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WELLBEING WARRIORS

**life
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~ TRIM THE UPF ~ January 2026
~ HANDY RESOURCE SHEET ~

Below 20 common foods that are “hidden” UPF so you can be looking in detail at the ingredients, plus an explainer at the end on sweeteners and sugar.

This is a general guide only, as ever in Wellbeing Warriors – you do you, and feel free to get stuck into your own research and go as detailed as you wish.

20 Common Foods People often don't realise are Ultra-Processed:

- 1. Flavoured yoghurts (especially “kids’ yoghurts”)**
Marketed as healthy, but usually contain stabilisers, gums, added flavours, sweeteners, colours. Often 100% UPF.
- 2. Protein bars / “healthy” snack bars**
Usually made of syrups, isolates, emulsifiers, artificial sweeteners and industrial binders. Almost always UPF.
- 3. Plant-based milks**
Oat, almond, soy - many contain emulsifiers, gums, stabilisers, flavourings. Some are minimally processed, but most are UPF.
- 4. Breakfast cereals**
Even the ones branded as high-fibre or wholegrain - extrusion is an industrial process + sugar + additives = UPF.
- 5. Supermarket bread**
Most packaged loaves contain emulsifiers, preservatives, stabilisers, enzymes and industrial fats.
- 6. “Healthy” wraps & tortillas**
Often packed with stabilisers, preservatives and texture agents.

7. **Margarine & "light spreads"**
High levels of industrial processing, emulsifiers and stabilisers.
8. **Supermarket hummus**
Sounds healthy... but many versions contain stabilisers, acidity regulators and seed oils processed at high heat.
9. **Jarred pasta sauces**
Often contain sugar, stabilisers and industrial processing; some are minimally processed, many are UPF.
10. **Cereal bars / granola bars**
Even organic ones - mostly syrups + texturising agents + flavourings.
11. **Supermarket soups (carton or can)**
Often have stabilisers, thickeners, emulsifiers and flavour enhancers.
12. **Instant porridge sachets**
Flavourings, sugar, emulsifiers - totally different from whole oats.
13. **Low-fat or diet yoghurts**
Almost always contain artificial sweeteners, thickeners and stabilisers to compensate for fat removed.
14. **Packaged "healthy" crackers and rice cakes**
Often ultra-processed through extrusion + additives.
15. **Supermarket guacamole**
Most have only a small percentage of avocado + gums, acidity regulators and preservatives.
16. **Flavoured nuts**
Even roasted nuts with "natural flavouring" are often sprayed with additives and carriers.
17. **Salad dressings**
Almost all supermarket dressings are UPF - emulsifiers, gums, stabilisers, seed oils, sweeteners.
18. **Supermarket smoothies**
Pasteurised, stabilised and often bulked with fruit concentrates and additives.
19. **Instant noodles**
UPF in the flavour sachet + industrial noodles treated to hold texture.
20. **"Healthy" sweeteners**
Maltodextrin, dextrose, sucralose, stevia blends with fillers - all ultra-processed. More on sweeteners below if you are interested as it's a bit of a minefield.

1. Summary: Sweeteners & Ultra-Processed Foods

Sweeteners are confusing, because the “natural” ones aren’t always natural, and the “healthy” ones aren’t always healthy. Here’s it is in a nutshell:

1. Most artificial sweeteners and sugar alcohols are ultra-processed.
They’re made in labs, go through multiple industrial steps, and often contain additives or carriers.
2. Most classic sweeteners are not ultra-processed.
They’re still sugar, so we use them mindfully but they aren’t industrial formulations.
3. Stevia is the big misunderstanding.
The *leaf* is natural.
The *white powder in the supermarket* is usually ultra-processed and blended with fillers.
4. Agave syrup looks wholesome but is surprisingly processed.
Technically it’s “processed, not ultra-processed,” but metabolically it behaves like fructose syrup.

The easiest way to think about it:

If it comes from a plant or hive and still looks like it, it’s NOT UPF.

If it comes from a laboratory or has multiple ingredients, it is UPF.

2. Simple Sweetener Q&A

Q: Is sugar ultra-processed?

A: *No. It’s processed, but not ultra-processed. Still sugar - just use mindfully.*

Q: What about honey or maple syrup?

A: *Not ultra-processed. They’re minimally processed natural foods.*

Q: Is stevia healthy?

A: *The leaf is natural. The powder in shops is usually ultra-processed and mixed with additives.*

Q: Are artificial sweeteners UPF?

A: *Yes. Pretty much all of them aspartame, sucralose, saccharin, acesulfame K are synthetic and ultra-processed.*

Q: What about “sugar alcohols” like erythritol and xylitol?

A: *These are ultra-processed too. They’re made in labs through multi-step industrial processes.*

Q: Is agave syrup healthy?

A: *It’s technically “processed, not ultra-processed,” but it’s still highly refined and behaves like fructose syrup in the body.*

Q: So, what’s the best choice?

A: *If you want to avoid UPF, choose natural sweeteners like sugar, honey, maple syrup or dates, and use them in small amounts.*

3. Sweetener Chart

Sweetener	UPF or Not?	Why
White sugar	Not UPF (Processed)	Just refined sugar cane/beet, no additives
Brown sugar	Not UPF	Same as above, with molasses
Molasses	Not UPF	By-product of sugar processing, no additives
Honey	Not UPF	Natural, minimally processed
Maple syrup	Not UPF	Boiled sap, no additives
Date syrup / date paste	Not UPF	Comes directly from fruit
Agave syrup	Not UPF (but heavily processed)	Extracted through multiple steps; metabolically similar to fructose syrup
Stevia leaf	Not UPF	A whole plant
Stevia powders/blends	UPF	Highly processed + usually blended with erythritol/dextrose
Sucralose (Splenda)	UPF	Artificial chemical sweetener
Aspartame	UPF	Synthetic sweetener
Acesulfame K	UPF	Lab-made sweetener
Saccharin	UPF	Old-style chemical sweetener
Erythritol	UPF	Industrially fermented & purified
Xylitol	UPF	Chemically processed sugar alcohol
Maltodextrin	UPF	Ultra-processed starch derivative

As ever this topic is HUGE, and you can research it and go as deep as you like. At the end of the day the main thing, in my opinion, is to not get too lost in the detail (which can get stressful) and focus on the bigger picture of your TREND which is much more powerful to build momentum and energy on.

For example, you might want to set one of these challenges for yourself:

- 1. One UPF-free meal each day?
 - 2. Amber or green only foods in the app?
 - 5 ingredients or less in each packaged food?
 - Nothing that isn't in my (or Claire's kitchen)?
 - Reduce UPF consumption by 25%?
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As ever in WW, everyone has a different lifestyle, body, country, culture, family, time, budget...use the knowledge that works best for you, research more deeply if you feel the call, and you do you!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Louise". The signature is written in black ink and includes a stylized flourish at the end of the word.