

Food Investigations: getting to the source

Adapted from FoodCorps

In this activity we will be investigating food and nutrition labels to trace our foods to their sources!

Here is what you need:

- Paper
- Pencil
- Some of your favorite foods/snack that have a nutrition label on the packaging

Background information:

Think about the various foods you have eaten so far today, and list them on a piece of paper. Were some of your foods listed **food products**, perhaps **whole foods**?

A **whole food** is food in its natural state like a tomato, a berry, or corn. A **product** is something you make with a whole food, like jam or french fries, and it usually comes in packaging from the grocery store.



Let's start!

Now that we know a bit more about the food we eat, let's explore the nutrition label on one of your favorite foods and get to the source of our food.

1. To begin, we will create a word web: In the center of your paper, write the name of the food you chose. (ex. Cheerios)
2. Grab your chosen food, and read all the ingredients listed (you can usually find these under the nutrition table)
3. Draw a line out from the center for each ingredient listed and write the ingredient on the far end of the line (see example on next page)
4. Once each ingredient is listed, think about the source of each ingredient and draw another line to note where it came from (ex. sugar-->sugar cane plant, salt-->mineral)
 - a. Any words you don't know or recognize? These are probably preservatives or fillers to make the food last longer or change the taste/texture. Ask an adult if they recognize this ingredient, or investigate online?
 - b. Trace each ingredient as far as you can to get to its original source

Some questions to ponder:

- How many different plants were used to create this food?
- Where do you think these plants are grown?

Next time you sit down to have a meal or snack, think about how many ingredients make up the food you are eating. Is it processed? The more ingredients added, the more the food is processed.

Oat plant, (*Avena sativa*)

Rolled Oats + Oat Bran

Mineral that is
mined and/or farmed

Salt

derived from inorganic salt (K^+) potassium
and phosphate rock

Tripotassium
Phosphate

Vitamin E

Cheerios

sugar

extracted +
crystallized
from
Sugar cane plant
(purified if white sugar)

Almond flavor

Chemically produced
(surprisingly not from
almonds like extracts)

Canola Oil

Pressed from seeds of
the rapeseed plant

Corn starch

from white endosperm
of corn plant kernel