



## Look at label to know what's in hot dog

**We haven't eaten hot dogs since our third-grader came home from school 45 years ago telling us that they contained "yucky body parts." We'd like to try hot dogs again, but how can we know what's in them?**

I guess it depends on what your definition of "yucky body parts" is, but the U.S. Department of Agriculture sets the standards for what's in hot dogs and other types of sausages. With a careful reading of the label, you can be sure of what you're eating.

The standard (officially known as the "Standard of Identity") for frankfurters requires that they be made from skeletal muscle meat from beef, pork or poultry, with no more than 30 percent fat and no more than 10 percent water. The type of meat must be listed, so if you buy "beef frankfurters," you know that the product doesn't contain pork or poultry. The meat is "comminuted," or reduced to tiny particles, and is seasoned, cured and sometimes smoked.

Up to 3.5 percent of the frankfurter can be nonfat dry milk, cereal or other binders and extenders, or up to 2 percent isolated soy protein. If used, they must be included in the ingredients listing; milk and soy are used less frequently now due to allergy concerns.

The meat itself is sometimes separated from bone using a high-tech process called "advanced meat bone separation and meat recovery

system." According to the USDA, this process separates meat from bone by mechanically scraping, shaving or pressing the meat without breaking or grinding the bone. Still, some bone particles can sometimes get mixed in the comminuted meat. The frankfurter can contain no more than 0.15 percent calcium (150 milligrams per 100 grams of product), severely limiting the amount of bone in your hot dog. If the end product contains more calcium, the meat must be labeled as "mechanically separated" in the ingredients list.

That could be confusing, because "mechanically separated meat" is actually produced using a different process, which allows more bone to enter the final product. "Mechanically separated" pork and poultry meat can be used in frankfurters, but beef cannot be processed this way due to concerns over bovine spongiform encephalopathy ("mad cow disease").

Some products are labeled as frankfurters "with byproducts" or "with variety meats." Those may contain heart, kidney or liver from pork or beef, but they must be named individually in the ingredients. If that doesn't sit well with you, stick with hot dogs labeled "frankfurters," not "frankfurters with byproducts."

For more information, see the fact sheet at [http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact\\_Sheets/Hot\\_Dogs/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Hot_Dogs/index.asp).

*Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or [filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu](mailto:filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu).*



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