

Food for Fun

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Healthy Nutrition Activity Book, Food for Fun

Chapter 6: Natural and processed foods

Natural food is food found in its original form as nature has provided us, such as a carrot pulled from the soil, washed, and sold at the market. It is not at all or only minimally modified and contains no artificial additives. "Processed food" is no longer natural food because humans have changed the original natural food by adding things or taking some of nutrients away. For example, often artificial colours and sugar and fats are added to foods. Here are some examples to help you think about the difference between natural foods and processed foods.

Examples:

- ◆ Oatmeal from which you can prepare breakfast porridge is a natural food made by simply crushing the grains of oats.
- ◆ Oatmeal cookies are a processed food because they are usually made from different flours and also contain a lot of sugar, fat, and artificial flavours.
- ◆ Soup made from potatoes, carrots, lentils, and herbs is a natural food because each ingredient comes directly from nature.
- ◆ A soup packet or a can of soup from the store usually contains some dried vegetables and salt, but it also might contain artificial flavours, artificial colours, and other additives like fats. This often makes the soup more processed than natural.

Exercise

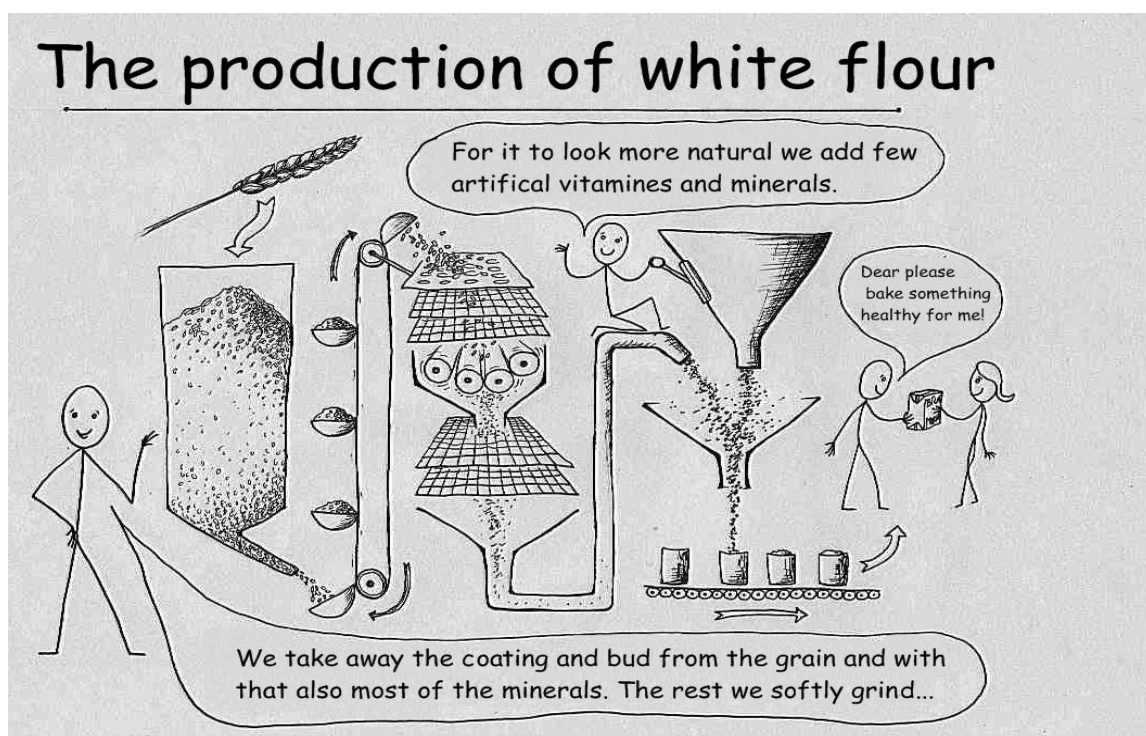
Write other examples where naturally healthy foods are turn into processed ones:

The problem with changing foods from their natural state, processing foods, is that humans have now created hundreds of food additives and many of these additives are harmful to our health. For example, for a long time food scientists were suspicious that certain artificial colours were causing children's behaviour to change in a negative way. Today, studies have confirmed or proven that some artificial colours are truly causing problems for children.

It is true that even among experts who help us understand nutrition and our health, these experts still debate about the appropriateness of using so many different types of additives when changing foods from natural to processed. Experts are not sure about the negative impact of these foods on our health. Experts are sure that adding sugars and fats when processing foods is unwise. In developed countries, such as the United States and many European countries, the wealthier countries of the world, there are many diseases that are linked to eating large amounts of processed foods. Because of the links between certain diseases and our nutrition, experts know that it is better to eat a fresh apple than to eat a cookie or biscuit with apple flavour. During the processing of food and the long storage of food, which is also not natural, the health benefits of that food decreases. We have learned about the vitamins in natural foods and the protective plant substances in natural foods. These health benefits decrease after processing natural foods and letting them sit for a long time.

Do you know why humans make so many processed foods from natural foods when natural foods are so much healthier? When searching for “offenders”, we see that each of us is a little bit responsible for all the processed foods that are in our stores. For the producers it is better to sell processed food because these can stay on the shelves longer. This way, the producers also earn more money because they can “brand” the food. We, as consumers, like to buy “food in packages”. Perhaps we like to stack the packages in our cupboards and we like to know the food won’t go bad sitting in our cupboards until we are ready to eat it. Also, many of us eat processed foods so often that we have become accustomed to unnatural flavours. Some people do not actually like the taste of natural foods any longer because we are so accustomed to processed foods. After eating sweetened foods every day, the natural taste of a carrot might not seem so sweet any longer. We also need to remember that every time we watch television the advertisements are almost always for processed foods.

Have you seen any advertisements for apples, beans, or nuts lately? How many advertisements have you seen on television or in children's magazines for cereal, biscuits and cookies, candies, and potato chips?



Special groups of natural foods are called organic products. Organic foods are the most natural grown plants or braised animals and the products made from these foods. Organic farmers do not use any chemical fertilizers or unnatural operations. For example, animals on the organic farms are fed a natural healthy diet and they also roam freely where they live. Conventional farming often means animals live their lives in uncomfortable cramped places like cages. Also, they are often fed with unnatural foods and drugs to make them grow as fast as possible.

Questions

- ◆ Name some examples of natural foods.
- ◆ Name some examples of processed foods.
- ◆ What happens to change a natural food into a processed food?
- ◆ Why are so many high processed foods in the stores?
- ◆ What is an organic food?

