

# Consuming Thoughts

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STOP, LOOK and READ the new food labels! May 1994 was the deadline for food companies to comply with the new regulations by the Foods and Drug Administration (FDA) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), requiring the new food label on all processed foods. New labels on processed meat and poultry items, which are under USDA jurisdiction, must appear on products by July 1994.

When picking up a product with the new label, consumers will notice the new and comprehensive nutritional information under a section now called "Nutrition Facts." This will enable consumers to learn about the nutritional qualities of the products they buy and use the information when making daily food choices.

The new label is distinguished by the redesigned nutrition panel. The FDA and USDA considered the health issues of greatest concern to the general public, and identified nutrients that must appear on the label and those that are

optional.

Nutrients that are now required include total calories, calories from fat, total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, total carbohydrates, dietary fiber, sugars (mono- and disaccharides), protein, vitamins A and C, calcium and iron. If a manufacturer makes a claim about any voluntary nutrient, such as if a product is enriched or fortified with thiamin or niacin, then information about that nutrient is mandatory.

You'll also be able to find information on fat, fiber and other food components fundamental to lowering your risk of chronic diseases. Listings for nutrients like thiamin and riboflavin will no longer be required, because Americans generally eat enough of them these days.

According to the former Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Louis Sullivan, M.S., the new label will provide a consistent tool to help consumers select healthier diets and will give consumers the power to take an ac-

tive, responsible role in protecting and promoting their health.

You can expect to see a full listing of "Nutrition Facts" on most packaged foods. Small packages may use a simplified format.

Labeling will remain voluntary for fresh produce, as well as single ingredient raw meat products (such as raw chicken breasts or beef roasts). Many grocery stores already display point-of-purchase nutrition facts for these items and more will be encouraged to participate. If the voluntary program for raw foods doesn't catch on, labeling for these products will become mandatory.

Now you can compare similar products and know that their serving sizes are basically identical. So when you realize how much fat is packed into that carton of triple chocolate-almond ice cream you're eyeing, you might opt for low-fat frozen yogurt instead. Serving sizes will also be standardized, so manufacturers can't make nutrition claims for unrealistically small portions. That means a chocolate cake, for example, must be divided into 8 servings sized to satisfy the average person — not 16 servings sized to satisfy the average first grader.

So consumers, the next time you go to the supermarket — STOP, LOOK and READ the "Nutrition Facts" and see how the new labels will help you to choose healthier foods, take the guess work out of grocery shopping and help you make more informed decisions in the supermarket.

# Where Food Comes From



Third grade students at Public School 214 in Queens (New York City) are learning about where their food comes from through Agriculture in the Classroom — a program that incorporates agriculture into the school curriculum in grades K-6. On a recent visit to New York City, American Farm Bureau President Dean Kleckner and New York Farm Bureau President Charles Wille saw firsthand the teaching about agriculture in a big city school. They were joined by several school officials, including the city's top educator, Chancellor of Education Ramon Cortines. The Farm Bureau leaders listened as Rhoda Gilbert, a third grade teacher at PS 214 presented a lesson on agriculture. They also visited the school garden and viewed agricultural projects of the class. In the photo, AFBF President Dean Kleckner answers questions about agriculture from PS 214 students.

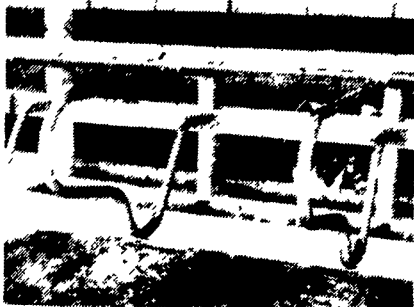
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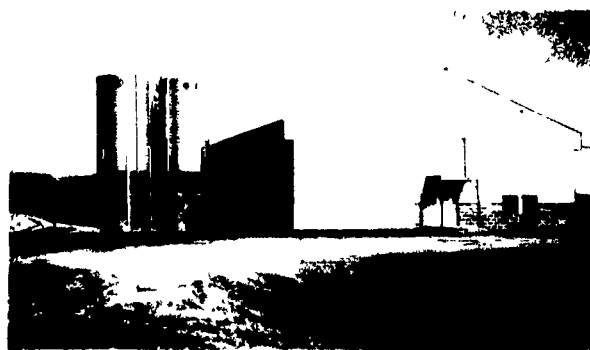
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