

Reading Food Labels

One of the most important guidelines for wise food shopping is to read food labels carefully. Most food labels provide a list of ingredients, and many also give additional information about the nutritional value of the contents. The items listed often include:

- ✓ **calories.**
- ✓ **fat.**
- ✓ **cholesterol.**
- ✓ **sodium.**
- ✓ **protein.**
- ✓ **vitamins and minerals.**

INGREDIENTS

When looking at any list of ingredients, remember that ingredients are in order of their relative weight. The first ingredient is the one that makes up the greatest part of the product. The last ingredient on the list represents the smallest part of the product, and the others represent amounts in between.

NUTRITION FACTS

Food labels provide nutritional information for a typical single serving rather than for the entire package or can, unless, of course, that makes up one serving. The serving size is an important measurement, since not all people eat the same amount of food at a single sitting. Try to gauge how close the serving size is to your own eating habits in order to calculate how many nutrients you'll be receiving at each meal.

Food labels also show the amount of certain nutrients per serving along with the “% Daily Value” (DV). The DV is based on a 2,000-calorie diet and is the percentage of each nutrient believed to meet the needs of the average person each day. For example, if a certain food provides 50 percent of the DV for Vitamin C, one serving gives a person half the Vitamin C needed per day.

A LITTLE READING YIELDS BIG BENEFITS

The little bit of time that a person spends reading labels at the supermarket can yield tremendous health benefits. Compare brand names to find the highest nutritional value at a reasonable cost. If a favorite food doesn't have nutritional information on the label, write to the manufacturer and ask for a list of nutrients. Finally, don't forget to read the lists of nutrients that may be posted near fresh, unprocessed foods, such as in the butcher and produce sections of many supermarkets. You'll soon become an expert in filling your nutritional needs.

DIET OLÉ CHICKEN ENCHILADA DINNER

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 12 oz. (340g)

Servings Per Container 1

Amount Per Serving

Calories 340 Calories from Fat 45

% Daily Value*

Total Fat 5g **8%**

Saturated Fat 2g **10%**

Trans Fat **1.5g**

Cholesterol 30mg **10%**

Sodium 470mg **20%**

Total Carbohydrate 61g **20%**

Dietary Fiber 5g **20%**

Sugars 2g

Protein 14g

Vitamin A 10% Vitamin C 35%

Calcium 15% Iron 10%

* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000-calorie diet.

Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:

	Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Sat Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

Calories per gram:

Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4