



## Book Review

### **McCance and Widdowson's the Composition of Foods sixth summary edition**

Food Standards Agency and Institute of Food Research, Royal Society of Chemistry, 2002, xv + 537 pages, ISBN 0-85404-428-0 (£45.00)

It is essential that food composition tables are regularly updated, since new fresh and manufactured foods become familiar items in the shops since previous published compositional data, and the nutritional value of many traditional foods changes as new varieties and sources of raw materials become available, new farming and manufacturing practices are adopted, and new methods of preparation and cooking become popular. Such factors affect the nutritional value of both plant and animal products.

This sixth summary edition of tabulated food compositional data extends and updates a series which began in the 1930s. Following publication of the fourth edition in 1978, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) took on the responsibility of maintaining and updating the official tables of food composition in the UK, and in 1987 joined with the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC) to begin production of a computerised UK National Nutrient Databank, from which a number of detailed supplements and the fifth edition of this volume (1991) were produced. Responsibility for maintenance of the UK National Nutrient Databank transferred to the Foods Standards Agency on its establishment in 2000, and data for this edition was compiled by the Institute of Food Research.

Most of the values included in this edition have been taken from detailed supplements, themselves mainly derived from MAFF's analytical studies. Where new data was not available, values have been taken from a number of sources including the scientific literature, manufacturers data and by calculation. Where data was derived by direct analysis of foods, great care was taken designing sampling protocols to ensure analysed foods were representative of

those used by UK consumers. A summary of analytical techniques used for this edition is also provided. Presented tables contain four pages of information for each food. The first page provides name and description along with data for edible proportions and major constituents (water, nitrogen, protein, fat, carbohydrate and energy). The second page gives starch, total and individual sugars (glucose, fructose, sucrose, maltose, lactose), dietary fibre (non-starch polysaccharide), fatty acid totals, and cholesterol. The third page gives inorganic data and the fourth page details vitamin composition. Values for total carbohydrate were generally obtained from the sum of analysed values for carbohydrate components, contrasting with data often used in other food tables which is determined by difference on a weight basis by subtracting the results of other proximate analyses which may include contributions from dietary fibre as well as compounded errors from other analyses.

Foods are arranged in groups with common characteristics, and include cereal products, milk products, eggs, fats and oils, meat products, fish products, vegetables, herbs and spices, fruits, nuts, sugars, preserves and snacks, beverages, alcoholic beverages and sauces, soups, and miscellaneous foods. A detailed introduction provides a thorough discussion of all necessary background information, definitions, etc. In summary, this single volume contains the most recent values for a range of common foods and is widely acknowledged as a key reference tool for information on nutritional value of foods consumed in the UK. It is therefore highly recommended as a valuable information source for all individuals with interests in food composition and nutrition.

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