

# What stands out on a label?

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With nearly 400,000 items in every grocery store (Food Marketing Institute), there are hundreds of different ways a packaged food can be labeled. Editor A. Elizabeth Sloan gathers statistics about what language on food labels consumers are looking for in the May 2013 issue of *Food Technology* magazine.

Here are the top 10 things consumers look for when it comes to buying food:

- Eight in 10 consumers look for "fresh" descriptors when shopping for foods and say that they find those foods "slightly/much more tasty." (Technomic 2012, Healthy Eating Consumer Trend Report). Frozen, Canned, and dry food marketers are calling out products made from fresh ingredients on their labels. Other keywords include: seasonal, real, made-by-hand, made-from-scratch, and authentic.
- The most-read label on foods is the expiration date, read by 75 percent of shoppers, followed by the nutrition facts panel, ingredient list, front-of-pack [nutrition information](#), icon or graphic, and the brand name (International Food Information Council).
- Consumers are also drawn towards packages that tout a convenience benefit like microwaveable, ready-to-use, on-the-go, bite-sized, hand-held, kid-targeted, and foods that have the serving dish included (IRI).
- One in five consumers regularly eat frozen foods and are drawn

to ones labeled microwaveable, natural, quick, single-serving, and upscale (Packaged Facts, 2012).

- One-quarter (27 percent) of the most successful new products last year offered labels that claim health benefits like: 100 percent real, a good source of vitamins and minerals, less calories/sugar, more natural/organic, a good source of protein, fiber/whole grain, and less reduced/no fat (IRI).
- Two-thirds of consumers looked for descriptions with no [artificial sweeteners](#) in 2012, 56 percent sought out unprocessed or [local products](#), 52 percent preservative or hormone-free, and 40 percent antibiotic-free (Technomic).
- Many consumers are looking to buy food for a specific nutritional ingredient like [whole wheat](#), high fiber, a full serving of fruit, high in protein, high in calcium, antioxidants, omega-3s, probiotics, and more (Packaged Facts, 2013).
- Consumers prefer labels that convey a balanced approach to health, rather than buying goods that suggest something is missing from the food like "light" or "guiltless" (Technomic).
- Over half of consumers frequently/occasionally buy [food](#) or beverages that target a specific health concern like cholesterol-lowering, weight loss, blood pressure, digestive health, and more (Packaged Facts, 2013)
- Ethical concerns also continue to attract a growing number of [consumers](#) looking for products with labels that say "farm raised," "cage-free," "grass-fed," "sustainable," and "fair trade" (Technomic).

Provided by Institute of Food Technologists

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