

# Section 12

## Convenience Foods



After completing this section, you will be able to:



**Reconstitute a range of convenience or pre-prepared foods.**

Culinary Operations,  
3N0549, Learning Outcome  
Number 12

## Convenience foods

### Convenience and pre-prepared foods



'Convenience food' is the general name given to any food which has been prepared in some way before we buy it.

Such foods can include ready-made sandwiches and meals, canned, bottled and frozen foods, dried foods such as packet soups and sauces, cake mixes, or instant desserts.

Convenience foods have several advantages.

- ✓ They are time saving and handy for people with busy lives.
- ✓ They are labour saving meals, easy to prepare and cook.
- ✓ They sometimes save on fuel bills as they cook in faster time.
- ✓ They are helpful for people learning to cook, the elderly and people with physical restrictions.
- ✓ These foods are useful for unexpected situations (such as unannounced visitors or when you don't have time to shop).
- ✓ They are easy to store and will keep for a long time in a cupboard or freezer.
- ✓ They provide a wide variety of dishes which you might not try if you had to prepare these dishes from scratch.
- ✓ The quality and standard are usually consistent.

Convenience foods also have several disadvantages.

- ✗ The flavour of convenient foods is not as good as fresh food.
- ✗ Certain vitamins and minerals may be lacking due to the preservation process.
- ✗ There can be lots of additives, particularly in dried foods.
- ✗ Convenience foods are also usually very high in fat, salt and sugar, which are cheap flavourings that hide the taste of chemical preservative.
- ✗ These foods can be expensive to produce and advertise.
- ✗ The portion size is often smaller than expected.
- ✗ They may have less meat, fish or cheese than you would include in homemade foods.
- ✗ The quality of some foods might be inferior e.g. meat pies, sausage rolls or pastry can be soggy with little meat inside.
- ✗ The cooking time is sometimes increased for thawing or longer baking time.
- ✗ It is much harder to control fat, salt and sugar levels.
- ✗ The cost per serving is usually higher than with homemade foods.
- ✗ Freshly-made food items (for example, entrées and salads, side dishes and sandwiches) provided by supermarkets tend to be made without dangerous preservatives but are still frequently laden with salt, sugar and fat. They also tend to be expensive and possibly not a good choice for a family on a budget.

### **Food value**

The food value of convenience foods can vary considerably depending on:

- origin
- manufacturing process
- producer
- whether the food is organic, genetically-modified or free from pesticides.

Dried foods can lack certain vitamins because of the preserving process. Many processed foods lack fibre or roughage, biscuits and cakes contain lots of white flour and white sugar.

### **Cost**

Cost of convenience foods varies for many reasons, not least of all because of the preserving process, the cost of advertising and packaging. Frozen vegetables, however, can work out to be just as cheap as fresh vegetables. They also usually retain their nutrient value because they are picked and frozen quickly.

## Additives

Every package or tin available for sale on the supermarket shelf will have a list of ingredients printed on a label. Among this list there are likely to be chemicals. These are added to foods to improve the flavour, colour and appearance of the food and or to increase the shelf-life of the product.

## Using convenience foods wisely



It is not unusual that we all use convenience foods regularly. This table lists some guidelines for using them wisely.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Use convenience foods as a <b>supplement or standby</b> rather than relying on them for everyday use.</li> <li>✓ Using convenience foods along with fresh foods to supplement our cooking makes sense (<i>using powdered custard to make custard sauce with freshly stewed apples</i>).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Think before you buy. Some fresh foods are quicker to make than</li> <li>✓ so-called convenience foods. Making homemade short crust or sugar pastry for example, is much quicker than waiting for a block of frozen pastry to thaw out.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Keep convenience foods for complicated recipes where there is more than one process involved. For example, when making lasagne use tinned bolognese sauce. Use packet sauce mixes for fish or meat pies.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Use your imagination when it comes to using convenience foods: adding a soup mix to a stew or casserole can make making the dish a much easier process.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ When planning meals avoid making a complete meal of convenience foods. Include two to three fresh homemade items in any meal.</li> </ul>



## Convenience foods

### Vocabulary

<b>convenience</b>	<b>pre-prepared</b>	<b>ready-made</b>	<b>time-saving</b>
<b>labour-saving</b>	<b>consistent</b>	<b>unexpected</b>	<b>restrictions</b>
<b>preservation</b>	<b>additives</b>	<b>chemical</b>	<b>expensive</b>
<b>pesticides</b>	<b>roughage</b>	<b>advertising</b>	<b>packaging</b>
<b>shelf-life</b>	<b>supplement</b>	<b>organic</b>	<b>genetically-modified</b>



## Convenience foods

## Worksheets

These worksheets are based on:

**Culinary Operations, 3N0549,  
Learning Outcome 12**

Reconstitute a range of convenience or pre-prepared foods.

## Convenience foods - Worksheet 1 - Practical work

Complete the following writing exercises as part of the task



Prepare and present **the foods** listed below

- ✓ Instant gravy (using powdered gravy)
- ✓ Chicken curry (using jars of curry sauce)
- ✓ Cooked rice (using microwaveable rice packet)
- ✓ Packet soup

1. Read the label on the instant gravy package. List the ingredients this product contains.

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2. What are the main flavouring ingredients in the jar of curry sauce?

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3. Read the label on the microwave rice package. List the ingredients the product contains.

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4. List and describe the steps required to make a packet of instant soup.

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## Convenience foods - Worksheet 2 - Convenience foods review

1. List the advantages and disadvantages of convenience foods.

Advantages	Disadvantages

2. List some guidelines for using convenience foods wisely.

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## Convenience foods - Worksheet 3 - Word search

Can you find the 10 words listed below in this word search?

v p i p e s t i c i d e s l p  
 l a v h j k o k r y q u c o g  
 p c w x p r o u g h a g e o b  
 t k p l c p z b e h r m e i v  
 s a g s w b h v f i k c t b p  
 u g t n f r i r e l n w q x t  
 p i j f i s t d l e z q q o n  
 p n f w n s b o i n r p p m e  
 l g p e b z i n p y i h t a t  
 e j p e q u e t r u o b a l s  
 m x s v x v f h r p z e b f i  
 e z k f n c l x b e v q z k s  
 n u y o y w c w w g v p h s n  
 t p c s y k h s t z a d k o o  
 m s e v i t i d d a k f a g c

additives  
 packaging  
 expensive  
 convenience  
 labour  
 consistent  
 advertising  
 roughage  
 pesticides  
 supplement