

HEALTHY BITES

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Sneaky marketing tactics at the supermarket

Food manufacturers know that consumers want to eat better, and use a range of marketing techniques to make foods look and sound healthier than they actually are.

We call this 'health washing' – dressing up a product as healthier than it really is to mislead consumers and convince them to buy these unhealthy foods.

Here are some things to look out for:

1. Buzzwords

Take a peek at any supermarket shelf and you'll see a dizzying array of products making health claims like 'natural', 'organic', 'lite/light', 'clean', 'fresh', 'wholesome', 'superfood', 'baked not fried' or 'sweetened with fruit'. These claims can make a product sound healthy but are usually meaningless.

A LiveLighter® investigation of supermarket foods that claim to be natural found that almost half were classified as unhealthy foods. When looking at just foods in the snack food aisle, 90% of those that claimed to be natural were in fact unhealthy.

Although we may feel that these types of claims don't have any effect on our purchasing habits, research shows that the use of health buzzwords on a food package gives the food a 'health halo' that makes us see the product as healthier, even if it isn't healthy at all.

For example, a fruit bar may sound healthy as it claims to be 'lunchbox friendly', contain 'superfoods' and have 'no artificial stuff' even though it is 50% sugar!

2. Package trickery

Brown paper packaging, green leaves, muted colours, nature landscapes, images of fruits and vegetables, minimalist designs and earthy fonts can make us think a food is less processed than it really is. These strategies are used to subtly evoke the perception that a food is healthy without the manufacturer having to actually make this claim.

3. Free from...

Have you noticed that every second food product these days seems to be making a claim to be 'gluten-free', 'fat-free', 'refined sugar-free' or 'cholesterol-free'? 'Free from' claims can be used to hide less palatable facts about the product. For example, lollies may make a claim that they are 99% fat-free although they are almost 100% sugar! Crackers may be marketed as gluten-free but can still be highly processed and packed with saturated fat and salt.

Labelling claims often focus on the positive elements of the product but don't tell the full story about what's in the food.

THAI-STYLE RED BEEF CURRY

Prep: 10 min

Cook: 20 min

Serves: 2

Ingredients

- ▲ ⅔ cup rice (uncooked)
- ▲ spray olive or canola oil spray
- ▲ 200 g lean beef, sliced into strips
- ▲ ½ onion, chopped
- ▲ 2 tsp red curry paste
- ▲ 250 g pumpkin, peeled, seeded and diced
- ▲ ½ capsicum, seeded and diced
- ▲ 1 x 165 g can reduced-fat coconut milk
- ▲ ½ lemon, zest and juice
- ▲ 2 cups baby spinach leaves

Method

1. Cook rice following packet directions.
2. Heat oil in a large frypan and cook beef for 2-3 minutes until the outside is browned.
3. Add onion and cook for another 2-3 minutes, until it starts to soften.
4. Stir in the curry paste, pumpkin and capsicum and simmer for 10 minutes until pumpkin is soft, adding a little water if necessary.
5. Pour in coconut milk and lemon rind and stir through spinach and cook until wilted.
6. Serve curry over rice with a wedge of lemon, if desired.

VARIATION: For a green chicken curry, swap the beef for chicken and use green curry paste instead of red.

TIP: To cook in the slow cooker, complete up to step 4, adding about ½ cup water. Add coconut milk, lemon and spinach just before serving.



Not sure what to do with the vegies left in your crisper at the end of the week? Why not turn them into a satisfying and nourishing bowl of soup? There are plenty of healthy and delicious soup recipes available on the LiveLighter® website.