Food Categorization Based on Processing Levels

This document outlines three food categories—Group A, Group B, and Group C—classified according to their processing levels, nutrient retention, and the presence or absence of additives.

## Group A Foods

### Processing Level

Low

### Definition:

- Edible portion remains unaltered for consumption, with minimal nutrient losses.

- Prepared with common ingredients such as spices, salt, sugar, and oils.

- Meant for consumption soon after preparation.

- Free from additives like preservatives, homogenizers, coloring agents, artificial flavors, bleaches, or improvers.

### Examples:

- Whole Grains and Legumes:

- Hand-pounded/minimally polished rice, puffed rice, whole dal, whole wheat, whole millets, corn, oats, and other cereals.

- Batter and Savories:

- Dosa and idli batter, snacks, chips, and other savory items prepared from whole grains and flour.

- Fresh Curries and Dishes:

- Lentils, beans, vegetables, roots, tubers, greens, mushrooms, and herbs cooked freshly.

- Animal Products:

- Freshly cooked fish, meat, and eggs.

- Dairy and Fermented Products:

- Pasteurized milk, homemade curd, paneer, and fermented cheese without additives.

- Fruits and Vegetables:

- Fresh or frozen without chemicals, cut fruits and vegetables, fresh juices made with water only.

- Nuts and Seeds:

- Whole nuts and seeds in their natural state.

## Group B Foods

### Processing Level:

Medium

### Definition:

- Edible portion may be altered but remains free from additives.

- Minimal nutrient losses, though some fiber is removed.

- Includes processes such as sun-drying, baking, fermenting, blanching, or roasting.

- Shelf life ranges from a few weeks to several years.

### Examples:

- Refined Grains:

- Highly polished rice, dal, refined wheat flour (maida), polished millets, and other cereals or legumes.

- Snacks and Savories:

- Chips, snacks, and other items made from refined grains.

- Frozen and Fermented Foods:

- Frozen curries, fermented vegetables, and pickles.

- Meat and Dairy:

- Frozen fish and meat, commercially available yogurt, paneer, butter, and sweets.

- Savories and Pickled Items:

- Papads, pickles, and other savory products.

## Group C Foods

### Processing Level:

High

### Definition:

- Edible portion is heavily altered, often unrecognizable from its original state.

- Extensive processing results in significant loss of micronutrients and fiber.

- Contains additives like preservatives, artificial flavors, coloring agents, bleaches, and antimicrobials.

- These foods are typically low in micronutrients and fiber.

### Examples:

- Bakery and Snack Products:

- Commercially produced bread, breakfast cereals, cakes, chips, biscuits, and fries.

- Condiments and Spreads:

- Jams, sauces, mayonnaise, and peanut butter.

- Dairy and Frozen Foods:

- Ice cream, protein powders, tofu, and frozen foods with additives.

- Meat and Plant-Based Products:

- Commercially produced cheese, butter, paneer with additives, plant-based meat, and soy chunks.

- Refined Ingredients:

- Cooking oils, refined sugars, salt, and spices.

- Beverages and Health Drinks:

- Energy drinks, health supplements added to milk, and packaged fruit juices.

This categorization helps in understanding the impact of food processing on nutrient retention and the extent to which additives are used in different types of food products. It can serve as a guideline for selecting healthier food options by balancing between minimally processed and highly processed foods.