

Foods to Donate with the Biggest Nutrition Bang for Buck



Minimally Processed Foods

- Rice
- Rolled/steel cut oats
- Whole grains (wheat berries, quinoa, buckwheat, farro, barley, teff, millet)
- Dried legumes (beans, lentils, garbanzo beans, split peas)
- Pasteurized fruit or vegetable juices (no added sugar, sweeteners, or flavors)
- Popcorn kernels
- Grits
- Fortified flours (wheat, rice, corn, buckwheat)
- Nut and seed butters (no added salt or sugar)
- Herbs and spices (thyme, oregano, mint, pepper, cloves, cinnamon, whole or powdered, powdered garlic, onion powdered or granulated)
- Tea (black or herbal)
- Coffee
- Dried fruits (no sulfur or sugar added)
- Nuts and seeds (unsalted)
- Nut and fruit mixes (trail mix)
- Pasta
- Couscous
- Polenta

Processed Culinary Ingredients

- Vegetable oils (from seeds, nuts, or fruits)
- Sugar
- Molasses
- Honey
- Maple syrup
- Starches (corn starch, rice starch, potato starch)
- Salt (sea salt, rock salt, and iodized table salt)



Processed Foods

- Canned or bottled vegetables and legumes (crushed/whole canned tomatoes, tomato sauce/paste, beans, corn, olives, artichokes, pickles, beets, pumpkin)
- Unsweetened fruit purees (apple sauce, GoGo Squeeze)
- Salted nut and seed butters (Justin's, Adam's 100% Natural)
- Salted nuts and seeds
- Canned fish (Open Nature, Wild Planet)
- Canned chicken
- Canned fruits in juice
- Rice Cakes (salted or unsalted)*
- Pre-popped salted popcorn*
- Shredded wheat cereal*
- Rice puffs/crisps*
- Rice/corn/wheat Chex*
- Bob's Redmill Homestyle muesli*
- No sugar-added pasta sauce (Primal Kitchens, Rao's, Lucini)*
- Natural and no sugar-added jerky (Chomps, Epic, Tillamook Zero Sugar)*

*These products are more processed but are still a good choice.

How to Identify Foods from Different Processing Groups

A good way to identify ultra-processed foods is by the amount and purpose of the processing, and the number and type of ingredients added. It is best to select foods from the first two groups most of the time. And, limit how many foods come from the ultra-processed group.

Minimally Processed Foods

- Little processing.
- Cleaned, removed unwanted parts, increased shelf life, and made easier to eat.
- No added ingredients.
- These foods make up the bulk of a healthy diet.

Processed Culinary Ingredients

- Minimally processed foods used in cooking.
- Examples include oil, sugar, honey, and salt
- These foods can be used for making nutritious homemade meals

Processed Foods

- Foods made from groups 1 and 2 above.
- Many processing steps used to improve taste and texture.
- Ingredients are recognized words.
- Read the ingredient list to learn if a processed food is a good choice.

Ultra-Processed Foods

- Processed in industrial facilities.
- Many added ingredients that are hard to recognize.
- These foods are best limited to special occasions.