



INTERNATIONAL
FOOD INFORMATION
 COUNCIL FOUNDATION

2017 FOOD & HEALTH SURVEY

UNPACKING PROCESSED FOODS

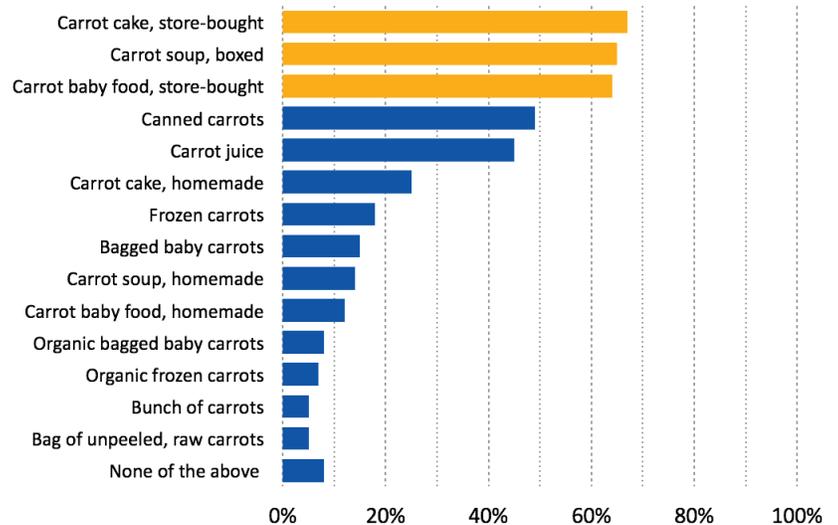
Consumers' definition of "processed foods" is arbitrary. In fact, Food & Health Survey respondents think of frozen carrots as more highly processed than bagged baby carrots, which are thought of as more highly processed than both organic bagged baby carrots and organic frozen carrots. Organic vs conventional, homemade vs store-bought and fresh vs frozen vs canned seem to all affect one's very personalized definition of "processed foods."



Defining "Processed"

Overall, consumers have a narrow view of what he or she considers a processed food. Only three out of fourteen carrot-based products listed were considered "processed" by over half of respondents. Perceived alterations to the food, rather than the presence of packaging, seemed to drive many Americans' to label a food as "processed." Interestingly, consumers were only half as likely to categorize organic bagged baby carrots (7%) as processed compared to conventional bagged baby carrots (14%).

What Do Consumers Consider to be "Processed"?





purchase, while slightly more than one-third (36%) cite “ease of opening” as at least somewhat important. Hispanic Americans are more likely than the general population to view all aspects of food packaging, including individual portions and recyclability, as important.

Yet despite how consumers consider and assess processed foods, many value the functional aspects made available through processing.

Convenience and affordability are the primary reasons consumers seek out packaged and processed foods. Americans are less likely to connect packaged and processed foods to benefits related to nutrition or safety.

Packaging Functionality

Many functional aspects of packaging are important to consumers. Half (51%) highlight “resealability” as an important factor when deciding which foods to

Use of Packaging Information

The expiration date (71%), nutrition facts panel (51%) and ingredients list (49%) are the packaging information most frequently consulted prior to purchasing. Compared to men, women are more likely to report consulting any of this information prior to purchasing.

Significant generational differences also exist in reported use of packaging information. For example, boomers (51%) are much more likely to report consulting front of pack nutrition information than millennials (36%).

Packaging Information Consulted During Purchase

