Processed food classifications: concepts and issues

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What are processed foods?
Food processing is any method used to turn fresh foods into food products.
So nearly all foods are processed?
Classification of processed foods
No consensus on the level of food processing

- Extent of change from natural state
- Nature of change
- Purpose of processing
- Place of processing
- Convenience-level
- Impact on cooking & eating habits
NOVA classification:

potato example

1. Un/Minimally processed
   - Potato (natural, whole food), sliced
   - Cooked with nothing added

2. Processed culinary ingredients

3. Processed
   - Potato (natural, whole food), sliced
   - Cooked with culinary ingredients added (oil, salt)

4. Ultra-processed
   - Extracted potato starch, flours, processed
   - Industrial/cosmetic additives
Conflicting views among scientists

- Definitions
- Process vs ingredient
- Nutritional analysis
- Home-cooking ≠ healthier
- Natural ≠ healthier
- Processing ≠ bad
Communication messages

- Food processing is a complex topic
- Food processing per se is not bad
- Complex risks & benefits

Regardless of the ongoing debates:
- Aim to eat lots of fruits, vegetables, pulses and wholegrains
- Some products contain unhealthy levels of nutrients, check the label