



Mutter Paneer in Packet

Okay Occasionally

Empty the packet into a bowl, heat it in microwave for over a minute, and voila, you have your ready-to-be-eaten mutter paneer (chick peas and Indian cottage cheese curry). While cooking this delicacy with its raw ingredients can easily take about an hour, its ready-to-eat versions that are common at mom-and-pop stores across streets are being consumed quite readily. Wondering how do they measure up on the 'healthy food' scale? Read on to find out.

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Such ready-to-eat foods do not have set standards under Food Safety Rules and are covered under the broader header of 'proprietary food'. So, we evaluated these under relevant standards set for proprietary

food. We bought four popular ready-to-eat mutter paneer brands – Aashirvaad, Haldiram's, MTR and Sanskriti – and evaluated whether these were fit for consumption. While at it, we also got to know which one among these four was better than the others.

Brand ↓	Maximum Retail Price (MRP) (Rs)	Net Weight Claimed (Grams)	Unit Price of 100 Grams (Rs)	Shelf Life Claimed (Months)
MTR	65	300	21.66	12
Aashirvaad	65	285	22.81	34
Sanskriti	85	300	28.33	18
Haldiram's	90	300	30.00	12

ANALYSIS

◆ Shelf Life

It is understood that shelf life denotes the duration of time for which the food product will last on the retail shelf without deteriorating. In other words, it is about the expiry date of the product after which it becomes unfit for human consumption.

- Aashirvaad has 34 months' shelf life, which is highest among the four brands.

◆ Fats

If you are a regular CV reader, you would know that the body uses fat as a fuel source and that fat is the major storage form of energy in the body. Hence, a moderate amount of fat is necessary in your regular diet. Fats have three forms – saturated, monounsaturated and polyunsaturated – and all these forms should be consumed in balance. Hence, it is recommended to check the fat contents of all packaged foods and keep a check on intake of all three forms of fat.

- Sanskriti has lowest fat content and is therefore marginally better than the other three.

Saturated fat: Saturated fats are the 'solid' fats that are one of the causes of chronic disease – specifically coronary heart disease.

- Aashirvaad contains the lowest percentage of saturated fat and Haldiram's has the highest.



Total Fat (%) and Fatty Acids (%) (as per NABL-Accredited Laboratory)					
Brand	Total Fat (%)	Saturated Fat (%)	Trans Fat (%)	Monounsaturated Fatty Acids (%)	Polyunsaturated Fatty Acids (%)
Sanskriti	8.63	3.81	Not Detected	2.47	2.19
Aashirvaad	9.17	2.88	Not Detected	2.72	2.72
MTR	11.92	3.37	Not Detected	3.41	5.05
Haldiram's	13.83	6.42	Not Detected	3.86	3.25

Packaged Food Series

Trans fat: Naturally occurring trans fat is found in small amounts in the fatty parts of meat and dairy products. Artificial trans fat comes from foods that contain partially hydrogenated oil and is formed when hydrogen is added to liquid oil, turning it into solid fat. Often, food manufacturers use artificial trans fat in food products because it is cheap and also increases the food's shelf life, stability and texture. Consuming trans fat increases bad cholesterol, which can lead to coronary heart disease.

- All brands were found trans fat-free.



SENSORY EVALUATION

All brands were evaluated by expert panellists at the food and nutrition laboratory of a reputed college of Delhi University. The panellists rated the brands on the following parameters:

1. Appearance
2. Aroma
3. Taste
4. Texture/Bite
5. Aftertaste
6. Overall acceptability



Brand	Appearance	Aroma	Taste	Texture/Bite	Aftertaste	Overall Acceptability
HALDIRAM'S	3.7	3.7	4.1	3.9	3.9	3.9
MTR	3.1	3.2	2.9	2.8	2.8	2.9
SANSKRITI	2.8	2.8	2.6	2.9	2.4	2.5
AASHIRVAAD	2.2	3.0	2.6	2.2	2.6	2.4

The rating for each parameter was done on the 1-to-5 scale, where 5 meant excellent, 4 good and 3 average. Both 2 and 1 meant poor and very poor, respectively.

INSTRUCTIONS

Stove top: Cut pouch, empty contents into a frying pan and heat for 3 to 5 minutes while stirring.
Microwave: Remove the pouch from the outer packaging, tear open the pouch by about 2 cm and put it standing inside the microwave. Heat on full power for 2 minutes. Remove from the microwave and tear open it completely.

CV Caution

As per our evaluation, all brands are okay for consumption. However, we do not endorse consumption of packaged foods, especially the ready-to-eat foods, on regular basis. Experts say that routinely high intake of salt, fat and sugar may precipitate symptoms of hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, etc., early in life and especially if the person has a genetic predisposition. These foods do not fulfil the body's requirements of vitamins, minerals and fibre either.

Nutritionists warn that prolonged consumption of packaged ready-to-eat foods can even lead to severe metabolic disorders and growing children should not even be introduced to such foods.