



COOKING
FROM THE HEART

*Low
Sugar*

Sugar is high in calories and can cause weight gain, increasing the risk of **obesity, diabetes** and **high blood pressure**.

sugar facts, charts and practical tips to reduce sugar intake

A joint initiative between Pharma Dynamics and The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa

pharma  dynamics
EFFECTIVE AFFORDABLE HEALTHCARE



THE HEART
AND STROKE
FOUNDATION
SOUTH AFRICA

Approved by the Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa

foreword

The incidence and prevalence of high blood pressure and diabetes in South Africa has risen significantly in recent years. Much of this is fuelled by unhealthy eating habits, lack of access to healthier food options, sedentary lifestyles, a stressful living environment and unsafe public walking spaces. Too much sugar in our diets is a major contributor to a number of health conditions – from **increased risk of obesity, inflammation and tooth decay, to the development of chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease and hypertension.** Scientific evidence confirms that diabetes drives heart disease and strokes, placing an immense burden on individuals, families, and the healthcare system.

Pharma Dynamics aspires to enhance both the quality and longevity of life. We are the leading supplier of cardiovascular medicines in South Africa, and with a growing portfolio for diabetes and metabolic syndrome, we support healthcare practitioners and patients with the necessary education and wellness programmes that complement their treatment regimes.

While individuals can take steps to limit the intake of discretionary sugar, many everyday food products contain hidden sugars, often leading to overconsumption of sugar. To address this, the Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa has conducted an analysis of the sugar content of a number of popular beverages, snacks, cereals and sauces. We've taken these findings and presented them in easy-to-read sugar charts, enabling consumers to make informed choices.

We also encourage you to know your family history of conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and strokes, as genetic factors may increase your risk profile. By equipping you with the charts, essential sugar facts and practical tips to reduce sugar intake, we hope that this resource inspires a commitment towards better nutrition and a healthier lifestyle.

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DISCLAIMER: Do not change or discontinue your medication without first consulting your healthcare practitioner.

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**COOKING
FROM THE HEART**

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EFFECTIVE AFFORDABLE HEALTHCARE



sugar facts

Sugar is a type of **carbohydrate** - like starches and fibre - which occurs either naturally in many foods, such as fruit, vegetables, dairy and grains, or added in foods such as soda drinks, energy drinks, flavoured yoghurt and sauces.

Your body breaks down the sugar and starches in carbohydrates and converts it into glucose, which then enters the bloodstream and becomes a source of energy.

Naturally occurring sugars come with other nutrients that your body needs to stay healthy.

Added sugar refers to sugars that are not naturally occurring.

The most common sugar is sucrose, a **crystalline table-top and industrial sweetener** used in foods and beverages.

COMMON HIGH-SUGAR FOODS

Sweetened drinks – soft drinks, energy drinks, sports drinks and fruit juices
Breakfast cereals and instant porridge
Flavoured yoghurts
Sweets and chocolates
Biscuits, cakes and pastries
Processed foods – sauces, canned foods, flavoured maize meal

HEALTH RISKS OF EATING TOO MUCH SUGAR

- Too much sugar intake can raise your glucose levels, putting you at risk of developing diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, kidney disease, liver disease, cancers and muscle and nerve damage.
- It can also cause weight gain and obesity. South Africa has the highest rate of obesity in sub-Saharan Africa: The 2023 National Food and Nutrition Security Survey (NFSS) reveals alarming rates of overweight and obesity in South Africa: 67.9% of women and 38.2% of men are overweight and obese.
- Excess sugar intake disrupts the gut and oral microbiome, causing inflammation and worsening gum disease.
- A diet high in sugar may increase your risk of depression, because of chronic inflammation, nutritional deficiencies, unstable blood sugar levels and poor gut health.

nutrition facts

SUGAR CONSUMPTION How much is too much?

A teaspoon (5g) of sugar contains
16.3 calories/ 68 kilojoules.

South Africans consume between
12 and 24 teaspoons (100 g) of sugar
per day; four to eight teaspoons are from
sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs).

WHO guidelines suggest a limit of **6
teaspoons** of sugar per day.

Liquid sugar (from SSBs) is absorbed
in 30 minutes causing a spike in blood
glucose, making it particularly harmful.

Calories from SSBs have **no nutritional
value** – they add to calories consumed,
but do not leave you feeling full unlike
calories from food or milk.

What's
inside?



Nutrition facts	
per Serving*	per 1/5 pack
32	64
0.5	1
3.2	6.4
3	6

Total sugars
include both natural
sugars and added
sugars.

**Natural
sugars** are
naturally occurring
sugars found mostly in
grain, milk (lactose)
and fruit (fructose).

Added sugars
includes any sugars
or sweeteners that are
added to foods or drinks
during processing or
preparation.

**Other names for
sugar** molecules
ending in "ose" (dextrose, fructose,
galactose, glucose, lactose, maltose,
sucrose), beet sugar, white sugar, brown
sugar, cane juice crystals, cane sugar, coconut
sugar, castor sugar, corn syrup solids, date sugar,
demerara sugar, **malt**, glucose syrup, grape sugar,
icing sugar, ethyl maltitol, dextrin, maltodextrin,
muscovado, raw sugar, sucanat, turbinado, agave
nectar, syrup, barley malt, **molasses**, rice syrup,
caramel, carob syrup, corn sweetener, corn syrup,
evaporated cane juice, fruit juice concentrates,
golden syrup, **high fructose corn** syrup,
honey, invert sugar, malt syrup,
maple syrup, sorghum syrup,
and treacle.

COMMON TERMS

Sugar-free
less than 0.5 g of sugar per serving;
contains no ingredient that is a sugar.

Reduced Sugar or Less Sugar
at least 25 percent less sugars per
serving compared to a standard
serving size of the traditional variety.

**No Added Sugars or
Without Added Sugars**
no sugars/ sugar-containing
ingredient is added during processing.



11 Simple tips to **cut down** on sugar

1. **Reduce the amount of sugar you add** to your tea, coffee, cereal and porridge, or better yet, cut it out completely. If you skip or reduce the amount by 1 teaspoon a day, over a month, you would have saved yourself 30 teaspoons of sugar!
2. **Cut back on sugar-sweetened drinks.** [Read page 4 to see how much sugar is in some of SA's most popular drinks.] Switch to healthier options: water, unsweetened sparkling water, herbal teas, black or green tea.
3. **Read the food labels,** so that you have an idea of how much sugar you consume. Sugars are listed in the ingredients (under various names), and are often listed under total carbohydrates, on the nutrition label. Ingredients are listed from the highest amount to the lowest amount according to weight, so the higher on the ingredient list sugar appears, the more sugar the item contains. Also keep in mind serving sizes - manufactures will sometimes list the nutritional information according to serving size, and not pack size!
4. **Limit breakfast foods with lots of added sugar,** such as refined breakfast cereals, pancakes, waffles, muffins, and jams. Swap it out for foods with plenty of protein and fibre such as oatmeal sweetened with fruit, flaxseed or chia seeds, scrambled egg with vegetables, or avocado on whole grain toast.
5. **Avoid sauces and condiments with added sugar,** such as tomato sauce, sweet chilli sauce or fruit chutney. Try other food seasonings instead: herbs and spices, chili, mustard, vinegar, or lemon/ lime juice.

Limit added sugar

Switch to healthier drinks options

Eat healthy fats

Season food with herbs and spices

Breakfast with plenty of protein and fibre


Eat whole foods

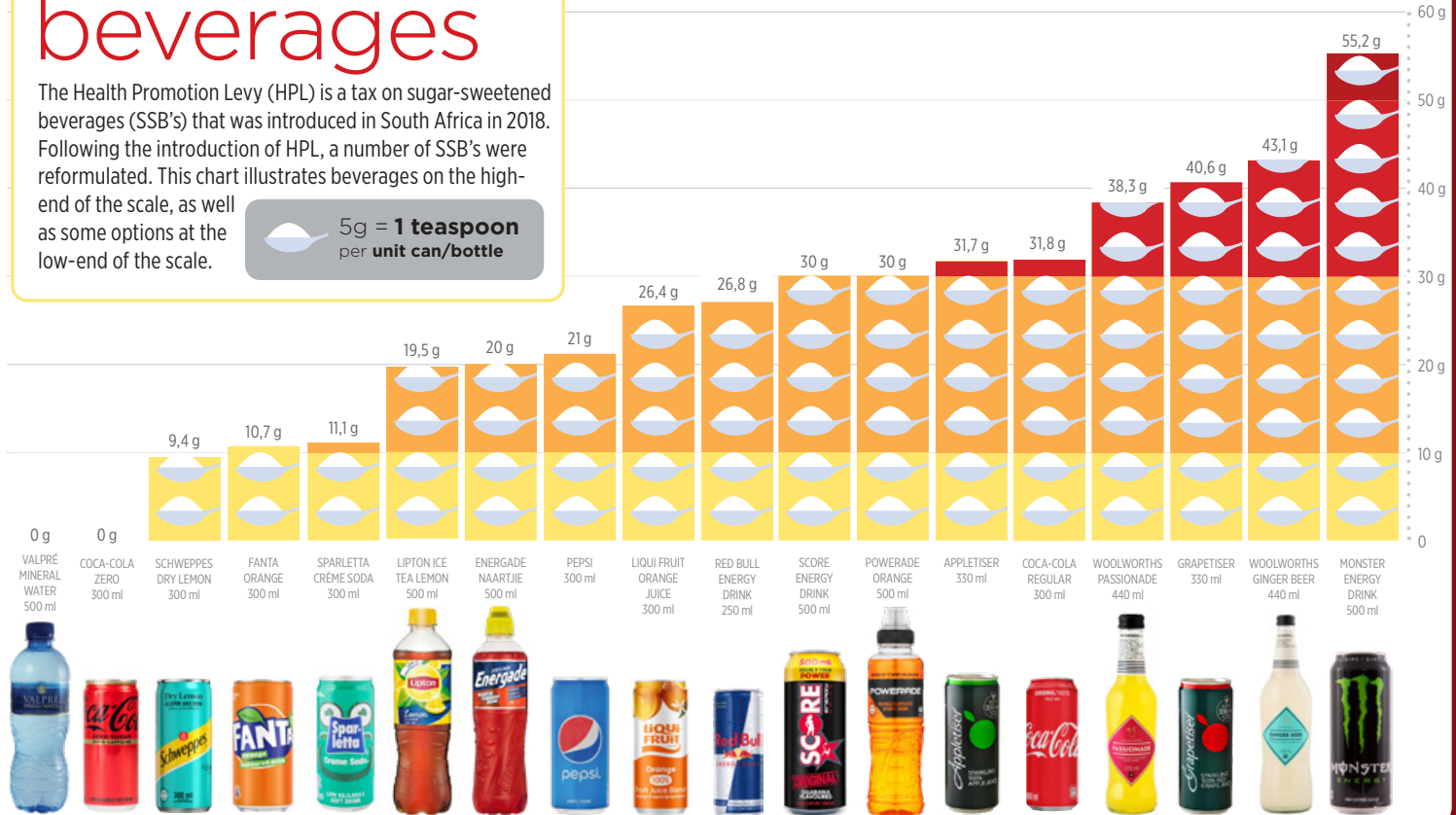
6. **Avoid sugar-heavy, wheat- and dairy-based desserts,** such as cakes, pies, doughnuts, and ice-cream. Try these alternatives: fresh fruit, Greek yoghurt with cinnamon or fruit, baked fruit with cream and dark chocolate (70% cocoa or higher).
7. **Eat whole foods,** such as fruits, legumes, whole grains, vegetables, and meat on the bone, and stay away from ultra-processed foods, such as sugary cereals, chips, and fast food.
8. **Eat healthy fats.** Healthy fats - found in foods like eggs, avocados, nuts, olive oil, sunflower oil, pumpkin seeds, walnuts, and salmon - cut sugar cravings because they digest slowly, keeping you fuller for longer.
9. **Be careful of some "health" snacks** such as granola bars, protein bars, and dried fruit as they can contain as much sugar as chocolate.
10. **Get enough sleep.** If you're frequently not getting enough sleep, research shows that it predisposes you to choosing foods that are high in sugar, fat, salt, and calories! Adequate sleep hours differ per age; adults are recommended to sleep between 7-9 hours daily.
11. **Be mindful of your eating habits** - taking the time to consider the nutritional value of your food can help you break unhealthy patterns.



beverages

The Health Promotion Levy (HPL) is a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages (SSB's) that was introduced in South Africa in 2018. Following the introduction of HPL, a number of SSB's were reformulated. This chart illustrates beverages on the high-end of the scale, as well as some options at the low-end of the scale.


 5g = 1 **teaspoon**
per **unit can/bottle**



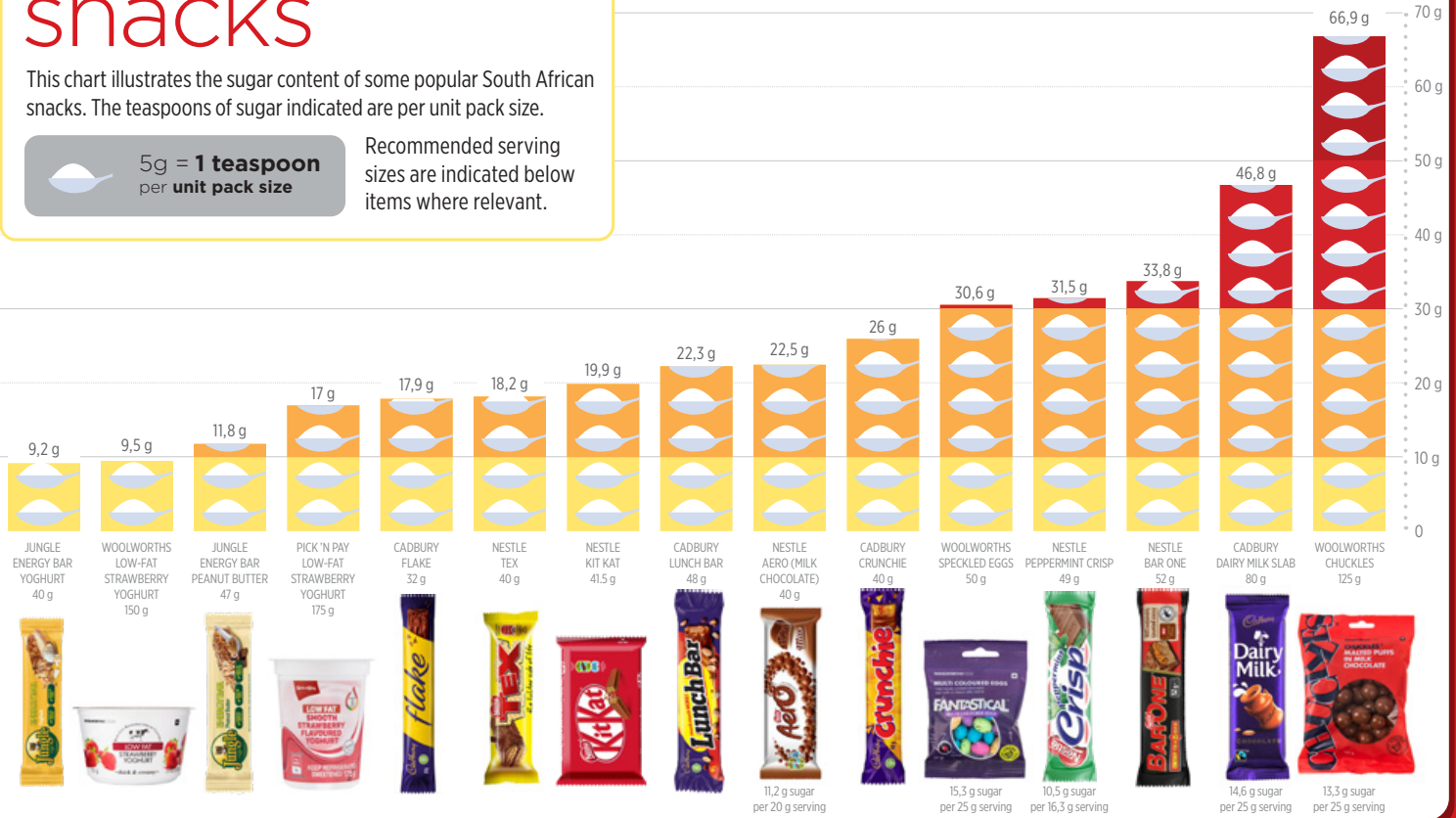


snacks

This chart illustrates the sugar content of some popular South African snacks. The teaspoons of sugar indicated are per unit pack size.

 5g = **1 teaspoon**
per **unit pack size**

Recommended serving sizes are indicated below items where relevant.



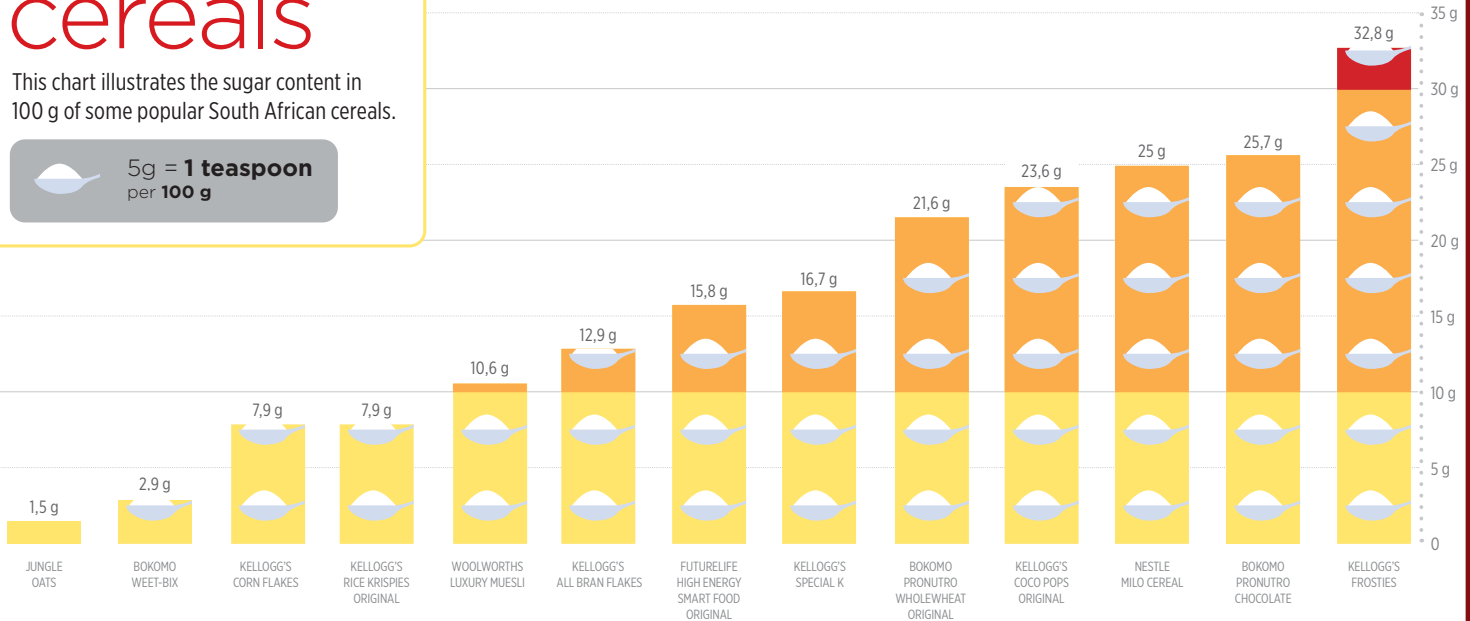


cereals

This chart illustrates the sugar content in 100 g of some popular South African cereals.



5g = **1 teaspoon**
per 100 g





sauces

This chart illustrates the sugar content in 100 ml / 100 g of some popular South African sauces. Whilst you may not consume 100 ml / 100 g of sauce per meal, it does illustrate sauces at the high- and low-end of the scale.

 5g = **1 teaspoon**
per 100 ml / 100 g



The *Cooking from the Heart* philosophy

As part of our patient support programmes, we partnered with the Heart and Stroke Foundation to develop a free cookbook resource – complete with healthy eating guidelines, meal plans and recipes – designed to help prevent and manage heart disease, hypertension, diabetes and other metabolic diseases.

The recipes are typical South African dishes that have been modified to increase fibre intake, and reduce:

- kilojoules (kJ)
- sugar
- salt
- saturated fat
- cholesterol
- total fat

In 2012, we launched **Cooking from the Heart: Recipes for the Whole Family**, a collection of easy-to-make, family-favourite recipes, that reflected the rich culinary heritage of South Africa.

The success of the inaugural edition inspired subsequent releases:

Cooking from the Heart, 2nd Edition: Breakfast, Lunch & Snacks

Cooking from the Heart, 3rd Edition: Diabetes (developed in conjunction with the Centre for Diabetes and Endocrinology (CDE) to assist patients living with diabetes).

Cooking from the Heart, 4th Edition: Braai (In collaboration with Jan Braai)

Cooking from the Heart, 5th Edition: Low salt

Cooking from the Heart, 6th Edition: DASH Edition

A decade later, the **DASH Edition** (2023) achieved global recognition, winning the award for “Best in the World” in the category for “Professional Health and Nutrition” at the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards, which received entries from more than 150 countries worldwide.

This led to a collaboration with South African Gourmand Award winners (2023) to present **HEARTY**, a unique gourmet recipe collection inspired by the DASH diet. [www.heartlyfood.co.za]

**SCAN TO ACCESS
all the *Cooking from the Heart*
books.**



Let's talk salt (sodium)

Eating too much salt can contribute to the development of high blood pressure (hypertension) and worsen existing high blood pressure conditions. Reducing excess salt intake improves blood pressure and lowers the risk of heart disease, strokes and kidney disease.



Salt and sodium explained



The chemical name for salt is sodium chloride (NaCl) and it is made up of 2 parts – **sodium** and **chloride**. Sodium is the part that should be limited, and this is what is indicated on food labels.

Take into consideration that a **teaspoon of salt contains 2000 mg of sodium**.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends eating **no more than 5 grams (5 ml = 1 teaspoon) of salt per day**, which is equal to 2000 mg of sodium (Na) per day. This includes the amount of **salt added during cooking**, at the **table**, and in **highly processed and convenience foods**.

Salt is added to **processed foods** for taste, texture, and to preserve it. Even foods that don't taste salty can be high in salt. It's easy to consume too much salt as it is **hidden** in many foods, and over time people become accustomed to the taste of salty food. A recent study showed that 28 % of 900 South Africans consumed more than 9 grams of salt per day.

REDUCING SALT IN YOUR DIET

Salt is displayed as **sodium** on **food labels**. The amount of sodium is indicated **per 100 g** of the specific food on the **nutritional information table**. Use this number to compare similar products. The indication on the label can also assist you to determine the amount of **sodium in a portion of food** that will contribute to your daily limit of 2000 mg.

Pharma Dynamics developed a **Low salt booklet** to help you identify foods that should be eaten less frequently due to their high sodium content. It lists foods that are considered more suitable choices. To access and download this booklet, scan the QR code.





the **DASH** diet

The DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet is considered an important advance in nutritional science.

It emphasises foods rich in protein, fibre, potassium, magnesium and calcium, such as fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts, whole grains and low-fat dairy. It also limits foods high in saturated fat and sugar.

The DASH diet is recommended by South African and International Hypertension Guidelines as numerous studies have consistently shown that it lowers blood pressure across a diverse range of patients with hypertension and pre-hypertension.

DASH is not a sodium-reduced diet, but its effect is enhanced by reducing dietary sodium intake.

Refer to page 8 for our **Cooking from the Heart** recipe book series.



Scan to
download the
DASH
EDITION



WORLD COOKBOOK AWARDS
IN THE CATEGORY
**Professional Health
and Nutrition**

HEARTY

DASH Dining with SA's Best!

HEARTY is a collaboration between Pharma Dynamics and Gourmand 'Best in the World' winners to bring you a premium collection of DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) compliant recipes, endorsed by the Heart and Stroke Foundation SA.

The collection features exclusive recipes curated by five accomplished local chefs and food writers: Monché Muller, Zola Nene, Herman Lensing, Isabella Niehaus and Heleen Meyer. Each recipe is a testament to their creativity and unique cooking style, and is a joy to the senses.

For many, healthy eating living is synonymous with dieting and deprivation. **HEARTY** challenges this perception by celebrating delicious, nourishing, beautiful meals that support heart health, without compromising on taste.

Explore the full
collection of recipes at
heartfood.co.za!



Seared salmon with beet & sprout slaw

Granadilla colada lollies

Niçoise salad for summer

Red lentil hummus

understanding food labels

Part of making good choices, is knowing what is in different food products. The habit of always reading food labels will benefit the whole family and is an important part of following a healthy lifestyle. Knowing what to look out for, is a good start.

Every food label looks a little different, but should contain certain important information to help you decide whether or not it is a healthy option. Understanding what this information means, will make reading labels so much easier.

Use this 2-step guide to understand the two important aspects of reading food labels: first the **nutrition information panel**, followed by the **list of ingredients** in the product.

Look for the Heart Mark logo. It makes choosing healthier food products easier when shopping.



step 1: read the nutrition information panel

The Nutrition Information Panel on a label is often divided into columns. One column shows the nutritional value per 100 g of food and the other column, the values per suggested serving size, indicated for that specific product. In an additional column, the nutritional elements are listed and should indicate the **energy, protein, fat, carbohydrates, sugar** and **sodium (salt)** in food. General guidelines for the ideal amount of each nutrient have been suggested on the next two pages.

TYPICAL NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION		
Average values	per 100 g	per 20 g serving (1 pack)
Energy	1550 kJ	310 kJ
Protein	11,9 g	2,4 g
Glycaemic carbohydrate of which total sugar	73 g 2,5 g	15 g 0,5 g
Total fat of which: saturated fat	3,0 g 0,7 g	0,6 g 0,1 g
trans fat	0,0 g	0,0 g
monounsaturated fat	0,5 g	0,1 g
polyunsaturated fat	1,8 g	0,4 g
Cholesterol	0 mg	0 mg
Dietary fibre*	3,3 g	0,7 g
Total sodium	662 mg	128 mg

SERVING SIZE

Note: The serving size on the label may not be the ideal portion size. Always look at the 'per 100 g' column to compare products

CARBS

Total or glycaemic amount and sugars | Limit foods high in added sugar
Aim for less than 5 g per 100 g

Note: Ignore the grams of sugar on the Nutrition Information Table as it is included in the grams of total or glycaemic carbohydrates

FATS

Total | Aim for less than 10 g per 100 g
For milk and yoghurt aim for less than 2 g per 100 g

Saturated | Aim for less than 3 g per 100 g or as low as possible

Trans | Aim for less than 1 g per 100 g

Oils and margarines are high in fat
Choose poly- and monounsaturated varieties
and use sparingly

DIETARY FIBRE

Aim for 3 g or more per serving

SALT (Sodium)

Aim for less than 120 mg per 100 g
(see table on page 13)

step 2: read the list of ingredients

The **list of ingredients** should be indicated in **order of highest to lowest quantity** in the specific food (see examples). The first three ingredients on the label make up the largest portion of the product. **Be aware of either sugar, salt or fat** as one of these first ingredients, as this may indicate that it's not such a healthy choice. Also take note that these ingredients are sometimes 'hidden' in products and listed under different names, which could be confusing.

Remember that **sugar, fat** and **salt** can be listed under different names on a label.

Sugar

concentrated fruit juice, corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, glucose, glucose syrup, golden syrup, maple syrup, honey, lactose, malt, malt extract, maltose, isomaltose, maltodextrin, molasses, sucrose, raw sugar, cane sugar, invert sugar, treacle

Salt

baking soda, salt, MSG (monosodium glutamate), any word containing the term sodium, nitrates, nitrites

example 1 brown onion soup powder

INGREDIENTS: wheat flour (gluten), corn starch, salt, flavour enhancers (E508, E627, E631), sugar, dehydrated vegetables (carrot, leek), vegetable fat (palm fruit, TBHQ [E319], BHT [E321]), hydrolysed vegetable protein (soya), colourant (E150a), thickener (E412), irradiated onion, irradiated herbs, anti-caking agent (E551), irradiated garlic, acidity regulator (E330), irradiated spices, flavourings

example 2 tin of chopped tomatoes

INGREDIENTS: tomatoes, tomato paste, citric acid, calcium chloride



Fat

animal fat, beef fat, butter, chocolate, carob, coconut oil, cream, dripping, ghee, hydrogenated oils, lard, margarine, milk solids, monoglycerides, palm oil, seeds, nuts, coconut, shortening, tallow, trans fats, vegetable fat

Use this practical table to know the **ideal value of each nutrient** in different foods.

Nutrient Per 100 g of food	Fat	Saturated fat	Sugar	Salt (Sodium)	
low Eat more often	< 3g	< 1,5g	< 5g	< 120mg	😊
medium Eat seldom	3-20g	1,5-5g	5-15g	120-600mg	😐
high Avoid	> 20g	> 5g	> 15g	> 600mg	😞

< stands for **less** than
> stands for **more** than



APPROVED AS PART OF
THE HEART AND STROKE
FOUNDATION EATING PLAN

The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa

implemented a healthy foods endorsement programme called the Heart Mark programme, about 25 years ago. The **Heart Mark** logo on the food labels indicates that it is a product low in salt, saturated fat, trans fat and sugar and high in fibre. Heart Mark products can contribute to reducing and controlling lifestyle diseases, like high blood pressure, bad cholesterol, heart diseases and strokes. Keep in mind that no product should be eaten in excessive portions or too frequently, even if it carries the Heart Mark.



Recipe Books

Heart healthy recipes
low in kilojoules (kJ), total fat, saturated fat, salt, sugar and cholesterol.

SCAN TO ACCESS
all the *Cooking from the Heart* books.



www.facebook.com/CookingFromTheHeartSA

www.mydynamics.co.za

CFTH 1: Meals, salads, side dishes & desserts (2012)



CFTH 2: Breakfast, lunch & snacks (2014)



CFTH 3: Recipes for those living with diabetes (2016)



CFTH 4: Braai Edition (2019)



CFTH 6: DASH Edition (2022)



CFTH 7: Hearty (2024)



CFTH 5: Low Salt (2020)



CFTH 8: Low Sugar (2025)

