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How Consumers Categorize Processed Food:

- Very healthy—3%
- Somewhat healthy—6%
- **Neither healthy or unhealthy—30%**
- **Somewhat unhealthy—47%**
- Very unhealthy—14%

Source: [Food Technology, Dec. 2011](#)

What are “Clean Label” Foods?



Learning to read labels

The term “clean label” is the new buzz phrase in food processing. What does it mean? Depends on who you ask. But in general, it involves eliminating chemical-sounding ingredients or any other ingredient deemed artificial. The idea is to keep it simple or wholesome.

This is a challenge for food processors. While marketers may call the food “natural,” one look at the lengthy ingre-

redient statement can make a consumer question whether it is “natural.” Other possible definitions of “clean label” include sustainable production practices.

How well consumers respond to these foods depends on the product. Some don’t mind seeing artificial sweeteners on the package as they are deemed healthier than sugar. Yet, others want to see simple ingredients statements such as for one brand of ice cream—milk, cream, sugar, eggs, and a flavor.

What shows up on package labels is consumer driven. And more shoppers are wanting “simple,” “natural,” “pure,” and “real” foods as Mother Nature intended.

Source: [Food Technology, Dec. 2011](#)

Restaurant Trends for the New Year

What will be the new food trend for 2012?

- Regional cuisine—Diners want more local food from their city or region.
- More choices—While favorites remain, look

for healthier options.

- Consumer control—Flexibility in ordering and customizing entrees.
- Slow down! - “Handmade” or “Home style” items

are slowing fast food diners.

- Imported ideas—Foods from abroad bring more flavors to menus.

Source: [Mintel](#)



Homemade Egg Nog Safety

Homemade eggnog is a tradition at many holiday parties. But this creamy drink may cause cases of Salmonella. The ingredient responsible? Usually raw or undercooked eggs.

The FDA advises making a cooked egg base for the drink. To make a cooked egg base:

1. Combine eggs and half the milk as indicated in the recipe. (Other ingredients, such as sugar may be added at this step.)
2. Cook the mixture gently to an internal temperature of 160° F, stirring constantly. The cooking will destroy Salmonella, if present. At this temperature, the mixture will firmly coat a metal spoon.
3. After cooking, chill the mixture before adding the rest of the milk and other ingredients.

Don't count on the alcohol to kill the bacteria either.



www.foodsafety.gov/blog/eggnog.html

What Caused the Cantaloupe Recall?

The FDA listed the following factors that likely caused the *Listeria* contamination in cantaloupe:

- Possible low level *Listeria* levels in the fields.
- A truck hauling culled cantaloupe to a cattle operation was parked near the cantaloupe packing plant.
- Water pooled on the floor near equipment and employee walkways.
- Packing equipment and floor were difficult to clean and sanitize.
- No pre-cooling step prior to cold storage to remove field heat. This caused condensation on the fruit allowing *Listeria* growth.

For the latest information related to the Jensen Farms cantaloupe recall, see <http://1.usa.gov/o3BtCR>.

Cheese Better Than Butter?

In a recent study published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, researchers found that fat in cheese does not increase total plasma or LDL-cholesterol amounts when compared to equivalent fat intake from butter.

The study had 49 men and women consume their regular diet but replace 13 percent of fat intake with butter or cheese. After six weeks, those who consumed cheese had lower total serum, LDL- and HDL-cholesterol numbers and higher glucose numbers than those who ate butter.

The reason is possibly due to higher calcium concentration in cheese which leads to higher elimination of fecal fat.



Eat a variety of cheeses and in moderation.

National Soup Month



Make your soup healthy with beans, whole wheat pasta, and tasty vegetables.

January is designated as National Soup Month. What a great way to warm up on a cold winter day. It is an easy meal that can incorporate many healthy ingredients. Homemade soups can be even healthier by reducing or eliminating sodium and adding more herbs and spices for flavor.

Leftovers from other meals can be frozen to make a soup later. Save bones from beef, pork, ham, chicken or turkey to cook in water and make a broth. Combine all these to make a tasty soup.

Freeze leftover soup for a quick lunch. Divide large amounts into small, shallow containers and chill in the refrigerator. Leave 1/2-inch space for expansion. Freeze and use within 2-3 months.

Leftover soup in the refrigerator should be used within 3-4 days.

Source: [University of Wisconsin-Extension](http://www.uwex.edu)



BPA in Soup Can Lining

A study done by the Harvard School of Public Health showed that consuming commercially canned soup can increase Bisphenol-A (BPA) levels in urine.

They had two groups of volunteers. One group ate the canned soup, the other ate homemade soup over a five day period.

The urine BPA levels in

the canned soup group increased 1,221 percent. While a huge increase, BPA is measured in parts per billion and is still a very minute amount.



For details on this study, see the Harvard press release at <http://bit.ly/v9xcXL>.



Look for black rice in specialty food stores or internet.

What is Black Rice?

While white rice and brown rice are commonly found on grocery shelves, black rice is one that is not common.

Black rice is rich in anthocyanin antioxidants much like those in blackberries and blueberries. The rice is also rich in fiber and vitamin E. It is widely used in Asian cuisine as food decoration, in noodles, sushi, and pudding.

As the rice cooks, it becomes a deep purple color. To prepare, use twice as much water to rice. It takes about 30 minutes. Black rice has a nutty, slightly sweet flavor.

Sources: Cook's Illustrated, Jan. 2012 and <http://bit.ly/9My0Wf>

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Slow Cooker Tips



Slow cookers are easy to use. Add ingredients and push "Start." Here are some tips to get the best from your slow cooker.



1. Use the size of cooker recommended for the recipe.
2. Don't overfill the cooker. Many

manufacturers suggest not filling more than 2/3 full.

3. Don't peek! Leave the lid on to keep heat in and for best cooking efficiency.
4. Plan ahead and prepare ingredients the night before. Store in the refrigerator. The next morning, add them to the cooker and push "Start!"
5. If the meat has been browned, deglaze the pan and add to the slow cooker.
6. Never use frozen meats! Always thaw prior to cooking.
7. Use small pieces of meat for quicker, safer cooking.

Source: [Eating Well](#)



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Sugar...More Than a Sweetener

Sugar is multi-functional in cooking and baking, but here are some uncommon uses for sugar.



Source: *Cook's Illustrated*,
January 2012

- After cutting onions or garlic, wet your hands with warm water, sprinkle with a little sugar and rub. The sugar soaks

up the odors like a sponge!

- Prevent cookies from drying out by storing them with a couple cubes of sugar. They will absorb the moisture in the air and keep cookies fresh a couple more days.
- Ouch! Hot drink burn your tongue? Soothe it with a spoonful of sugar to pull the heat from your tongue and dull the pain.