CORN STARCH, MONO- AND DIGLYCERIDES, NATURAL AND ARTIFICIAL FLAVORS, POLYGLYCEROL ESTERS OF FATTY ACIDS, SODIUM ALGINATE, NATURAL COCOA EXTRACT, PROPYLENE GLYCOL MONO- AND DIESTERS OF FATS AND FATTY ACIDS, MALTODEXTRIN, GELLAN GUM, LACTYLIC ESTERS OF FATTY ACIDS, SOY LECITHIN, POLYSORBATE 60, SOY FLOUR, COFFEE. CONTAINS MILK, WHEAT, EGGS AND SOY.

Calories and serving size should be in larger type.

Unnecessary information.

Calling it "% Daily Amount" would be more understandable.

The Daily Amount for sodium should be 1,500 mg. The current 2,400 mg is too high.

With no Daily Value for trans fat, added sugars, or protein, consumers don't know how much to shoot for each day.

"Dietary fiber" should be called "Fiber" and should include only intact fiber from whole grains, beans, vegetables, fruit, and other foods. Polydextrose, maltodextrin, and similar carbohydrates should not count as fiber.

This information isn't useful for most consumers.

The label should list only added sugars (from high-fructose corn syrup, table sugar, etc.), not the naturally occurring sugars in milk and fruit.

Many people don't realize that this is ordinary refined white flour.

All-capital letters are hard to read.

If the food contains grains, the label should say what percent of the grains are whole grains.

The "% Daily
Amount" lets
consumers know
how much of
a day's worth of
trans fat, added
sugar, protein,
etc., each serving
contains.

Red color and
"High" warn
consumers when
a serving has at
least 20 percent
of the Daily
Amount for
saturated fat, trans
fat, cholesterol,
sodium, or added
sugars.

Caffeine content is disclosed.

Consumers can see that when all the cake's sugars are combined, they become the first ingredient.

Label should show percentages by weight of key ingredients, especially those that are good or bad for your health.

Bullets separate ingredients.

Minor ingredients and allergens are listed separately.

Better Label

- Grains: 2% whole

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1/14 Cake (107 g)

Calories in 1 serving 350

14 Servings p	er Box				
Amount per serv	ing %	Daily An	nount*		
Total Fat	14 g	High	22 %		
Saturated Fat	5 g	High	25%		
Trans Fat	0 g		0%		
Cholesterol	30 mg		10%		
Sodium	290 mg		19%		
Total Carbohydi	ate 53 g		18%		
Fiber	3 g		12%		
Added Sugars	30 g	– High	120%		
Protein	4 g		8%		
Vitamin A 0%	Vita	amin C	0%		
Calcium 4%	Iror	1	15%		
*% Daily Amount is based on 2 000 calories a day					

*% Daily Amount is based on 2,000 calories a day. 20% or more of the DA is HIGH. 5% or less is LOW. 50 mg caffeine per serving

Ingredient Facts

Major Ingredients: Sugars (sugar, corn syrup, high-fructose corn syrup, white grape juice concentrate) (28%) • Skim milk • Refined bleached flour (wheat flour, niacin, iron, thiamin mononitrate, riboflavin, folic acid) • Vegetable oil (palm, soybean, and/or cottonseed oils) • Water • Cocoa processed with alkali (5%) • Eggs • Cherries (3%)

Contains 2% or less of: Whole wheat flour
• Caramel color • Polydextrose • Leavening
(baking soda, sodium aluminum phosphate,
monocalcium phosphate) • Salt • Corn starch •
Mono- and diglycerides • Natural and artificial
flavors • Polyglycerol esters of fatty acids
• Sodium alginate • Natural cocoa extract •
Propylene glycol • Mono- and diesters of fats
and fatty acids • Maltodextrin • Gellan gum •
Lactylic esters of fatty acids • Soy lecithin •
Polysorbate 60 • Soy flour • Coffee

Allergy Information: Contains MILK • WHEAT • EGGS • SOY