

PROCESSED FOODS

We have heard over and over again to eat less processed foods but does that mean we have to turn into Bugs Bunny and eat only raw carrots or fruits or make our own bread?! No. The truth is that practically all foods are processed—even unsalted peanut butter, pre-cut butternut squash, and cheddar cheese. It is the extent of the processing that must be focused on.

So, what are Processed Foods? There are 4 groups: Whole, minimally processed, Processed, and Ultra-processed. Ultra-processed foods are the ones to limit, but just like every person who eats only this doesn't fit into their pants, not every food in a can, bag, or box fits into this category.



- WHOLE is of course untouched or doctored, which is pretty impossible to find unless you pick it from your garden or pluck it from a tree.
- As soon as you clean, prep, dry, pasteurize, ferment, or do anything that may subtract part of the food, it is MINIMALLY PROCESSED. An example would be removing a shell from a nut, but you aren't adding any oils, fats, sugar, salt, etc, or washing lettuce, carrots, or potatoes. This category includes frozen fruits and vegetables, dried fruits, rolled oats, fresh or frozen meat, pasteurized milk, and unsweetened yogurt.
- PROCESSED is when salt, sugar, oil, or other culinary ingredients are added. Some of this may be added to preserve the foods or make them tastier. Examples are canned legumes, vegetables, fish, or tomato sauce with salt or sugar, fruit in syrup, cheeses, and breads with only flour, yeast, water, and salt.
- ULTRA-PROCESSED foods contain little or no recognizable whole foods. They have industrial ingredients like artificial color and flavors, high fructose corn syrup, emulsifiers, preservatives like nitrates, and high levels of sugar and salt. Examples of this is pretty much everything I eat, deli meats, white bread, sugary yogurts or breakfast cereals, ketchup. Tell me it isn't true that the orange powdered "cheese" on Cheetos isn't real and natural!