



Not all processed foods are bad. Even washing, cutting, or freezing food counts as processing. The **NOVA** classification system helps us understand the degree of processing and its impact on health:

NOVA 1: Unprocessed or Minimally Processed Foods	NOVA 2: Processed Culinary Ingredients	NOVA 3: Processed Foods	NOVA 4: Ultra-Processed Foods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close to their natural state, nutrient-dense • No added preservatives or artificial ingredients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extracted from natural foods for cooking • Best used in moderation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modified with salt, sugar, or oil • Still close to natural state and contain important nutrients • More convenient and longer lasting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavily altered, contain additives not used in home kitchens • Convenient but often high in sugar, sodium, unhealthy fats • Some can provide important nutrients
Examples: fresh or frozen fruits or vegetables, fresh eggs, plain milk or yogurt, brown rice or oats, dried beans or lentils, fresh chicken or fish, unsalted nuts or seeds	Examples: butter, maple syrup, honey, olive oil, spices, dried herbs, vinegar, sugar, soy sauce, lard	Examples: canned vegetables and beans (with salt), natural cheese, fresh bread (few ingredients), whole grain pasta, hummus, canned fish (in oil or brine), roasted & salted nuts, fortified whole grain cereal	Examples: soda, chips, candy, microwave meals, chicken nuggets, fast food

Use NOVA as a Helpful Guide - Not a Rulebook

NOVA can help you recognize foods that are more or less processed—but it's not all or nothing.

- ▶ Choose more whole foods, fewer highly processed items.
- ▶ Read labels and make choices that work for your budget and lifestyle.
- ▶ Some packaged foods can still be part of a healthy, balanced diet.



The **NOVA** classification categorizes foods by their level of processing. Smart choices—balancing convenience with whole foods—let you enjoy processed foods without sacrificing health.

NOVA 1

Unprocessed or Minimally Processed:

close to their natural state, typically unaltered or lightly processed



Consume Most Often

NOVA 2

Processed Culinary Ingredients:

Derived from foods in their natural state but have been modified for cooking or food preparation



Consume in Moderation

NOVA 3

Processed Foods:

Closer to their natural state but undergo modification through the addition of ingredients like salt, sugar, or oil to preserve, flavor, or enhance



NOVA 4

Ultra-Processed Foods:

Heavily altered and contain ingredients not typically found in a home kitchen, such as artificial preservatives, colors, flavor enhancers, or emulsifiers



Consume Less Often