



# EATING 101

## RU DINING HEALTHY?

A WEEKLY NEWSLETTER BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE RU HEALTHY DINING TEAM  
A Joint Program Between Rutgers Dining Services and The New Jersey Institute for Food, Nutrition, and Health



### What's the Deal with Processed Foods?

Have you been told to avoid all processed foods in your diet because they are bad for you? While ultra-processed foods contain high levels of added sugars and sodium and should be limited or avoided, minimally processed foods can be a part of a healthy diet. Some processed foods even have vitamins and minerals added to them to help avoid nutrient deficiencies in the population. Any food that has an alteration to its natural state, such as washing, canning, freezing, or packaging, is defined as a processed food. Look below to see the degree of processing that your favorite foods fall under.

Minimally Processed



Most Heavily Processed

Minimally processed foods are often pre-prepped foods for the convenience of busy people. These foods also undergo minimal processing to remain safe to eat. Examples include:

- Sliced apples
- Bagged spinach
- Roasted nuts

The next level of food processing includes foods that are slightly processed to maintain their freshness and nutritional quality. Examples include:

- Frozen Fruits and Vegetables
- Canned Vegetables
- Canned tuna

Many ingredients, such as spices, preservatives, and sweeteners, are processed into foods to enhance their texture and flavor. Examples of foods with these added ingredients include:

- Salad dressing
- Jarred pasta sauce
- Flavored yogurt

More heavily processed foods include those that are ready-to-eat. At least two to three ingredients are typically used to make these foods. Examples include:

- Granola
- Deli meat
- Crackers

The most heavily processed foods, or ultra-processed foods, are pre-made meals, and should only be consumed in moderation. These foods undergo several processing steps and contain multiple ingredients. Examples include:

- Frozen pizza
- Instant ramen
- Microwaveable meals

There is a spectrum of processed foods—you can still maintain a healthy diet by consuming a variety of minimally processed foods, while avoiding ultra-processed foods. Keep in mind, the more processed a food is, the higher it is in sodium and less nutritious than its less processed counterpart. The Rutgers dining halls strive to provide minimally processed foods by cooking meals from fresh ingredients.



*Stay calm...I know this is a lot to process*



Authored By: Jessica Van Wie

Reviewed By: Dr. Peggy Policastro, RDN-Dining Services/IFNH

References: *Processed Foods: What's OK and What to Avoid* Available at: <https://www.eatright.org/food/nutrition/nutrition-facts-and-food-labels/processed-foods-whats-ok-and-what-to-avoid> Accessed on: 2/5/22 *Processed Foods and Health* Available at: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/processed-foods/> Accessed on: 2/5/22

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