Here is a lot to look at on food packages. It is difficult to know what health claims to pay attention to and if the claim is reliable. Fortunately, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) closely regulates most packaged foods made and sold in the United States.

What is a health claim?
A health claim describes the link between a food substance and the reduced risk of a condition or disease. Only health claims that are approved by the FDA can be used on a food label. Approval of health claims is dependent on current research showing the reduction of disease or condition as a result of consuming a food or nutrient.

The FDA requires a health claim to have two essential components. The claim must include both a:

1. Substance, whether a food, food component, or dietary ingredient, and a
2. Disease or health-related condition.

A statement lacking either one of these components does not meet the criteria of a health claim.

Nutrient and structure function claims
Health claims are not the only type of claim that can be found on food packaging. There are also nutrient claims and structure-function claims.

- A nutrient claim only states the amount of a substance there is in a product. For example, an item with the label “low sodium” indicates that you can consume this food regularly without getting more salt than is recommended for the average diet.
- These claims must have a specific wording to them and not just imply that the item may or may not contain an amount of a nutrient.

Continued on page 2
(Look for a few examples of nutrient claims in
the Food Bites section.)

• A **structure-function** claim describes the
benefits of a food on a part of the body. An
example of this is “helps support healthy teeth
and bones.” This type of claim does not have to
be approved by the FDA.

• To be considered legal, these claims cannot
mention a disease without scientific backing.

Health claims can help you find foods that help
prevent many diseases, such as heart disease, certain
types of cancers, diabetes, and obesity. Look for
other health claims to help you make healthier food
choices.

**References**

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se21.2.101_172](https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=c7e427855f12554dbc292b4c8a7545a0&mc=true&node=pt21.2.101&rgn=div5#se21.2.101_172).

**Food Bites**

**General Terms on Food Labels**

Kathy Savoie, Extension Educator

**Good source of:** the product provides between 10
and 19 percent (%) of the Daily Value for a given
nutrient per serving.

**High:** 20 percent (%) or more of the Daily Value for
a given nutrient per serving; can also use the words
*rich in* or *excellent source of*.

**Less:** at least 25 percent (%) less of a given nutrient
or kcalorie than the comparison food; can also use
the words *fewer* or *reduced*.

**Light or lite:** one-third fewer kcalories than the
comparison food; 50 percent (%) or less of the fat
or sodium than the comparison food; any use of the
term other than as defined must specify what it is
referring to (for example, “light in color” or “light in
texture”).

**Reference**

Rolfes, Pinna and Whitney. *Understanding Normal and
Would you like to visit a farm to see how animals are raised or food is grown? If so, you are in luck!

*Open Farm Day* is an annual event where several farms around the state open their gates for families to visit. Many farms will have demonstrations, displays and farm-raised products for sale. Activities might include barn and field tours, milking, hay rides, petting zoos, nature trails, samples for tasting and refreshments.

Mark your calendar and plan for a day of fun at a farm near you.

**This year’s Open Farm Day will be held on Sunday, July 23, 2017.**

For more information, visit [http://www.maine.gov/dacf/ard/market_promotion/open_farm_day.shtml](http://www.maine.gov/dacf/ard/market_promotion/open_farm_day.shtml).
Food Safety Corner
Know Your Food Labels
By Kathy Savoie, Extension Educator

More than 90% of consumers may be wasting food and money because of confusion about the meaning of dates on food labels.

Are dates on food labels for food safety or quality?
Food manufacturers provide dates to help consumers and retailers decide when food is of best quality. These dates are not an indicator of the product’s safety (except for infant formula).

The Bottom Line
Regardless of the date, consumers should evaluate the quality of the food product prior to consumption. How food is handled before and after it is purchased affects food safety. Spoiled foods will develop an off odor, flavor or texture due to naturally occurring spoilage bacteria.
What can you do? Make sure your refrigerator is at 40 degrees or lower for proper storage of perishable foods and use common sense...when in doubt, throw it out!

Commonly Used Date Labels

- **Best if Used By/Before:** recommended date for best flavor or quality.
- **Use-By:** last date recommended for use of the product at peak quality.
- **Freeze-By:** date recommended to freeze foods by to extend its shelf-life.
- **Sell-By:** tells the store the last date they should sell that package of food.

Source
Food Product Dating, USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service.

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Eat Well is published four times a year for current, past and future UMaine Extension Eat Well program participants. For more information on Eat Well, contact your County Extension office. **Managing Editor:** Kate Yerxa, MS, RD, **Extension Editor:** Phoebe Nylund, Eat Well Program. **Eat Well Committee:** Kathleen Savoie, MS, RD, Extension Educator; Kate Yerxa, MS, RD, Extension Educator; and Christine Finemore, Community Education Assistant. **Design and Production:** Phoebe Nylund, Eat Well Program.

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Ask Eat Well
Deborah Barnett
Community Education Assistant, Kennebec County

Deborah “Debbie” Barnett has been a part of the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Eat Well Nutrition Education Program for five years.

“I absolutely love the variety of people I get to interact with!” says Debbie. “The excitement of the students in school and the shared ideas of our newest community members are two of the most gratifying things I have experienced on the job.” Debbie looks for the positive in every day whether it be spending time with her three grandchildren, playing with her dog, Jed, going on small adventures with her fiancé or just relaxing by the lake. Her motto is: “It’s All Good!”

Q. What are the “Facts up Front” that are seen on food packages?

A. Think for a moment about the package your favorite food comes in. We know that the job of an advertiser is to make the packaging as desirable as possible so we, as consumers, want to buy that product. The important information about what is inside of the packaging is on the back (or side) of that container in the form of the Nutrition Facts Label. This is where we find serving size, calorie information, amount of fat, sodium and sugar, along with ingredients.

The next time you are in the grocery store, take a look at the front label. You may see something new. The Facts Up Front are starting to appear on many of our packaged products. These are small squares containing very important nutritional information. It is the same information we can find on the Nutrition Facts Label but it is on the front of the container making it easier for us to make healthier food choices.

The serving size is noted either above or just below the information blocks. You might find information on things such as the number of calories, and the amount of fat, sugar, sodium, and potassium. The nutrient amounts are presented in both weight, gram (g) or milligram (mg) and percent (%) Daily Value.

Check it out when you are shopping. Making the healthier food choice is getting a little more convenient!
Quick and Easy Eat Well Recipe
Crustless Spinach Pie

**Ingredients**
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 3 eggs
- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup fat-free (skim) milk
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1½ cups low-fat cheese, shredded, any type
- 4 cups chopped, fresh spinach (or other greens, such as bok choy, kale, or Swiss chard)

**Directions**
1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Melt butter in 9”x13” pan and spread on bottom and sides of pan.
3. Beat eggs well in a mixing bowl, add flour, milk, garlic powder and baking powder. Pour into the 9”x13” pan. Stir in cheese and spinach.
4. Bake for 30-35 minutes until edges are brown and firm all over.

Makes 8 servings  Serving size: 1 slice   Cost per recipe: $4.47 Cost per serving: $0.56

**Nutrition Facts**

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Protein</td>
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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.

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<th>Calories from Fat</th>
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<td>Servings Per Container 8</td>
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