



Eat Healthy

And Love It!

SUPER FOODS

to Improve
Body & Mind

RATINGS

**We Test for
the Best**

Frozen Pizzas
Pastas
Snack Crackers
Yogurt
Coffee

**6 FOODS
THAT
KEEP YOU
YOUNG**

Special Fall Edition

\$12.99US \$13.99CAN



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See Recipes Inside

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NOVEMBER 2018



WE TESTED IT

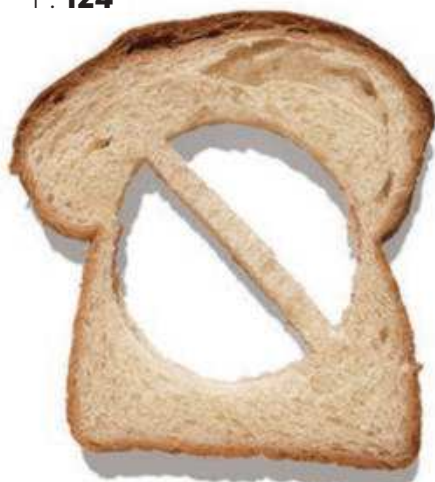
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TO OUR READERS

We've received such terrific feedback about our expert healthy eating advice that we're reprinting this guide and making it available again. Use it—plus our food and nutrition pros' best tips for safe and smart holiday cooking and eating, added just for this issue—to make nutritious and delicious choices, year-round.

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Enjoy the Healing Power of Food

WE ALL WANT to live longer and feel better. And that's exactly what a healthy diet can help you to do, by boosting your energy, keeping your mind sharp, and fighting diseases.

But the ever-changing nutrition information in the news can be confusing. That's where we come in.

Consumer Reports is here to help you sort the superfoods from the super-fads. Our team of Ph.D.s, dietitians, recipe developers, and researchers shares easy-to-follow health

and nutrition advice based on the latest studies from the most respected experts. And our taste testers and engineers review thousands of products to help you buy the best. You can trust our advice because we're nonprofit and independent: We buy everything we test, and we accept no ads.

Eating your way to a better life—now, that sounds like a simply delicious plan.

—The Editors of
Consumer Reports

RATINGS Overall Scores are based on a scale of 0 to 100. We rate products using these symbols:

🔴 POOR 🟡 FAIR 🟢 GOOD
🟢 VERY GOOD 🟢 EXCELLENT



Eat Healthy And Love It!

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News Bites

Is 'Green Juice' Healthy?

Sometimes. Sold everywhere from Whole Foods to Starbucks, "green juices offer a way to get nutrients from veggies you might not be getting enough of," says Amy Keating, a registered dietitian at CR. "But they aren't a substitute for whole vegetables." At right, you'll find a few worthwhile options. But heed the advice on the next page to be sure you're making a healthy choice.



SMART WAYS TO GO GREEN



Evolution Fresh Organic Emerald Greens, 11 oz., \$5

14 g SUGARS
90 mg SODIUM

Sold at Starbucks, this juice is low in sodium but also contains apple juice, which increases its sugars count.



Suja Twelve Essentials, 16 oz., \$8

8 g SUGARS
230 mg SODIUM

Almost all herbs and veggies, this bottle steers clear of fruit (except for a bit of lemon juice), which keeps its sugars low.



Daily Greens Purity, 12 oz., \$5

9 g SUGARS
180 mg SODIUM

It's claimed to pack in 4.5 lb. of produce, including broccoli, kale, and celery, with low sugars. It is also USDA organic.

**PICKING THE BEST
GREEN JUICE**

■ **Scan for sugar.** Some drinks tout “no sugar added” but have a lot of natural sugars from fruit juice. Naked Juice Boosted Smoothie Green Machine (below) has 53 grams of natural sugars in 15 ounces—more than the added sugars in the same amount of Coke.

■ **Check the sodium.** Many green drinks don’t add salt, but some vegetables, such as beets and celery, have a surprising amount of natural sodium. Evolution Fresh’s Organic Green Devotion includes celery juice as the first ingredient and has 300 mg of sodium per serving—higher than many of its counterparts.

■ **Don’t believe miracle claims.** Be wary of claims with specific benefits, including better sleep and glowing skin, a more balanced body, and cleansed blood. “Don’t take these claims at face value,” Keating says, and check whether companies have the research to back them up.

■ **Spot tricky serving sizes.** Some Bolthouse Farms and Suja drinks, for example, list a serving size as only half a bottle. A distracted glance may lull you into thinking you’re consuming half the sodium, sugar, and calories than are in the whole bottle.



Protect Your Heart by Limiting Saturated Fat

THE WORLD HEALTH Organization (WHO) has issued draft guidelines that add another voice to the debate about the health risks of saturated fats. These types of fat—found in beef, butter, cheese, chocolate, coconut oil, palm oil, and whole milk—should make up less than

10 percent of an adult or child’s total daily calories, the agency says.

“What the new WHO guidelines do is add strength to the idea that having too much saturated fat in your diet can raise the risk of heart disease, and dampen the ‘butter is back’ argument,” says David

Seres, M.D., associate professor of medicine at the Institute of Human Nutrition at Columbia University Medical Center.

In addition, everyone should keep their intake of trans fats under 1 percent of their calories.

Some trans fats are found naturally in foods, but most come from partially hydrogenated vegetable oils in packaged foods. Fortunately, avoiding trans fat is easier now that the Food and Drug Administration’s ban on partially hydrogenated oils has gone into effect.

How to Keep Fridge Food Fresher

A few minutes of organizing can help your groceries last longer

1 MIDDLE AND UPPER SHELVES

These are some of the warmest areas, with temperatures often reaching up around 40° F, even when the fridge is set to the correct temp of 37° F. You can put snack cups and leftovers here, but large amounts should be transferred to small containers so that they'll cool faster.

2 LOWER SHELF

This cool spot is

ideal for items that are more likely to spoil or develop harmful bacteria, including milk; eggs, in their original carton to maintain moisture; and raw fish, meat, and poultry, sealed.

3 CRISPER DRAWERS

These are designed for produce and can often be individually adjusted for humidity. If not, sorting items helps because some fruits emit gases that wilt

nearby veggies.

Low-Humidity Drawer Low-humidity areas are best for most fruits and some vegetables that require dryer air to stay fresh. Put apples, peaches, ripe avocados, peppers, pears, mushrooms, and squash here.

High-Humidity Drawer A little extra humidity can keep vegetables such as broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, and leafy greens from wilting too soon.

4 THE DOOR

Our tests, done in climate-controlled chambers, found that the fridge door tended to climb a few degrees higher than the main cabin—that's fine for butter or juice but not for milk or eggs.

5 MEAT/DELI BIN

This drawer is one of the coldest spots in your fridge (about 32° F) and is best for bacon, hot dogs, deli meat, and cheeses.



The No-Diet Way to Lose Weight

HERE'S AN EASY way to put the brakes on weight gain: Sl-o-o-o-w down at the dinner table. In a recent Japanese study of 59,717 women and men with type 2 diabetes, the slowest eaters were 42 percent less likely to become obese over five years compared with the food-gobblers. One reason that taking your time while eating may help keep you slim is that it gives your mind and body time to realize that you feel full, so you can put down your fork before you overdo it. In this study, two other strategies—skipping after-dinner snacks and not eating within 2 hours of going to sleep—also reduced the likelihood of obesity.

TIP

Keep leftovers on the top two shelves, toward the front of the fridge, so that you don't forget to eat them.

Products We Love

Better home cooking (and eating!) is easier if you have the right equipment to work with. Here are some of our experts' favorite kitchen tools.

1. Smeg 5-Quart SMF01PBUS mixer \$460
In addition to its bold retro styling, this model boasts excellent mixing and whipping performance. Kneading was very good, and it was quieter than many we tested.
smegusa.com

2. Kitchy Pizza Cutter Wheel \$13
We haven't tested this gadget, but its unusual design caught our attention, in part for its smart safety feature: a blade guard that covers the sharp edge when it's not in use.
amazon.com

3. Ultimate Grip Oven Mitt \$15 each
Protect your hands from temperatures up to 500° F with this grippy glove made of food-grade silicone and insulating neoprene.
builtny.com

4. Nespresso Essenza Mini Espresso Machine by DeLonghi EN85L \$109
Tied for the top spot in our pod coffee maker ratings, this model brews quickly and consistently. It adjusts brew strength easily.
delonghi.com

5. KitchenAid 4-Slice KMT4116 toaster \$120
Extra-long slots make this model ideal for toasting homemade or artisan bread, and a high-lift lever helps to remove hot slices more safely.
kitchenaid.com

6. Rubbermaid FreshWorks Produce Saver \$15 for two
In CR's tests of produce storage containers, this one excelled at keeping strawberries fresh.
amazon.com

7. Debbie Meyer 32-Piece UltraLite GreenBoxes \$20
After two weeks in the fridge, the raspberries we stored in these containers looked the best. Those stored in other containers were moldy.
amazon.com

8. Oxo Good Grips GreenSaver Produce Keeper \$20 for large
With an adjustable vent, an elevated colander, and a charcoal filter, this container kept our lettuce crisp for more than a week.
amazon.com

9. Zulay Premium Quality Metal Lemon Lime Squeezer \$16
The zing of fresh citrus juice adds flavor to your food without extra sodium. Bonus: The squeezer strains out the seeds.
amazon.com

10. U-Taste 10 Piece Measuring Cups and Spoons \$22
Measuring portions with dishwasher-safe, stainless steel measuring spoons (and cups, not shown) can help you stick to your daily calorie goal.
amazon.com



PHOTOS: JOHN POWERS/CONSUMER REPORTS (PIZZA CUTTER, TOASTER, MEASURING SPOONS)



2



3



6



7



8



75

OVERALL SCORE

4



85

OVERALL SCORE

5

We Tested It





CR Report

Ballot for Red Lentil Pasta

Name: Ali Date: 3/6/18 Session: 3 of 0

1. Appearance
 nothing notable
 pale
 brown

TEXTURE

2. Firmness

3. Other Texture Descriptors

NONE

SLIGHT
 chewy
 springy/bouncy
 numbly

NOTABLE
 chewy
 springy/bouncy
 numbly
 soft
 starchy
 stringent
 gritty
 pasty
 other (specify)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
 NOT FIRM / SOFT / MUSHY

7 8 7 8 7 8

SLIGHT
 sweet
 nutty

SLIGHT
 sour
 bitter
 raw fl
 starchy

What's Inside

10

Easy as Pie

Frozen pizza can be tasty and reasonably nutritious, if you buy wisely. Our testers share their top picks.

18

Good (for You) to the Last Drop

We spill the beans on the health perks of coffee, and guide you to the best brew.

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New Ways to Use Your Noodle

Some alternative pastas are promised to be better for you. CR's food team put them to the (taste) test.

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The Whole Truth About Whole-Milk Yogurt

It's rich and creamy, but what about the fat? Get the skinny on this dairy treat.

38

Pass the Crackers

There's a new breed of "healthy" crackers on supermarket shelves. Here, which ones to reach for.

FOOD STYLING: JAMIE KIMM; PROP STYLING: KAITLYN DU ROSS WALKER FOR HONEY ARTISTS

Easy as Pie

Frozen pizzas that taste good and are reasonably healthy? We rated 25 to see whether convenience has a price.

One in 8 Americans has a slice (or two or three) of pizza on any given day. And according to the market research firm Mintel, much of that is frozen: 37 percent of us eat frozen pizza two to three times per month. Our recent tests of 25 cheese and vegetable pies show that opting for a frozen one is actually a pretty good plan.

43

**Against
the Grain**
Gluten Free
Three Cheese
Pizza

52

**Whole Foods
Market**
Wood-Fired
Pizza Marinated
Grilled
Vegetables

59

**American
Flatbread**
Tomato
Sauce & Three
Cheese Pizza





60

American Flatbread
Revolution Thin & Crispy Pizza



61

Dr. Oetker
Virtuoso Thin + Crispy Crust
Pizza Vegetable Medley



54

Amy's
Roasted Vegetable
Pizza No Cheese



59

Amy's
Cheese Pizza

62

Trader Giotto's
(Trader Joe's)
Organic Roasted
Vegetable Pizza

How to Make a More Perfect Pie

You'll get the best results from a frozen pizza if you follow these tips:

- 1. Preheat the oven.** It's key to good browning and crisping. Don't shortcut this step.
- 2. Don't thaw the pie.** Unless the directions on the box specifically tell you to do so, put the frozen pie directly into the preheated oven.
- 3. Slide it on an oven rack.** This makes for a crispier crust. The rack should be positioned in the center of the oven.
- 4. Add your own veggies or fresh herbs.** Baby spinach, mushrooms, onions, peppers, and sliced tomatoes are good choices, but you can use whatever you like. Sauté or roast the veggies lightly to remove some of the water so that your pie won't get soggy during baking. Finish with fresh herbs such as basil or oregano. These additions not only improve the nutritional content but also will help give a frozen pie a fresher taste.

We Tested It

Frozen Gets a Makeover

Frozen pies have always been dogged by a reputation for being highly processed and not so tasty. Mintel's research shows that more than half of frozen-pizza buyers said they'd buy a pie more often if it weren't so processed, and 59 percent said they'd buy more if they had more premium ingredients. That's led frozen-pizza manufacturers to try to improve their product by cutting out preservatives and artificial flavors, lowering the sodium content, and making crusts with whole grains. "There are a lot more options now in frozen pizzas, with 'clean' ingredient lists that look more like what I would make at home if I started from scratch," says Rachel Cheatham, Ph.D., an adjunct assistant professor of nutrition and food marketing at Tufts University.

Our test results show that these efforts are making a difference. About half of the pizzas earned a Very Good rating for taste. Nutrition was a bit trickier. Although we found several pies that—in the realm of pizza—are reasonably nutritious choices, you'd still be hard-pressed to call any of them health food. We didn't find any that we could give our highest marks to, mostly because the fiber, saturated fat, and sodium counts dragged down the nutrition scores.

"Many of the cheese pizzas and all of the veggie ones received a Good rating for nutrition, with the veggie pizzas tending to have more fiber, less saturated fat, and a little less sodium than the cheese pizzas," says Ellen Kloss, a Consumer Reports nutritionist. Three of the veggie pies we tested—California Pizza Kitchen Spinach and Artichoke Crispy Thin Crust, Trader Giotto's Organic Roasted Vegetable, and Dr. Oetker Virtuoso Thin + Crispy Crust Pizza Vegetable Medley—scored the only Very Good overall ratings of the bunch.

The Role of Toppings and Crust

Whether you opt for frozen or takeout, chowing down on a couple of slices can mean taking in nearly 750 calories and an alarming 1,600 mg of sodium.

Easy Bake Ovens

You don't have to turn on your oven to heat up a frozen pizza. These countertop toaster ovens will do a dandy job.

The smaller interior of a toaster oven means it will take less time to reach the desired baking temperature than if you used a regular oven, so you can go from freezer to plate faster.

To fit a typical frozen pie, you'll need a toaster oven with a depth of at least 12 inches, such as the two below. The Breville was tops in our testing, but the Krups scored well for less than half the price.



Breville Smart Oven Pro BOV845BSS, \$270

76

Fits a 13-inch pizza.



Krups DeLuxe Convection Toaster OK710D51, \$120

72

Fits a 12-inch pizza.

(U.S. dietary guidelines call for less than 2,300 mg per day.) And depending on your choice of toppings, pizza can also pack a significant amount of saturated fat. We picked plain cheese and vegetable pizzas to test, knowing that those with meat toppings would have rated worse on the nutrition front. "Losing the meat and adding veggies is a good way to make pizza into a healthier meal," says Lauri Wright, R.D., Ph.D., an assistant professor of nutrition and dietetics at the University of North Florida. "You'll get more fiber, more vitamins and nutrients, and less sodium and fat."

When trying to pick a healthier pizza, consider a vegetable pie. "The veggie pies we tested were for the most part lower in saturated fat than the cheese pizzas," Kloss says. Thin crust can sometimes save you some calories, but don't automatically assume that a thin-crust pie is a better choice. For example, Red Baron Thin & Crispy Crust Five Cheese Pizza is similar in calories and fat to the Tombstone Original 5 Cheese Pizza, and has considerably more sodium.

Whole-grain crusts aren't easy to find, but they're worth seeking out.

"If you go for one made with whole grains, you can double the fiber," Wright says. In our testing, for example, Freschetta Artisan Crust Four Cheese Pizza had a multigrain crust and 4 grams of fiber per serving. Most of the other cheese pizzas had 1 to 2 grams.

Why Size Matters

"We found that serving sizes for these frozen pizzas varied quite a bit," Kloss says. "Sometimes it's one-third of a pie, sometimes a quarter. And for one of the thin-crust pies we tested (American Flatbread Tomato Sauce & Three Cheese Pizza), a single serving was half the pizza." So even though calories per serving averaged about 300, you could easily consume two to three times that if you don't pay attention to serving size. If your favorite frozen pizza is higher in calories, fat, or sodium than you'd like, consider having just a slice and rounding out your meal with a big salad.

Takeout Pizza That Packs a Punch

Curious to know which are some of the unhealthiest pies that money can buy? Here are some heavyweights from the chain restaurants Pizza Hut, Domino's Pizza, Papa John's, and Little Caesars.

WHILE NONE OF the frozen pizzas we tested are nutritional superstars, many are better choices compared with what's on the menu at popular takeout chains.

Thick crusts (made only with refined white flour), crusts stuffed with cheese, and toppings that include several types of processed meat add up to pizzas that

are nutritionally on a par with a double cheeseburger. In some cases, a single slice can deliver nearly half of the recommended daily allowance for sodium.



PIZZA HUT
Meat Lover's Stuffed Crust

480 calories
26 g fat
11 g saturated fat
2 g fiber
6 g sugars
1,380 mg sodium



DOMINO'S PIZZA
Cali Chicken Bacon Ranch

400 calories
20 g fat
7 g saturated fat
2 g fiber
2 g sugars
880 mg sodium



PAPA JOHN'S
John's Favorite

390 calories
20 g fat
9 g saturated fat
1 g fiber
3 g sugars
920 mg sodium



LITTLE CAESARS
3 Meat Treat

330 calories
16 g fat
7 g saturated fat
2 g fiber
3 g sugars
690 mg sodium

We Tested It

Brussels
Sprouts Pizza
With Goat
Cheese



Margherita
Pizza With
Arugula



Roasted
Vegetable
Pizza
With Ricotta
Cheese



3 Healthy Pizza Recipes Under 200 Calories a Slice

Try these easy combinations to give America's favorite comfort food a fresh and flavorful update.

OUR NUTRITION EXPERTS agree that if you want a truly healthy pizza, you should make it yourself.

“You have more control over the amount of cheese and salt you use, and you can switch to a whole-grain crust, which adds fiber,” says Amy Keating, R.D., a Consumer Reports dietitian. “The best way to make any pizza healthier, though—whether you make it yourself or take it out of a box—is to pile on the vegetables.”

Try these healthy pizza recipes, developed in Consumer Reports’ test kitchens. They call for a prebaked thin whole-wheat crust (we used Pastorelli Ultra Thin Pizza Crusts Whole Wheat), but you could also use refrigerated whole-wheat dough or make your own whole-wheat crust.

MARGHERITA PIZZA WITH ARUGULA

- 1 cup canned crushed tomatoes (no salt added)
- 1 teaspoon red-wine vinegar
- ¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper or black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 12-inch prebaked 100% whole-wheat thin crust
- 2 cups lightly packed arugula leaves, coarsely chopped
- 4 oz. unsalted fresh mozzarella cheese, torn into small pieces
- 2 tablespoons shredded Asiago or Parmesan cheese
- 10 fresh basil leaves, thinly sliced (about 1 tablespoon)

1. Heat oven to 450° F. Whisk together the tomatoes, vinegar, pepper, and oregano.
2. Place the crust on a pizza paddle or large cutting board. Spread sauce on pizza crust, then top with the arugula, mozzarella, and Asiago.
3. Carefully slide pizza directly onto the middle oven rack and bake until the cheese is melted and bubbling, about 8 minutes. Remove the pizza carefully onto the paddle or cutting board.
4. Sprinkle with basil leaves. Let the pizza rest 2 to 3 minutes before cutting.

Per slice: 150 calories, 7 grams fat, 3 grams saturated fat, 7 grams protein, 16 grams carbohydrates, 3 grams fiber, 80 mg sodium

ROASTED VEGETABLE PIZZA WITH RICOTTA CHEESE

- 1 cup sliced zucchini
- 1 cup sliced mushrooms
- 2 shallots, sliced
- 1 medium yellow pepper, sliced
- 1 medium red pepper, sliced
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, sliced
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 1 12-inch prebaked 100% whole-wheat thin crust
- ½ cup shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese
- ½ cup part-skim ricotta cheese
- 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 tablespoon pesto sauce (store-bought or homemade)

1. Heat oven to 425° F. Place the vegetables in a large bowl and toss with the salt and olive oil.
2. Spread out the vegetables on large rimmed baking sheet. Roast until they are softened and brown in spots, about 13 minutes. Remove from oven.
3. Place the crust on a pizza paddle or large cutting board. Sprinkle the crust with mozzarella and top with vegetables. Place dollops of ricotta cheese around the crust and sprinkle with Parmesan.
4. Carefully slide the pizza directly onto middle oven rack and bake until the cheese is melted and bubbly, about 7 to 8 minutes. Remove carefully onto paddle or cutting board. Drizzle with pesto and serve.

Per slice: 190 calories, 8 grams fat, 3 grams saturated fat, 9 grams protein, 20 grams carbohydrates, 3 grams fiber, 220 mg sodium

BRUSSELS SPROUTS PIZZA WITH GOAT CHEESE

- 2 teaspoons honey, divided
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- 1 12-inch prebaked 100% whole-wheat thin crust
- 2½ cups thinly sliced Brussels sprouts
- 1 small red onion, thinly sliced
- 3 oz. crumbled goat cheese
- 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 tablespoons chopped unsalted pistachio nuts

1. Heat oven to 425° F. Drizzle 1 teaspoon of the honey on the crust.
2. In a large bowl, toss Brussels sprouts with olive oil and salt.
3. Place the crust on a pizza paddle or large cutting board. Top the crust evenly with the Brussels sprouts, onion, goat cheese, Parmesan, and pistachios.
4. Carefully slide pizza directly onto middle oven rack and bake until the cheese is melted and the pizza is hot, about 10 minutes.
5. Remove the pizza carefully onto the paddle or cutting board. Drizzle with the remaining 1 teaspoon honey and serve.







Per slice: 170 calories, 8 grams fat, 2.5 grams saturated fat, 7 grams protein, 20 grams carbohydrates, 4 grams fiber, 150 mg sodium

Ratings > **Pizza Party** A frozen pizza that can compete with takeout is crispy on the bottom but moist and chewy on the top. The sauce should taste fresh and the cheese should be flavorful plus have stretch and a little chewiness.

Recommended	Product	Overall Score	Rating		Nutrition Information										Price	Flavor & Texture Description
			Nutrition score	Sensory score	Serving size	Calories	Fat (g)	Saturated fat (g)	Protein (g)	Carbohydrates (g)	Fiber (g)	Sugars (g)	Sodium (mg)	Package size (oz.)		
CHEESE																
	American Flatbread Tomato Sauce & Three Cheese Pizza	59	↓	↑	½ pizza	300	10	5	15	37	2	1	700	9.10	8.00	Very thin whole-grain crust and a blend of flavorful cheeses. Sauce has a slight fresh-tomato taste and olive oil and wine flavors, but it's sparse. Edges are slightly tough and crunchy.
	Amy's Cheese Pizza	59	↓	↑	⅓ pizza	290	12	5	12	33	2	4	590	13.00	8.00	Tender crust topped with mozzarella and a fresh-tasting tomato sauce with flavors of olive oil, garlic, and Italian spices.
	DiGiorno Original Rising Crust Four Cheese Pizza	57	↓	↑	½ pizza	290	10	4.5	14	36	1	5	670	28.20	7.00	Thick, breadlike crust with cornmeal crunch and a yeasty flavor. Flavorful blend of Italian cheeses. Plentiful sauce with big tomato and slight fennel flavors.
	California Pizza Kitchen Four Cheese Crispy Thin Crust Pizza	56	↓	↑	⅓ pizza	300	14	8	15	29	1	4	520	13.50	8.00	Thin crust topped with smoked Gouda and other cheeses. Fresh-tasting tomato sauce flavored with garlic and Italian spices, but a little light on the amount.
	Simply Balanced (Target) Organic Three Cheese Pizza	55	↓	↓	⅓ pizza	290	10	6	14	35	2	2	580	13.40	6.00	Thin, crispy, somewhat bland crust with charred edges and a smoky note reminiscent of a brick-oven pie. Topped with a unique blend of sharp cheeses.
	Trader Giotto's (Trader Joe's) Pizza 4 Formaggi	55	↓	↑	⅓ pizza	310	9	5	14	42	2	3	870	13.40	4.00	Thin, crispy, brick-oven-style crust. Topped with lots of stretchy Edam and Italian cheeses (no mozzarella) that add sharp flavors. Sauce is seasoned with oregano.
	Freschetta Artisan Crust Four Cheese Pizza	55	↓	↑	½ pizza	320	12	6	15	38	4	9	670	22.30	7.00	Soft, breadlike whole-grain crust. The slightly sweet sauce with slight fennel flavor somewhat overpowers the blend of Italian cheeses. Moderate heat.
	Amy's Gluten Free Cheese Pizza	49	↓	↓	⅓ pizza	320	16	4	10	34	2	5	590	12.00	10.00	Crust has a soft, slightly crumbly texture, like cornbread. Topped with sparse, mild mozzarella cheese and fresh-tasting sauce.
	Newman's Own Thin & Crispy Pizza Four Cheese	48	↓	↓	⅓ pizza	340	16	9	19	34	2	2	680	14.40	6.00	Thin, crispy crust with lots of flavorful cheese and sparse, mild tomato sauce. Garlicky and a bit salty, with slight heat.
	Freschetta Naturally Rising Crust 4 Cheese Medley Pizza	47	↓	↑	½ pizza	380	14	7	16	48	2	9	900	26.11	5.00	Thick, breadlike crust topped with a blend of Italian cheeses. Plentiful sauce heavily seasoned with Italian spices, garlic, and slight fennel. Has some heat.
	365 Everyday Value (Whole Foods) Thin Crust Pizza Four Cheese	47	↓	↓	⅓ pizza	320	14	7	16	31	2	9	700	12.50	4.00	Has a soft white-bread crust. Plentiful cheese and Italian spices. Slight heat and big dehydrated-garlic flavor.
	Tombstone Original 5 Cheese Pizza	46	↓	↓	¼ pizza	340	15	7	17	33	2	3	570	19.80	5.00	Somewhat bland, white-bread-style crust topped with plentiful cheese. Has a slightly sour tomato sauce with slight heat.
	Freschetta Gluten Free 4 Cheese Medley Pizza	44	↓	↓	¼ pizza	330	15	8	12	36	1	7	670	17.50	10.00	Crust is crispy and thinner than most and topped with lots of Italian cheeses with a "browned" flavor. But the crust has a very chewy texture that detracts overall.
	Against the Grain Three Cheese Gluten Free Pizza	43	↓	↓	½ pizza	400	23	8	15	32	0	1	420	24.00	12.00	Cheddar-cheese crust is crispy on the outside and somewhat doughy on the inside. Lots of mozzarella and other Italian cheeses. Sauce tastes fresh.

Recommended	Product	Overall Score	Rating		Nutrition Information									Price	Flavor & Texture Description
			Nutrition score	Sensory score	Serving size	Calories	Fat (g)	Saturated fat (g)	Protein (g)	Carbohydrates (g)	Fiber (g)	Sugars (g)	Sodium (mg)		

CHEESE *Continued*

	Udi's Gluten Free Three Cheese Pizza	41			½ pizza	360	15	9	12	45	2	6	570	10.00	8.50	Crispy thin crust topped with a blend of Italian cheeses and a slightly sweet sauce. A bit heavy on the dehydrated spices, which add a slight bitterness.
	Red Baron Thin & Crispy Crust Five Cheese Pizza	37			½ pizza	360	16	9	13	40	2	9	840	14.76	5.00	Thin crust. Thicker sauce, like tomato paste. Heavy seasonings somewhat overwhelm the mild cheeses. Slight heat.
	Daiya Cheeze Lover's Gluten-Free Pizza	37			½ pizza	390	17	4.5	4	54	5	4	670	15.70	10.00	Multigrain crust, slightly doughy center. Faux "cheese" is crunchy and didn't melt. Thicker sauce, like tomato paste.

VEGETABLE

	Trader Giotto's (Trader Joe's) Organic Roasted Vegetable Pizza	62			½ pizza	300	11	4.5	12	36	5	4	550	16.08	4.50	Crispy crust. Plentiful roasted pepper, eggplant, zucchini, onion, mozzarella, and soft mild cheese, with tomato sauce.
	Dr. Oetker Virtuoso Thin + Crispy Crust Pizza Vegetable Medley	61			½ pizza	260	12	4.5	8	30	2	4	530	13.60	4.00	Lots of fresh-tasting cherry tomatoes, peppers, and red onion, with mozzarella and other cheeses. Sparse, mild tomato sauce with garlic. Pepperoncini adds heat.
	American Flatbread Revolution Thin & Crispy Pizza	60			½ pizza	360	12	6	17	45	3	4	820	16.80	10.00	Thin crust with crispy edges and a whole-grain flavor. Topped with thinly sliced mushrooms, onions with a caramelized flavor, and lots of cheese. Fresh-tasting.
	Amy's Roasted Vegetable Pizza No Cheese	54			½ pizza	280	9	1.5	7	42	3	5	540	12.00	9.00	Slightly doughy crust. Lots of caramelized onions, red pepper, artichoke, and mushrooms. No cheese. Balsamic vinegar and garlic flavors.
	DiGiorno Thin & Crispy Pizza Garden Vegetable	54			½ pizza	210	10	4.5	9	24	2	2	420	12.50	4.00	Thin, crispy crust. Has zucchini, red and yellow peppers, onion, mozzarella, dollops of creamy white sauce, and spices.
	Whole Foods Market Wood-Fired Pizza Marinated Grilled Vegetables	52			½ pizza	260	10	4	10	33	4	4	720	13.40	6.00	Whole-grain crust with mozzarella and large grilled pieces of red and yellow peppers, zucchini, eggplant, broccoli, and asparagus. Smoky note. Crust is crisp on the edges, but waterlogged vegetables result in a slightly soggy center.
	Freschetta Brick Oven Crust Roasted Mushroom & Spinach Pizza	49			½ pizza	260	10	4	10	34	2	8	590	22.52	6.00	Crust has crispy edges. Topped with lots of slightly soggy spinach, mushroom slices, and garlic pieces. The flavor of the mediocre Alfredo-style sauce dominates.

HOW WE TEST: CR's nutrition and food-testing team rated frozen pizzas for nutrition and taste.

The **Overall Score** is a combination of the two. The **Nutrition score** is based on energy density (calories per gram), total fat, saturated

fat, fiber, sugars, sodium, and other nutrients. Extra weighting is given for influential nutrients, either positive

or negative, respective to the pizza. **Sensory scores** are based on the results of a blind tasting by a trained sensory panel.

Good (for You) to the Last Drop

Your morning cup of joe may have some surprising health perks. Here, we spill the beans on the latest research, share our top picks of coffees and coffee makers, and more.

America has a serious coffee habit. Though a steaming cup of joe has fueled the morning routines of many for generations, U.S. coffee consumption is now at an all-time high: Approximately 62 percent of Americans drank it every day in 2017—an increase of 5 percentage points over the previous year, according to the National Coffee Association. And this jonesing for java isn't limited to a single market or demographic.

COFFEE DRINKERS ACROSS all age groups, from teens to seniors, have a seemingly insatiable thirst for the stuff. Many of us also have a growing preference for high-quality brew, with more than half the coffee we consume now classified as gourmet. It's a preference that's becoming much easier to indulge: The number of specialty coffee roasters and shops (think Intelligentsia, La Colombe, and Stumptown, as well as untold numbers of small independent shops) increased tenfold between 1993 and 2013.

Most of the coffee we drink, though, is still brewed at home, in no-nonsense drip coffee makers. (See our ratings of the best, on page 25.) And in their ceaseless quest for the perfect cup, aficionados are also experimenting with new and rediscovered “artisanal” brewing methods, which, it turns out, really do make a difference in how



Stand Your Grounds

The Chemex coffee maker produces a balanced brew that earned high marks from our tasters.

We Tested It

coffee tastes. (See our comparison of five methods in “Battle of the Brewers,” on page 23.)

Retailers, eager to cater to devotees willing to pay premium prices, are offering fresh gourmet beans from around the world. According to market research firm Mintel, 30 new Ethiopian coffees hit the U.S. market between 2012 and 2016, more than from any other African country. (See our ratings of Ethiopian beans, on page 24.)

But the best news about our collective coffee craze is that it appears to be good for us. A raft of research done in the past two decades has shown that coffee may well be linked to a reduced risk of a number of illnesses, including certain cancers, heart disease, and perhaps even Alzheimer’s disease.

Powerful Health Benefits

A few decades ago coffee was considered not healthy and possibly harmful, says Edward Giovannucci, M.D., Ph.D., a researcher and professor of nutrition and epidemiology at Harvard’s T.H. Chan School of Public Health. “But more recent studies seem to suggest that there’s a benefit to drinking coffee,” he says.

The largest analysis we’ve seen examining coffee consumption and health, based on two studies that

Regular coffee drinkers seem to have a lower risk of type 2 diabetes, Parkinson’s, and Alzheimer’s.

included more than 700,000 people from more than 10 countries, was published online in *Annals of Internal Medicine* last summer.

Researchers from several universities across the U.S. and Europe found that coffee drinkers were less likely to die prematurely. In one study, those who drank one to three cups of coffee per day were 12 to 18 percent less likely to die during the study period from any cause, including cancer and heart, liver, and respiratory diseases. These results suggest that moderate coffee drinking is not detrimental to your health and could even have health benefits, says Neil Murphy, Ph.D., a scientist at the World Health Organization and a lead author of one of the studies.

Other research published in the past five years has found that regular coffee drinkers seem to have a lower

risk of type 2 diabetes and Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s diseases, as well as healthier livers, faster metabolism, and decreased risks of endometrial, prostatic, and colorectal cancers.

Studies have also confirmed what most of us already know: The caffeine in coffee can make you more alert and increase concentration, and may boost learning, decision-making, and performance on cognitive tasks.

Researchers think that the keys to coffee’s health benefits are the antioxidants and other biologically active compounds responsible for its distinctive flavor. “It could be a combination of all of these compounds working together,” says V. Wendy Setiawan, Ph.D., an associate professor of preventive medicine at the University of Southern California’s Keck School of Medicine and a researcher on one of the studies published in *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Some Coffee Caution

Don’t assume that more is better: Increasing your coffee consumption beyond three cups a day might not up its health benefits. In fact, certain studies have suggested a link between more than four or five cups a day and lower bone density, especially in those at higher risk of osteoporosis. (Caffeine potentially limits the body’s

What’s in Your Coffee Cup?

Even if your morning perk-up starts out as a health benefit, you can mess up a good thing with those little extras you stir in. If you drink two cups a day, for example, each with 2 ounces

of cream (120 calories) and 2 teaspoons of sugar (32 calories), you’ll take in about 300 calories and 24 grams of fat—that’s more calories and twice the fat of a jelly doughnut from Dunkin’ Donuts.

The milk you choose can also make a difference. (According to the Department of Agriculture, Americans bought more than twice as much 2 percent and whole milk as either 1 percent or

nonfat in 2016.) A switch from, say, whole milk to 1 percent and less sugar can make a real impact on the calories you’re consuming with your coffee. Simply look at our nutritional breakdown for guidance.

2 OUNCES OF	Soy Milk*	Nonfat Milk	1% Milk	2% Milk	Whole Milk	Half and Half	Cream
CALORIES	20	22	26	30	38	74	120
GRAMS OF FAT	1	0	0.5	1	2	6.5	12

*Unsweetened.

Watch What You Add

Stirring in too much cream and sugar can significantly decrease the health benefits of your daily cup.



$\left(\begin{array}{c} \text{CREAM} \\ 2 \text{ ounces} \end{array} + \begin{array}{c} \text{SUGAR} \\ 2 \text{ teaspoons} \end{array} \right) \times 2 \text{ CUPS OF COFFEE A DAY} = 300 \text{ CALORIES} \ \& \ 24 \text{ GRAMS OF FAT}$

We Tested It

absorption of calcium, but adding 2 tablespoons of milk to each cup can help counteract this effect.)

Other researchers have found that certain compounds in coffee can raise cholesterol, although some evidence suggests that brewing with a filter might trap those compounds.

The caffeine in coffee can also have undesired effects: Just one cup can cause sleep problems and irritability in some people, and even regular coffee drinkers can experience headaches, nausea, anxiety, jitters, and increased blood pressure when they drink more than their bodies can handle.

How much caffeine is too much? U.S. government dietary guidelines say that up to 400 mg per day—the amount in about two to four 8-ounce cups of coffee, depending on the type of bean and how it's brewed—can be part of a healthy diet for most adults.

Certain high-risk groups, however, should limit their caffeine intake. Pregnant women should consume no more than 200 mg per day (the amount in about one 12-ounce cup of coffee) because caffeine could increase the risk of spontaneous abortion as well as growth delays in the fetus. Caffeine can also prevent the absorption of or

create new side effects of common drugs, such as certain antibiotics, antidepressants, and antipsychotics. Ask your doctor whether it's safe to drink coffee if you're on medication.

For people who need to avoid caffeine, drinking decaffeinated coffee may also be a healthy option, Harvard's Giovannucci says. Recent research suggests that decaf provides health benefits similar to those of caffeinated coffee but without the side effects. Decaf has slightly fewer antioxidants than a regular cup, but research shows that it's also associated with a lower risk of type 2 diabetes and many other perks.

The Truth About Coffee Packaging

Not all labels have genuine meaning. Here's how to tell the difference.

If you rely on labels for information about a product's environmental impact and fair-trade policies, you should know that certain claims on coffee labels are essentially meaningless: Terms including "ethically/sustainably farmed," "shade grown," and "direct trade" lack any legal definition or industry standards. But you can rely on certain seals to indicate the conditions under which coffee was grown. Charlotte Vallaeys, Consumer Reports' senior policy analyst and our top food labels expert, explains what these five common labels mean.



USDA Organic

The term "organic" is strictly regulated by the Department of Agriculture. In the case of coffee farms, this seal means synthetic fertilizers and synthetic pesticides that can be harmful to farmers and wildlife are banned. The label also ensures that soil quality is protected.



Fairtrade

This seal indicates that the beans were sourced directly from small-scale farmers who were paid a fair price. The certification organization, Fairtrade International, sets a minimum price—enough to cover the costs of sustainable production—that must be paid directly to coffee producers. A premium added to the minimum price is distributed to coffee producers and must be invested in their communities or businesses.



Fair Trade Certified

Similar to Fairtrade, Fair Trade USA means farmers are paid a fair price for their coffee beans. Unlike Fairtrade, Fair Trade USA's standards allow beans to be grown on large farms with hired workers. When this is the case, the standards require workers be paid at least the local minimum wage and that the farm implements a plan to increase that to a living wage over time. It also means producers are paid an extra sum that is used by the farmers and workers to meet their individual and collective needs.



Bird Friendly Habitat

This seal certifies that the farm where the coffee was grown qualifies as a "bird friendly habitat" as defined by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center. It means that coffee carrying this seal not only is organic but also was grown in an environment that protected biodiversity and maintained native trees so that the coffee farm could remain an important habitat for birds and other wildlife.



Rainforest Alliance Certified

This seal means that some or all of the coffee in the bag is sourced from farms that have met standards aimed at promoting sustainability and protecting farmers, forests, wildlife, and local communities. But Rainforest Alliance standards for minimizing pesticide use and incorporating native trees are not as stringent as those behind the Bird Friendly Habitat designation.

Battle of the Brewers

We asked our expert tasters to evaluate coffee made using five popular methods. The results reveal that the flavor of the final product is shaped in part by the brewing technique you choose.

For a clean, balanced cup
Chemex



Chemex
\$46

THE BREWER

This hourglass-shaped pour-over coffee maker differs from other pour-over models because of the Chemex-branded filters, which are made of heavy paper and designed to regulate the filtration rate and keep out sediment. The glass body has a wooden handle that wraps around the neck of the carafe. It's easy to pour coffee from the Chemex, but the narrow neck makes it difficult to clean by hand. The wooden handle isn't dishwasher-safe, but it can be easily removed.

THE RESULTS

Coffee brewed in the Chemex earned high marks for complexity, acidity, and overall quality in our taste tests; the filter minimized the presence of solids in the cup. If you like an aromatic, balanced brew with sweet, juicy undertones, this one's for you.

For a bold, full-bodied taste
French Press



**Bodum Chambord
8 Cup Coffee Maker**
\$40

THE BREWER

French presses brew by allowing coarsely ground beans to steep (usually for about 4 minutes) in hot water. The grounds are separated from the coffee and pushed to the bottom of the carafe when a built-in filter is depressed. This sizable Bodum Chambord brews up to eight cups at once, and it's easy to pour from. The fine-mesh filter forms a tight seal with the glass walls of the carafe, helping keep grounds out of the brewed coffee—a common problem with cheaper models.

THE RESULTS

Without a paper filter, the coffee holds on to its natural oils, creating a full-bodied taste. The mesh filter holds back most of the grounds, but small, powderlike coffee grounds (called "fines") can remain in the brew, creating a somewhat viscous cup.

For a refined single serving
AeroPress



**AeroPress
Coffee Maker**
\$30

THE BREWER

This one-of-a-kind miniature coffee maker sits on top of a mug and is small enough to travel with. Mix water and grounds in the carafe, then plunge the top down to force the brewed mixture through a microfilter designed to capture even very fine particles. Our tester noted that the process is a bit precarious because the tool has to be balanced on top of a cup. It's also only big enough to brew a single cup at a time.

THE RESULTS

The AeroPress produced a high-quality brew, with good body and aromatics but just a touch less complexity. The company claims that—unlike a French press—this method leaves "no grit in your cup," but our tasters found that the coffee sometimes contained a bit of fine coffee silt.

For a simple, quality brew
Pour-Over



**Melitta 6-Cup
Pour-Over Brewer**
\$10

THE BREWER

Most pour-over coffee makers are little more than a filter basket that sits on top of a glass or ceramic carafe. The basket is lined with a paper filter, into which grounds are placed. This method puts you in control of a slow, careful pour over the entire bed of coffee, ensuring even distribution. The brewer is relatively easy to clean, dishwasher-safe—and cheap enough that you won't be heartbroken if the carafe shatters in the sink: The filter basket will work on top of other containers as well.

THE RESULTS

This brewing method earned high marks. Our tasters found that the pour-over coffee had full, juicy flavors that weren't too aggressive, with a smooth feel and sweet taste.

For easy, no-nonsense joe
Drip



**Cuisinart PerfectTemp
14 Cup DCC-3200**
\$100

THE BREWER

In general, drip coffee makers force you to sacrifice some control, but convenience often trumps perfection, especially first thing in the morning. At the top of our drip coffee maker ratings (see chart on page 25), this programmable model brews in the ideal temperature zone of 195° to 205° F and prepares 40 ounces in just 10 minutes. The controls are generally easy to use and intuitive.

THE RESULTS

Scoring slightly lower than other methods in complexity, smoothness, and overall quality, the drip method is hard to beat on convenience. Our tasters noted a higher astringency, and the fruity, somewhat sweeter notes of the coffee were masked by a sharper acidity.

Ratings > **Ethiopian Coffee** More coffees from Ethiopia are hitting store shelves than are gourmet grinds from any other African country.

Recommended	Product	Sensory Score	Specs		Price			Flavor Description
			Type	Darker roast	Per package (\$)	Per pound (\$)	Per 6-oz. serving or per K-Cup (¢)	
✓	La Colombe Coffee Roasters Ethiopia-YirgZ (12 oz.)	84	Whole Bean		15	20	51	Vibrant cup with a nice level of sweetness balanced with citrus, fruity flavors, and a hint of honey. A good one to savor black. Medium body.
✓	Green Mountain Coffee Organic Ethiopia Yirgacheffe (16-count)	75	K-Cup		19	NA	75	Well-balanced, with notes of chocolate, fruit, and a trace of citrus. Medium to full body.
✓	Birch Coffee Ethiopia Yirgacheffe (12 oz.)	74	Whole Bean		17	20	51	Tangy, with nice fruity layers and notes of lemon, berry, honey, and floral. Lighter body.
✓	Stumptown Coffee Roasters Ethiopia Duromina (12 oz.)	73	Whole Bean		16	24	61	Tangy, with very nice aromatics that are citrusy, fruity (tastes of cherry and currants), and floral but a trace grassy. Medium body.
Ⓢ	Trader Joe's Organic Fair Trade Shade Grown Ethiopian (13 oz.)	70	Whole Bean	•	10	12	31	Strong, with bold, earthy flavors and notes of dark chocolate and fruit (dried fruit, cherry). Bitter and astringent. Medium to full body.
✓	Irving Farm Coffee Roasters Konga Ethiopia (12 oz.)	70	Whole Bean		18	23	57	Traces of fruit, citrus, and malt but more grassy and less complex than those more highly rated. Light to medium roast and body.
Ⓢ	Coffee Beanery Ethiopian Yirgacheffe (16 oz.)	69	Whole Bean		17	14	32	Chocolate and fruity notes with medium-high sweetness. Medium roast with a medium to full body.
Ⓢ	Starbucks Ethiopia (16 oz.)	68	Whole Bean	•	14	14	32	Dark roast that has a smoky, strong flavor. Balanced, with a nice level of sweetness and chocolate and fruit flavors. More bitter than most. Medium to full body.
✓	Illy MonoArabica Ethiopia (8.8 oz.)	68	Whole Bean		15	27	63	Chocolate and fruity top notes but a bit woody (old tasting). Medium roast and body.
✓	The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf Ethiopia Yirgacheffe (16 oz.)	67	Whole Bean	•	14	14	35	Nice sweetness but a trace smoky and burnt, with fruity, citrus, and toasty top notes. Somewhat bitter and astringent. Medium to full body.
✓	Gloria Jean's Coffees Ethiopian Yirgacheffe (16 oz.)	67	Whole Bean	•	16	16	37	Fruity, with cocoa and a little bit smoky and earthy. A trace woody. Fairly strong cup with medium to full body.
	Archer Farms (Target) Organic Ethiopian Yirgacheffe (10 oz.)	60	Whole Bean	•	6	10	24	Smoky notes with dark chocolate and fruity (dried fruit, berries) flavors. Fairly strong cup that's somewhat bitter, with medium to full body. Medium-dark roast.
	Jim's Organic Coffee Ethiopian Sidamo Nura Korate (12 oz.)	58	Whole Bean	•	14	20	51	Traces of fruit, cocoa, and smoky burnt flavors, with bitter notes and low sweetness and acidity. Medium to full body. Not bad but also not delicious. Medium-dark roast.
	Peet's Coffee Ethiopian Fancy (16 oz.)	55	Whole Bean	•	18	18	41	Earthy character, with a little fruit and chocolate but also some burnt, bitter notes. Fairly strong flavor with some astringency. Medium body. Darker roast.
	Marley Coffee One Love Ethiopia Yirgacheffe (8 oz.)	50	Whole Bean	•	7	24	55	A bit earthy, with some fruit that tastes pulpy. Off-note of ferment. Astringency also detracts. Medium-dark roast.

HOW WE TEST: Two coffee experts tested and rated 15 Ethiopian coffees. Except for the K-Cup, each was brewed by drip method according

to the coffee company's directions or standard recipe. Eleven products were rated Excellent or Very Good,

and three of these are CR Best Buys. Those higher in the ratings generally had a more complex flavor and fewer defects. **Price** is per package;

prices per pound and per 6-ounce cup are also listed.

Ratings > **Drip Coffee Makers** They're easy to use and can brew up to 14 cups. Most can be programmed the night before to start in the morning.

Recommended	Brand & Model	Overall Score	Price	Test Results			Features			
				Brew performance	Convenience	Carafe handling	Brew time (min.)	Programmable	Small-batch setting	Brew-strength control
✓	Cuisinart PerfecTemp 14 Cup Programmable DCC-3200	84	\$100	↑	↑	↑	10	•	•	•
✓	Cuisinart PerfecTemp DCC-2800	83	\$100	↑	↑	↑	9	•	•	•
Ⓢ	Hamilton Beach 12 Cup Programmable 49465R	79	\$25	↑	↑	↑	10	•		
	Capresso SG220 12-Cup	79	\$60	↑	↑	↑	9	•		•
✓	Kenmore Elite 12-Cup 76772	78	\$90	↑	↑	↑	9	•	•	•
	KitchenAid KCM1202OB	78	\$80	↑	↑	↑	8	•	•	•
	KitchenAid 12-Cup with One Touch Brewing KCM1204	78	\$100	↑	↑	↑	8	•	•	•
✓	Cuisinart Brew Central DCC-1200	76	\$90	↑	↑	↑	9	•	•	
✓	Frigidaire Professional Programmable Drip FPDC12D7MS	75	\$45	↑	↑	↑	8	•		•
	Black+Decker CM4000S	73	\$40	↑	↑	↑	8	•		•
	Black+Decker CM2020B	73	\$40	↑	↑	↑	9	•	•	•
	Krups Savoy EC314050	73	\$80	↑	↑	↑	9	•	•	•
	Mr. Coffee BVMC-DMX85 HotShot Station	73	\$70	↑	↑	↑	10	•		•
	Ninja Bar Brewer CF085	72	\$170	↑	↑	↓	9	•	•	•
	KitchenAid 12-Cup KCM111OB	72	\$80	↑	↑	↑	8	•	•	•
	Mr. Coffee DW13	72	\$20	↑	↑	↑	10			
	Mr. Coffee BVMC-SJX33GT	72	\$30	↑	↑	↑	10	•		•
	Hamilton Beach The Scoop 2-Way Brewer 49980Z	71	\$80	↑	↑	↑	9	•	•	•
	KitchenAid Pour Over Brewer KCM0812	71	\$200	↑	↑	↓	12	•	•	•
	Cooks Programmable 12-Cup (JCPenney exclusive)	70	\$30	↑	↑	↑	10	•		
	Betty Crocker 12-Cup Stainless Steel BC-2809CB	70	\$30	↑	↑	↑	9	•		
	Mr. Coffee BVMC-PJX23 (Target exclusive)	70	\$30	↑	↑	↑	9	•		•
	Mr. Coffee Optimal Brew BVMC-PSTX91	69	\$70	↑	↑	↓	7	•		
	Cuisinart Coffee Plus CHW-12	68	\$80	↑	↑	↑	9	•	•	
	Hamilton Beach FlexBrew 2-Way Brewer 49976	66	\$80	↓	↑	↑	10	•	•	•
	Cuisinart Coffee Center SS-15	66	\$200	↑	↑	↑	9	•	•	•
	Krups KM730D50	66	\$70	↓	↑	↑	9	•		•
	Krups Savoy EC414050	66	\$80	↑	↑	↑	9	•	•	•

> Online members can go to [CR.org/coffeemakers](https://www.crisp.com/coffeemakers) for complete, up-to-date ratings.

HOW WE TEST: We calculate the **Overall Score** by measuring the temperature of water during the brew cycle, noting how long water

remains between 195° and 205° F—the standard set by the Specialty Coffee Association for optimal brewing. We assess **Convenience** of

the machine and carafe, noting how easy it is to program, fill its reservoir, install any filters, and clean. We also note how easy it is to handle the

carafe without drips or spills. **Brew time** is calculated to the nearest minute using 40 ounces of water on the machine's regular cycle.



New Ways to Use Your Noodle

Can penne made from chickpeas or fusilli made from lentils stand in for the traditional stuff—and be healthier? We fork over our findings.

“Life is a combination of magic and pasta,” said the Italian filmmaker Federico Fellini. And a growing number of us looking to cut back on carbs, avoid gluten, and pump up our plant-protein intake are now turning to a new breed of noodles to perform those nutritional magic tricks.

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

TRADITIONAL PASTA is made from semolina, a refined flour derived from durum wheat. But the new pastas are made from grains such as quinoa and legumes such as chickpeas and lentils. So-called alternative pastas—which Whole Foods named one of the top 10 food trends for 2017—are perceived as better for you. “They intersect with virtually every healthy food trend in today’s marketplace,” says Rachel Cheatham, Ph.D., an adjunct assistant professor of nutrition at Tufts University. So we tested 13 alternative pastas to see whether they meet consumer expectations for nutrition and taste.

Noodle Nutrition

Americans trying to eat fewer carbs may be disappointed to discover that the carb counts of these new pastas aren’t always much lower than regular pasta. A 2-ounce serving of traditional

We Tested It

pasta—½ cup dry, which cooks up to about 1 cup—has about 43 grams of carbs. The same-size serving of the alternative pastas we looked at had 32 to 46 grams. Nor are there big differences in calorie counts: 2 ounces of dry regular pasta has 210 calories; bean or quinoa noodles have 190 to 210 calories.

But there are other reasons to add alternative pastas to your culinary repertoire. Eating legumes and whole grains is linked to improved cardiovascular health, a lower risk for type 2 diabetes, and better weight control—benefits that can be attributed in great part to their protein and fiber content.

Like the beans themselves, legume pastas are packed with plant protein. The ones we tested ranged from 11 to 15 grams per 2-ounce serving. “The bean pastas are a good way for people who don’t like beans in their natural state to get the benefits of legumes,” says Amy Keating, R.D., a Consumer Reports dietitian.

Despite quinoa’s reputation for being a protein-rich grain, pastas made with it usually contain a blend of flours, sometimes including wheat. The ones we looked at had just 4 to 8 grams of protein per serving. (Regular pasta averages 7 grams.)

All of the alternative pastas we tested had enough fiber to be considered a good source of the nutrient (3 or more grams per serving). But some had 8 or more grams. “Getting more fiber has many health benefits,” says Marvin M. Lipman, M.D. “But if you aren’t used to consuming large amounts in one sitting, it can cause bloating, cramping, and gas.” To avoid these problems, he says, increase fiber intake gradually and drink plenty of water.

Pasta made from beans and grains

like quinoa often falls squarely in the gluten-free category. That doesn’t make food more nutritious, but if you have a bona fide gluten intolerance, then the rise of alternative pastas may be a boon for you. Look for a logo that says “certified gluten-free,” because not all alternative pastas are made from gluten-free ingredients.

The Truth About the Taste

High-quality traditional pasta will have a firm texture when cooked (al dente, or “to the tooth”). It should be easy to bite into but offer some resistance. As you chew the noodle, the pasta should hold together well, not crumble or melt away in your mouth. None of the bean or quinoa pastas we prepared and tested met this standard entirely, but the top-rated red-lentil pastas came the closest.

The red-lentil pastas were also tops in taste. None of the black-bean, chickpea, or quinoa pastas scored higher than Good for texture or taste. But the top-ranked brands in each category are still worth a try; the flavor and texture defects were less noticeable when the pastas were paired with the right toppings. (See our in-house chef’s suggestions for flavorful sauces in “Give Red Sauce a Rest,” page 30.)

It’s true that alternative pastas are pricier than regular pasta. For packages of 8 to 12 ounces, we paid \$2.50 to \$10 for the bean and quinoa pastas we tested, with our top picks in each category costing \$2.50 to \$5 per box. But because of their protein content, spending more on spaghetti may translate into savings at the supermarket if you’re spending less on other protein sources, such as meat or fish, Cheatham says.

Go With the Whole Grain

Whole-wheat pastas are a healthier and surprisingly tasty choice.

If you’re looking for a more nutritious alternative to regular pasta that costs less than the legume and quinoa varieties, try whole-wheat. The package sizes of the products we tested were 12 to 16 ounces and the prices were \$1.50 to \$3 per box. Like white pasta, whole-wheat pasta is made from durum wheat but contains all three parts of the grain—bran, endosperm, and germ. That means it has more nutrients and about 3 to 4 additional grams of fiber per serving than the regular kind.

Another plus: In terms of flavor and texture, some whole-wheat noodles come close to traditional ones. We gave Barilla Whole Grain Penne and Ronzoni Healthy Harvest 100% Whole Grain Penne Rigate Very Good taste ratings. The remaining five brands received Good ratings. In order of quality, they are De Cecco 100% Whole Wheat Penne Rigate, 365 Everyday Value (Whole Foods) Organic Whole Wheat Penne Rigate, Trader Giotto’s (Trader Joe’s) Organic Whole Wheat Penne Rigate, DeLallo Organic 100% Whole Wheat Penne Rigate, and Hodgson Mill Whole Wheat Whole Grain Penne.

1. Explore Cuisine Organic Red Lentil Penne **2. Ancient Harvest** Organic Supergrain **3. Banza** Penne Made From Chickpeas **4. Pasta Lensi** Red Lentil Fusilli **5. Ancient Harvest** POW Black Bean Elbows **6. Tolerant** Organic Black Bean Penne **7. Hodgson Mill** UltraGrain Penne With Quinoa **8. Ancient Harvest** POW Red Lentil Rotini **9. Explore Cuisine** Organic Chickpea Fusilli **10. Tolerant** Organic Red Lentil Penne **11. Pasta Lensi** Chickpea Casarecce **12. Trader Joe’s** Organic Black Bean Rotini **13. DeBoles** Quinoa Plus Golden Flax Penne.



We Tested It

Good News for Carb Lovers

Cold pasta, whole grains, and some legumes contain resistant starch, which may improve blood sugar and gut health, and make you feel fuller.

CARBS CAN BE sources of resistant starch, or RS, a carbohydrate similar to fiber with some of the same benefits. Research on RS is in its early stages, but here's what we know now:

It's Good for Your Gut (and More)

"If you don't get enough fermentable fiber, like resistant starch, you risk the

buildup of mucus-consuming bacteria that will degrade the protective lining of your intestines, allowing pathogens to gain access," says Michael Keenan, Ph.D., a professor of nutrition and food sciences at Louisiana State University. A thinner-than-optimal intestinal lining could put you at greater risk of inflammatory bowel disease and colon cancer.

Blood sugar (glucose) levels rise more slowly after meals with resistant starch, which helps the body use insulin better. This may improve type 2 diabetes control and weight management. And the starch might even increase fat burning. According to a small study in the journal *Nutrition & Metabolism*, people burned 23 percent more fat after a meal with 5 percent resistant starch than they usually did after a meal without it.

Eat More Fiber to Get More RS

"We don't really know how much resistant starch we need because we don't even really know how to measure it properly," says Diane Birt, Ph.D., distinguished professor of food science and human nutrition at Iowa State University. Your best bet is to increase your fiber intake to at least 25 to 30 grams per day, and include foods known to contain resistant starch: whole grains and seeds; chickpeas, kidney beans, and lentils; and underripe bananas.

Carb Salad Is No Joke

Pasta, potatoes, and white rice have a resistant starch that forms when foods are cooked, then cooled—a process that alters the chemical structure of the carbs in these foods. Pasta or potato salad, anyone?

Give Red Sauce a Rest

The best toppings for bean pastas from CR's Claudia Gallo, a professional chef.

MEXICAN BLACK-BEAN ROTINI

Combine 5½ cups cooked, drained hot pasta with 1 cup frozen corn kernels (defrosted), 1 chopped red pepper, 2 chopped tomatoes, ½ chopped small red onion, and 1 chopped avocado. For the dressing, combine ¼ cup fresh lime juice, ⅓ cup olive oil, ½ teaspoon salt, and ⅛ teaspoon cayenne pepper. Combine with black-bean mixture and top with chopped fresh cilantro. Makes 6 servings.

CHICKPEA FUSILLI FORMAGGIO

Toss 3½ cups cooked, drained hot pasta with ¼ cup olive oil, ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese, and fresh parsley. Makes 4 servings.

RED, WHITE, AND GREEN ROTINI

Toss 4 cups cauliflower florets and 1 pint grape tomatoes in 3 tablespoons olive oil and ¼ teaspoon each salt and black pepper. Roast on a rimmed sheet pan at 425°F for 25 to 30 minutes. Add 2 cloves garlic, sliced, during last 5 minutes. Cook an 8-ounce package of red-lentil rotini and drain, reserving 1 cup of pasta water. Stir in cauliflower mixture, 5 ounces of baby spinach, ½ cup grated Asiago cheese, and pasta water to moisten. Makes 4 servings.

Ratings > **Noodles by the Numbers** Calories and carbs are similar to regular pasta, but fiber and protein are usually higher.



Product	Rating		Nutrition Information					Pricing				Ingredients	CR's Take
	Taste	Nutrition	Calories	Fat (g)	Carbs (g)	Fiber (g)	Protein (g)	Package size (oz.)	Price per package (\$)	# Servings per package	Cost per serving (\$)		
RED LENTIL													
Ancient Harvest POW Red Lentil Rotini	↑	↑	200	1	35	7	14	8	4.50	4	1.13	Red-lentil flour, organic quinoa flour	Chewy, with a clean, complex flavor that tastes of red lentils. A tad crumbly and slightly chalky. Pairs well with red sauce.
Explore Cuisine Organic Red Lentil Penne	↑	↑	190	1	35	3	11	8	5.00	4	1.25	Organic red-lentil flour (73%), organic brown-rice flour	Mild red-lentil flavor; slightly earthy. Texture is soft and slightly chewy, with slight to moderate chalkiness.
Tolerant Organic Red Lentil Penne*	↓	↑	200	1	35	7	14	12	9.00	6	1.50	Non-GMO organic red lentils	Earthy notes and slightly bitter. Slightly crumbly, mushy, and chalky texture. Flavor is better than texture.
Pasta Lensi Red Lentil Fusilli	↓	↑	200	1	34	3	15	10	4.90	5	0.98	Red-lentil flour	Flavor is a bit earthy with a hint of bitterness. Texture gets mushy and chalky as you chew.
CHICKPEA													
Explore Cuisine Organic Chickpea Fusilli	↓	↑	200	2.5	35	5	11	8	5.00	4	1.25	Organic chickpea flour (60%), organic brown-rice flour, organic tapioca starch, organic pea protein	Slightly starchy, beanlike flavor. Has a chewy, slightly rubbery texture, but it's still worth a try. Pairs well with red sauce, which made the flavor defects less noticeable.
Pasta Lensi Chickpea Casarecce	↓	↑	210	3	34	7	12	10	3.50	5	0.70	Chickpea flour	Soft, with a beany flavor and a chalky, mushy texture. Slightly astringent.
Banza Penne Made From Chickpeas	↓	↑	190	3.5	32	8	14	8	3.00	4	0.75	Chickpeas, tapioca pea protein, xanthan gum	Moderately bitter. Mushy and slight chalky texture. Slightly astringent.
BLACK BEAN													
Trader Joe's Organic Black Bean Rotini	↓	↑	200	1.5	35	15	14	12	3.00	6	0.50	Organic black-bean flour	Clean, good black-bean flavor and slight bitterness. Texture is slightly mushy, chalky, and crumbly. Astringent.
Tolerant Organic Black Bean Penne*	↓	↑	210	1	36	10	14	12	10.00	6	1.67	Non-GMO organic black beans	Black-bean flavor with a slight to moderate bitterness. Chalky, slightly crumbly, and rather gritty. Astringent.
Ancient Harvest POW Black Bean Elbows	↓	↑	190	1	35	7	12	8	4.50	4	1.13	Black-bean flour, brown-rice flour, organic quinoa flour	Notable lingering bitterness overpowers mild black-bean flavor. Chalky and very soft, mushy, and sticky. Astringent.
QUINOA BLENDS													
Hodgson Mill UltraGrain Penne With Quinoa	↓	↓	190	1	41	3	8	12	2.50	6	0.42	Ultra-grain whole-wheat flour, durum flour, quinoa flour	Slight nutty taste that's reminiscent of whole-wheat pasta; slightly bitter and starchy. Chewy and slightly crumbly texture.
DeBoles Quinoa Plus Golden Flax Penne	↓	↓	200	2	43	3	5	8	3.60	4	0.90	Whole-grain brown-rice flour, rice flour, whole-grain quinoa flour, flaxseed, xanthan gum, ascorbic acid	Tastes of nondescript grains; one sample was moderately bitter and slightly sour. Starchy and crumbly.
Ancient Harvest Organic Supergrain Penne	↓	↓	210	1	46	4	4	8	3.00	4	0.75	Organic corn flour, organic quinoa flour	Tastes of nondescript grains; slightly sweet. Chewy, slightly crumbly texture. Astringent, with a grainy mouthfeel. Moderately bitter.

HOW WE TEST: We evaluated 13 legume- and quinoa-based pastas for nutrition and taste. Eight ounces of each pasta was cooked

in 2½ quarts of boiling water with 2 teaspoons of salt added. Using package directions, we established

the cooking time in an attempt to achieve an al dente texture before testing began. Each type (e.g., black bean) was evaluated

separately. Tastings were blind, and the taste and texture descriptions are based on sampling the pastas plain.

*The serving size on this product label is 3 ounces, but we calculated the values for 2 ounces for easy comparison with the other products.

The Whole Truth About Whole-Milk Yogurt

It might not surprise you that, compared with low-fat versions, whole-milk yogurt often tastes superior. But emerging evidence shows that it could also have health benefits.

Stroll through the dairy aisle of your grocery store and you may notice that fat is back—at least in the yogurt case. Although low-fat and nonfat yogurts still dominate, according to market research firm Mintel, there has been an astounding 2,675 percent increase in the number of whole-milk yogurt products on store shelves in the past decade as consumers more and more perceive “whole” products to be healthier.

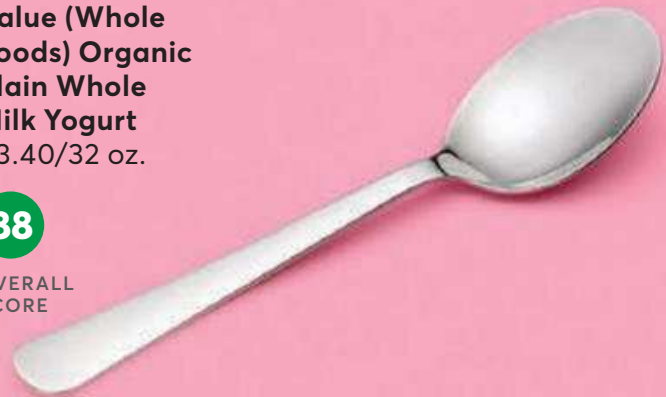




365 Everyday Value (Whole Foods) Organic Plain Whole Milk Yogurt
\$3.40/32 oz.

88

OVERALL SCORE



Dannon Oikos Plain Whole Milk Greek Yogurt
\$5/32 oz.

87

OVERALL SCORE



Fage Total Strawberry Whole Milk Greek Yogurt (split cup)
\$1.80/5.3 oz.

84

OVERALL SCORE



Liberté Organic Baja Strawberry Whole Milk Yogurt
\$2/5.5 oz.

79

OVERALL SCORE



We Tested It

SWITCHING TO WHOLE MILK could be a taste revelation. The flavor is rich, and the texture is often creamier than even the creamiest low-fat versions.

Plus you might not need to choose between health and taste. Scientists are just now starting to dig into the research about whole-milk dairy products, says Dariush Mozaffarian, M.D., Dr.P.H., dean of the Gerald J. and Dorothy R. Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University in Massachusetts. “What it suggests is that there may be health benefits to whole-fat dairy.”

But not all yogurts are created equal. Consumer Reports’ food testers looked at 23 whole-milk regular and Greek products in two flavors, plain and berry.

Dairy Fat’s Nutritional Benefits

“In observational studies we see clear associations between consumption of all types of yogurt and lower risk of obesity, weight gain, and type 2 diabetes,” says Mario Kratz, Ph.D., an associate member at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle. For example, a 2014 Harvard analysis of studies found that a daily serving cut the risk of type 2 diabetes by 18 percent. A study of 1,500 adults published recently in the journal *Nutrition & Diabetes* found that those who ate the most dairy—1½ to 7 cups of butter, cheese, cream, milk, and yogurt per week—had less body fat, a smaller waist, and a lower body mass index than those who ate about ¾ cup or less. “When we drilled down into the different types of dairy, we saw especially promising results for yogurt,”

says Emma L. Feeney, Ph.D., lead author and research program manager of Food for Health Ireland at University College Dublin’s Institute of Food and Health.

Theories abound about why yogurt might be beneficial. One is that it’s loaded with protein, which some experts believe could help prevent weight gain by making you feel fuller, longer. But it may be more likely that other factors are responsible, Kratz says, such as the probiotics (good bacteria) or the complex mixture of micronutrients, vitamins, minerals (such as calcium), and fatty acids—of which dairy products may have more than 400 types.

In particular, a type of fat in dairy called sphingolipids appears to benefit the heart. But their effects on your health might depend on the food you get them from. “You can have dairy fat in the form of butter, and you can have the exact same amount in cheese, and it has quite a different effect,” Feeney says. “We just really don’t know what the best food matrix is to eat it in.”

Similarly, it’s not clear which type of yogurt—whole-milk or low-fat—has a nutritional advantage. Still, Mozaffarian says, “there’s little evidence that low-fat dairy is better.” If anything, he says, research suggests that whole-fat dairy products might be better.

Feeney’s study, for example, found that people who ate higher-fat dairy products had triglyceride levels that were just as healthy as, if not healthier than, those of people who ate lower-fat dairy. Several studies in children have found that eating whole-fat dairy is

associated with less weight gain over time than low-fat dairy. One 2013 study involving 10,700 preschoolers found that those who drank low-fat milk were more likely to be overweight or obese than those who drank whole milk.

Still, research doesn’t directly prove that eating yogurt (or any other type of dairy) causes you to be healthier, Kratz says. It could be that people who eat yogurt are healthier to begin with, he says, or that they’re eating yogurt in place of a less healthy snack, such as a jelly donut. For now you should factor any whole-milk yogurt you eat into your daily saturated-fat intake.

Avoid Sugar Shock

In our tests we found that fat and sugars vary across brands. “You really need to compare nutrition labels,” says Ellen Kloss, a CR nutritionist who led the testing. Certain flavored versions can have more sugars than some ice cream.

The American Heart Association recommends no more than 6 teaspoons (24 grams) of added sugars per day for women and no more than 9 teaspoons (36 grams) for men.

Not all the sugars in flavored yogurt come from added sugars—even plain yogurt has some sugars from the naturally occurring lactose in milk—but if you opt for flavored yogurt, check the ingredients to see how many kinds of sugars are listed. “The Brown Cow strawberry yogurt, which had the highest sugars content in our test,” Kloss says, “contained not just cane sugar but also honey and maple syrup.”

What's in That Treat?

Craving something cool and creamy? Check our comparison of plain and flavored whole-milk yogurt vs. ice cream.



Brown Cow Cream Top Whole Milk Yogurt Plain 6 oz. with 1 tsp. honey and ¼ cup strawberry slices

160 calories, 8 g fat, 4.5 g sat. fat, 6 g protein, 19 g carbs, and 17 g sugars (about 4 tsp.)



Brown Cow Cream Top Whole Milk Yogurt Strawberry 6 oz.

190 calories, 6 g fat, 3.5 g sat. fat, 5 g protein, 29 g carbs, and 28 g sugars (7 tsp.)



Häagen-Dazs Strawberry Ice Cream 6 oz.

360 calories, 23 g fat, 14 g sat. fat, 6 g protein, 33 g carbs, and 30 g sugars (about 8 tsp.)

TIP

Certain yogurts can have almost as many sugars as ice cream, so check the label before choosing.



Ratings ➤ **Spoon It Up** Yogurt, rich in protein, has long been acknowledged as a healthy snack, but the whole-milk version may have even more to recommend it.

Recommended	Product	Overall Score	Rating		Nutrition Information									Pricing		CR's Take
			Nutrition	Taste	Serving size (oz.)	Calories	Fat (g)	Sat. fat (g)	Protein (g)	Carbohydrates (g)	Sugars (g)	Sodium (mg)	Calcium %DV	Package size (oz.)	Average price per package (\$)	
REGULAR PLAIN																
✓	\$ 365 Everyday Value (Whole Foods) Organic Plain Whole Milk Yogurt	88	↑	↑↑	8	170	9	5	9	13	12	125	30	32	3.40	Full and creamy, with a mild, clean flavor that's not too tart.
✓	\$ Trader Joe's Organic Plain Whole Milk Yogurt	88	↑	↑↑	8	170	9	5	9	13	12	125	30	32	3.20	Full and creamy, with a mild, clean flavor that's not too tart.
✓	Stonyfield Smooth & Creamy Organic Plain Whole Milk Yogurt	76	↑	↑	8	170	9	5	9	13	12	125	30	32	4.80	Full and creamy. A slight puddinglike texture. Mild flavor that's not too tart.
✓	Annie's Organic Plain Whole Milk Yogurt	76	↑	↑	8	170	9	5	10	15	11	150	30	32	4.50	Full and creamy but thinner than others. One sample had very slight off-note.
✓	Brown Cow Cream Top Whole Milk Yogurt Plain	65	↑	↑	8	170	10	6	8	14	13	125	30	32	4.00	Slightly chalky, curdy yogurt that's on the tart side. Slight cheesy note.
	Organic Valley Grassmilk Plain Whole Milk Yogurt	58	↑	↓	8	180	9	5	10	15	15	160	35	24	4.50	Slightly chalky, curdy. On the tart side. Slight cheesy taste.
GREEK PLAIN																
✓	Dannon Oikos Plain Whole Milk Greek Yogurt	87	↑	↑↑	8	190	9	6	20	9	9	75	25	32	5.00	Full and creamy, with a clean flavor. Notably thick. Slightly astringent.
✓	Wallaby Organic Plain Whole Milk Greek Yogurt	87	↓	↑↑	8	210	10	6	19	10	6	100	25	32	6.00	Full, creamy, and thick, with a mild flavor; less tart than others. Slightly astringent.
✓	Stonyfield Organic Plain Whole Milk Greek Yogurt	76	↑	↑	8	190	8	5	22	8	7	140	30	30	7.30	Full, creamy, and thick. Slightly astringent. One lot had a slight cheesy note.
✓	Great Value (Walmart) Plain Whole Milk Greek Yogurt	70	↑	↑	8	190	8	5	21	10	8	80	35	32	3.80	Texture varied: One sample was less dense, with an almost whipped impression, and another was creamy smooth and more dense. Slightly chalky and astringent.
✓	Chobani Original Plain Whole Milk Greek Yogurt	70	↑	↑	8	190	9	6	20	8	6	85	25	32	6.00	Full, creamy, and thick. On the tart side. Slight cheesy taste. Slightly chalky and astringent.
	Trader Joe's Plain Whole Milk Greek Yogurt	58	↓	↑	8	280	22	14	8	12	10	105	30	16	2.50	Tasted more like sour cream and cream than yogurt. Had an almost whipped texture. Slightly chalky and astringent.
REGULAR BERRY																
✓	Liberté Organic Baja Strawberry Whole Milk Yogurt	79	↓	↑↑	5.5	210	11	7	4	23	20	65	10	5.5	2.00	Creamy, smooth, and quite thick. Big strawberry and dairy flavors; small pieces of fruit and seeds lend a fresh note. Sweeter and less tart than most. Dessertlike.
✓	Brown Cow Cream Top Whole Milk Yogurt Strawberry	72	↓	↑	6	190	6	3.5	5	29	28	75	20	6	1.30	Strawberry flavor with a generic "fruity" character. Moderately sweet and less tart than most. Has a taste of honey. Contains strawberry pieces and seeds.
✓	Stonyfield Organic 100% Grassfed Strawberry Whole Milk Yogurt	68	↓	↑	6	140	6	3.5	4	17	15	100	20	6	1.70	Full yogurt that is not too sweet, with mild strawberry flavor and a big dairy flavor. Has small fruit pieces and seeds. Very slight cheesy flavor.

Recommended	Product	Overall Score	Rating		Nutrition Information								Pricing		CR's Take
			Nutrition	Taste	Serving size (oz.)	Calories	Fat (g)	Sat. fat (g)	Protein (g)	Carbohydrates (g)	Sugars (g)	Sodium (mg)	Calcium %DV	Package size (oz.)	

REGULAR BERRY *Continued*

💰	Dannon Strawberry Whole Milk Yogurt	65	⬇️	⬆️	5.3	140	4.5	3	5	20	16	70	20	5.3	0.80	Creamy, smooth yogurt. Has some small fruit pieces and is moderately sweet. Strawberry flavor tastes a bit floral and has a candylike character.
	Dreaming Cow Grass Fed Strawberry Pomegranate Cream Top Yogurt	59	⬆️	⬇️	6	144	6	5	6	16	13	88	25	6	1.30	Thin texture. Mild strawberry and fruit flavor that is tangy, with little sweetness. Smooth, with no fruit pieces. Slightly chalky and astringent.

GREEK BERRY

✓	Fage Total Strawberry Whole Milk Greek Yogurt (split cup)	84	⬇️	⬆️	5.3	170	6	4.5	11	17	16	45	10	5.3	1.80	Creamy, full, and very thick. Has hints of cream with large strawberry pieces and seeds and fresh notes. Sweeter and less tart than most. Dessertlike.
✓	Siggi's Mixed Berries Whole Milk Icelandic Style Yogurt	75	⬆️	⬆️	4.4	140	4.5	3	12	12	8	55	10	4.4	1.80	Quite tart, thick, and creamy. Smooth, with no fruit pieces. Mild mixed-berry flavor and low in sweetness. Slightly chalky and astringent.
✓	Stonyfield Organic Strawberry Whole Milk Greek Yogurt (split cup)	72	⬇️	⬆️	5.3	150	4.5	2.5	12	16	15	130	15	5.3	1.50	Thick and creamy smooth, with small fruit pieces and seeds. Good balance of strawberry and yogurt flavor, but strawberry has a slight off-note. Moderately sweet.
✓	Wallaby Organic Strawberry Whole Milk Greek Yogurt	68	⬇️	⬆️	5.3	160	5	3.5	10	19	16	55	15	5.3	1.50	Thick. Good balance of strawberry and full yogurt taste with small strawberry pieces and seeds. Moderately sweet and less sour than most, with a very slight bitterness and hint of candylike strawberry impression. Slightly chalky.
	Maple Hill Creamery 100% Grass Fed Organic Strawberry Whole Milk Greek Yogurt	55	⬇️	⬇️	5.3	140	6	3.5	11	14	13	60	10	5.3	3.00	Thick and full. More dairy flavor, with mild strawberry flavor and few fruit pieces. Not too sweet. Slight cheesy note.

HOW WE TEST: CR's nutrition and food testing team rated whole-milk yogurts for nutrition and taste. The **Overall Score** is a combination of the two. The **Nutrition**

score is based on values for energy density (calories per gram of food), total fat, saturated fat, sodium, sugars, iron, and calcium. Extra weighting is given

for influential nutrients, either positive or negative, respective to the food. **Taste** ratings are based on the results of a blind tasting panel of trained sensory experts.

NOTE: Plain yogurts were purchased by the quart; serving sizes are 8 ounces, or 1 cup. Berry yogurts were single-serving containers; serving sizes vary.

Is Grass-Fed Always Greener?


'Grass Fed' is a term found on yogurt labels. What does it mean, and does it matter?

The "100% Grass Fed" label suggests that the dairy product came from a cow that ate only grass. The health advantages of grass-fed dairy are not fully understood, but here's what we do know: Milk from grass-fed cows has substantially more of the types of fat—such as omega-3s and conjugated linoleic acids—that are linked to benefits including weight loss and a lower risk of heart disease and certain cancers.

In certain grass-fed yogurts we tried, our taste panelists noted slight "grassy" or "cheesy"

flavors, which can take some getting used to, says CR nutritionist Ellen Klosz, who led our testing. Others tasted more like conventional yogurt. Grass-fed dairy is also a sustainable choice because grass-fed cows tend to be healthier and to require fewer antibiotics than their grain-fed relatives.

Not all grass-fed claims are verified. Look for certification with the "100% Grass Fed" claim, like "American Grassfed," "PCO Certified 100% GrassFed," or "Certified Grassfed by AGW."



Back to Nature
Multigrain
Flax Flatbread

SERVING SIZE:
3 CRACKERS

Nabisco Triscuit
Reduced Fat

SERVING SIZE:
6 CRACKERS

Dare Breton
Multigrain

SERVING SIZE:
4 CRACKERS

Nabisco Triscuit
Thin Crisps
Original

SERVING SIZE:
15 CRACKERS

Pass the Crackers

You might feel better about reaching for these party staples now: Many have recently undergone a 'healthy' makeover. We crunched the crackers (and the numbers) to tell you which are really nutritious and tasty, too.

Trader Joe's
Some Enchanted
Cracker
Multigrain

**SERVING SIZE:
4 CRACKERS**

Mary's Gone
Crackers
Super Seed
Chia & Hemp

**SERVING SIZE:
12 CRACKERS**

Crunchmaster
Multi-Seed
Original

**SERVING SIZE:
15 CRACKERS**

Glutino Gluten
Free Original

**SERVING SIZE:
8 CRACKERS**

Nabisco Ritz
Crackers
Whole Wheat

**SERVING SIZE:
5 CRACKERS**

Whether they're dressed up on a party platter or eaten straight out of the box, crackers are a perennial favorite. Ninety-two percent of consumers said they bought them in the previous six months, according to a survey from the market research firm Mintel.

VERSATILITY IS PART of their appeal, but 65 percent of those polled also think crackers make for an easy, healthy snack, and 56 percent think they're healthier than chips or pretzels.

Little wonder that manufacturers are moving more cracker choices onto retail shelves. Uncommon ingredients such as chickpeas, hemp seeds, millet, teff, and triticale are touted on packaging. Flowery phrases—such as “Barley and flax explode with good-for-you-nutrients”—abound. But are these new crackers really any healthier for you?

It depends on the cracker, CR found in its recent tests of 20 products. “A serving of healthier crackers could actually amount to one of the three to four servings of whole grains you should have in a day,” says Ellen Klosz, a member of CR's food-testing team. “Some crackers supply more fiber

than chips or pretzels, so they may also be a more filling snack.”

But you have to read the labels carefully. “A cracker's name or claims may make you think it contains 100 percent whole grains when it doesn't,” Klosz says. “And even whole-grain crackers can have as much sodium—or more—as chips, or contain added sugars.”

Snack Cracker Do's and Don'ts

Of course, nutritional advantages don't matter much if the cracker tastes like cardboard. Our testing found several flavorful choices. But keep these crumbs of wisdom in mind:

■ **Go for whole grain.** Brown rice, farro, teff, and whole wheat are just a few of the whole grains you'll find in these new crackers, along with amaranth and quinoa—which are technically seeds but count as grains. These healthy carbs

provide a variety of phytonutrients and fiber, which have been linked to a lower risk of cardiovascular disease, colorectal cancer, and stroke, and may help to reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes.

Refined white flour, on the other hand, is stripped of these nutrients in the refining process. Ideally, you should pick a cracker that contains only whole grains or at least has a whole grain as the first ingredient, Klosz says. For example, swap four Carr's Table Water Crackers (made with refined white flour) for four Reduced Fat Triscuits (made with 100 percent whole-grain wheat), our top-rated cracker, and the fiber count goes from less than 1 gram to about 3 grams and the calorie count stays about the same (60 vs. 73).

Always check the ingredients list to see just how “whole grain” a cracker really is. For instance, the whole-grain Ritz crackers we tested had “whole wheat” in big type on the front of the package, but a closer look revealed the words “baked with” right above. White flour is the first ingredient, and five Ritz crackers have less than 1 gram of fiber—about the same amount as in the original Ritz. Watch out for “multi-grain” crackers, too. They aren't always 100 percent whole grain and don't always even have whole grains first on the ingredients list.

Can You Top This?

Cracker toppings don't have to be fat and calorie bombs to be delicious.

A third of consumers say they pay more attention to what's on their cracker than to the cracker itself, according to market research firm Mintel. Cheese is the most popular topper, but even an ounce of cheddar can contain 115 calories and about 5 grams of saturated fat. Instead, try these healthier combos. We used 18-calorie Reduced Fat Triscuits, and each topping here has just 30 to 50 calories.



Spread on 1 teaspoon of smashed black beans. **Top with** 1 teaspoon of salsa, 1½ teaspoons of Monterey Jack cheese, and chopped cilantro.



Spread on 1 teaspoon of low-fat cream cheese mixed with minced fresh rosemary, thyme, or mint. **Top with** half a cherry tomato.



Spread on 1 teaspoon of light mayo mixed with a pinch of curry powder. **Top with** 1 slice of hard-boiled egg and chopped celery.

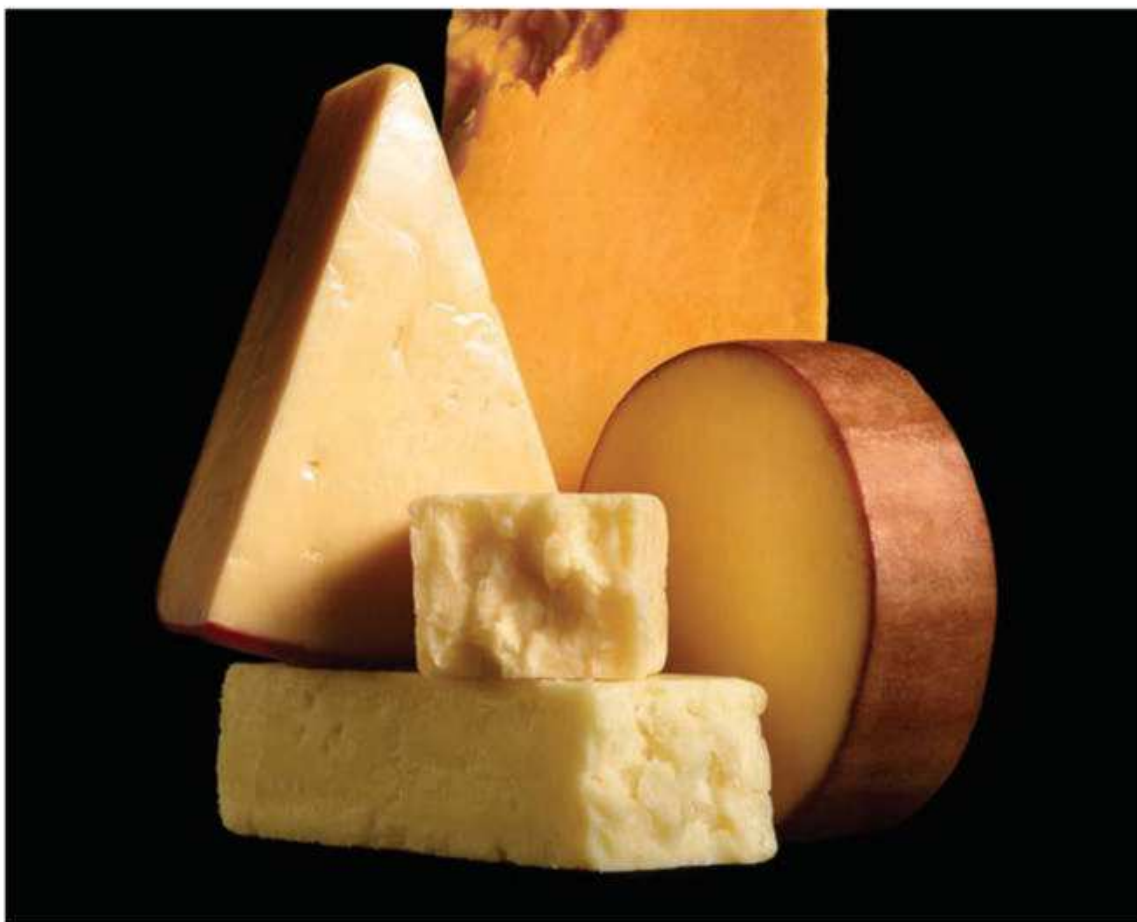
■ **Monitor portion size.** If you stick to the recommended serving sizes, crackers won't do a ton of diet damage, says Amy Keating, R.D., a CR dietitian. Among the products we tested, the calories ranged from 5 to 40 in just one cracker. If bigger portions make you feel more satisfied, choose a thin or small cracker. For example, you could have 15 Crunchmaster Original Multi-Seed Crackers for just 140 calories and 110 mg of sodium, just a little more than what's in three Back to Nature Multigrain Flax Seeded Flatbread Crackers.

■ **Be smart about toppings.** "What you put on crackers can really push you over your calorie, fat, or sodium limit," Keating says. Half an ounce of Brie cheese, for example, has 50 calories, 4 grams of fat, and 90 mg of sodium. Instead, opt for healthier dips and toppings. (See "Can You Top This?" below.)

■ **Count the sodium and sugars.** Crackers tend to have less sodium than chips and pretzels, but they can still contribute more than you'd think. The sodium count per serving of the crackers in our tests ranged from 90 to 280 mg; sugars ranged from 0 to 6 grams.

■ **Go easy on rice products.** Gluten-free diets have made rice products popular, but rice can be a source of arsenic, a carcinogen that's especially risky for young children. CR testing conducted in

2012 and 2014 found measurable levels of the heavy metal in almost all the rice products we looked at. There are crackers made with other gluten-free ingredients that have negligible levels of arsenic, such as amaranth, buckwheat, corn, and millet. Gluten-free Dare Breton White Bean With Salt & Pepper Crackers are made with navy beans and tapioca flour instead of rice flour.



TIP

Most cheeses have about 100 calories per ounce, so pay attention to portions as you top your crackers.



Spread on 1 tablespoon of low-fat Greek yogurt. **Top with** 1 slice of cucumber, a few slivers of smoked salmon, plus a sprinkle of fresh dill.



Spread on 2 teaspoons of mashed avocado. **Top with** 1 teaspoon of diced mango and a sprinkling of slivered scallions.



Spread on 1 teaspoon of part-skim ricotta cheese. **Top with** 1 teaspoon of jarred olive tapenade and snipped basil leaves.



Spread on 1 teaspoon of goat cheese. **Top with** a few sprigs of watercress or baby arugula and 1 tablespoon of diced pear.

Have Some Hummus

Looking for a healthier cracker topping or dip? Try this magic bean dip.

If there was a nutrition contest for dips, hummus—traditionally made from mashed chickpeas, tahini (sesame seed paste), lemon juice, olive oil, and spices—would win in the “best all-around” category.

While it is about five times higher in calories than salsa, it has a little more than twice the fiber. And though it doesn't deliver as much healthy

monounsaturated fat as guacamole, it offers about 2.4 grams more protein.

The chickpeas are likely mostly responsible for hummus' health benefits. Also called garbanzo beans, they—along with dried beans, dried peas, and lentils—belong to a class of legumes called pulses. And pulses, dietitians will say, rank high on the healthy foods list.

Chickpeas are full of key nutrients, such as B vitamins, calcium, folic acid, iron, magnesium, phosphate, potassium, and zinc, says Domingo J. Piñero, Ph.D., a clinical associate professor of nutrition at New York University's Department of Nutrition, Food Studies, and Public Health. And they're loaded with fiber: A 2-tablespoon serving of

hummus supplies 2 grams. “Including chickpeas in your diet ... is good for your intestine and your health,” say Piñero.

These healthful attributes might help explain why studies suggest that people who eat a lot of pulses tend to weigh less, have better regulated blood sugar (glucose), lower blood pressure, lower cholesterol, and reduced risk of diabetes, heart disease, and certain cancers. A study published in the *Journal of Nutrition and Food Sciences* in 2014, for example, found that those who reported eating any amount of chickpeas, hummus, or both at the time they were interviewed had markers that point to better health compared with non-eaters. Admittedly, the number of chickpea and hummus eaters was small—264 out of the 18,000 adults in the study—but they were 43 to 53 percent less likely to be overweight or obese, and were 51 percent less likely to have elevated blood glucose levels than non-eaters. The study results don't prove that chickpeas or hummus was responsible for making these people healthier, but the findings do suggest that those who eat these foods tend to be healthier overall.

Among pulses, says Piñero, chickpeas are extra special because they have a better nutritional profile than other beans, such as black beans. “The quality of the protein is slightly higher,” he says, meaning chickpeas contain a good variety of amino acids (the building blocks of protein) and their protein is easily digested. A serving of hummus supplies 2.4 grams of protein.

Plus, if hummus is made traditionally, with olive oil, you'll also get a dose of heart-healthy monounsaturated fat.

3 More Dips for Crackers or Chips

EDAMAME DIP

- 1 8-ounce package shelled edamame (about 1½ cups)
- ⅓ cup cilantro leaves
- 1 avocado, peeled, chopped
- ⅓ cup reduced-fat sour cream
- ⅓ cup water
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon toasted sesame oil
- ¼ teaspoon ground cumin (optional)

Put the edamame in a food processor. Pulse several times. Add cilantro. Pulse again. Add remaining ingredients; process until smooth.

ROASTED GARLIC AND RED PEPPER DIP

- 2 heads garlic
- 2 teaspoons plus 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 8-ounce package Neufchatel cheese, softened
- ⅓ cup chopped, roasted red pepper
- ⅓ cup parsley leaves
- ¼ cup reduced-fat sour cream
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons hot sauce

Heat oven to 400° F. Slice ½ inch from the top of each garlic head. Place garlic cut side up on a large sheet of aluminum foil. Drizzle with 2 teaspoons of olive oil. Wrap tightly. Roast about an hour, then let cool. Squeeze garlic cloves from the bottom of each head into a food processor. Add remaining oil and other ingredients. Process until smooth.

CARAMELIZED ONION DIP WITH CHIVES

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 pounds Vidalia onions, peeled, halved, sliced thin
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 cup Greek nonfat yogurt
- 4 ounces Neufchatel cheese
- ¼ cup chopped chives

Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add onions, salt, and pepper, and sauté for 10 minutes, stirring frequently. Reduce heat to medium-low and cook, stirring occasionally, for 30 minutes until onions are browned and caramelized. Cool. Mix yogurt and cheese in a large bowl. Stir in cooled onions and chives.



EASY HUMMUS DIP

- 1 15-oz. can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- ¼ cup tahini
- 2 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- ½ tsp. cumin
- ⅛ tsp. salt
- ⅛ tsp. cayenne pepper (optional)

Place all ingredients in food processor and blend until smooth. If too thick, add 1 or 2 Tbsp. water. Makes about 1 ½ cups.

Ratings > Crackers

	Product	Overall Score	Rating		Nutrition									Pricing		Flavor & Texture Description	
			Nutrition	Taste	Crackers per serving	Calories	Fat (g)	Saturated fat (g)	Protein (g)	Carbohydrates (g)	Fiber (g)	Sugars (g)	Sodium (mg)	Package size (oz.)	Average price per package (\$)		
Recommended																	
\$	Nabisco Triscuit Reduced Fat Crackers	68	↑	↑	6	110	2.5	0	3	21	4	0	150	7.5	3.00	Crispy, crunchy whole-wheat squares with a somewhat coarse texture. Simple flavors of toasted wheat and salt.	
✓	Back to Nature Multigrain Flax Seeded Flatbread Crackers	67	↓	↑	3	120	4.5	0	2	18	2	2	90	5.5	3.80	Large and very crunchy, with plentiful seeds. Slightly sweet and salty, with a nutty flavor and hints of onion and herbs.	
✓	Crunchmaster Original Multi-Seed Crackers	66	↓	↑	15	140	5	0.5	3	20	2	0	110	4.5	2.80	Crunchy brown-rice cracker with a toasted and sesame flavor. Moderately salty.	
✓	Nabisco Triscuit Thin Crisps Original Crackers	65	↑	↑	15	130	4.5	0	3	21	4	0	170	7.1	3.50	Crispy, crunchy toasted whole-wheat triangles with moderate salt.	
\$	Trader Joe's Some Enchanted Cracker Multigrain	64	↓	↑	4	140	6	0.5	3	19	2	2	200	10	2.50	Large multigrain cracker with visible seeds. Crispy, slightly flaky texture. Salty, sweet, and buttery notes, with a taste of poppy and sesame seeds.	
\$	Dare Breton Multigrain Crackers	61	↓	↑	4	90	4	1.5	2	11	1	1	115	8.8	4.00	Large multigrain cracker with visible grains and seeds. Crispy, tender, and flaky. Slightly salty, with a toasted-grain flavor and hint of sesame.	
	Blue Diamond Artisan Nut-Thins Multi-Seeds Cracker Snacks	60	↓	↑	13	130	3.5	0	3	22	2	0	135	4.25	3.80	Slightly hard and crunchy brown-rice/almond crackers with seedy, nutty, and toasted flavor notes.	
	Vea World Crisps Andean Quinoa & Spices Crackers	60	↓	↑	18	130	4	0	2	23	2	2	180	5	3.50	Small, thin multigrain crackers that are crispy and crunchy, with visible grains. Garlicky and nutty flavors. Some spicy heat and moderate salt. Better for snacking than topping.	
	Kii Naturals Organic Artisan Crisps Raisin, Rosemary & Pumpkin Seed	58	↓	↑	5	80	2	0.3	3	13	1	6	110	5	7.00	Thin, slightly hard and crunchy multi-grain toasts with visible herbs, seeds, and raisins. Slightly salty. Dried rosemary seasoning can be overpowering. Raisins add chewy sweetness.	
	365 Everyday Value (Whole Foods) Woven Wheats Baked Crackers	58	↑	↓	8	110	1	0	3	24	3	0	170	7	2.80	Crunchy woven whole-wheat squares, with lightly toasted and salty notes. On the dry side, with a somewhat coarse texture and bland taste.	
	Way Better Snacks Sprouted Barley Crackers, Salt & Cracked Pepper	58	↑	↓	14	110	4.5	0	3	15	4	0	110	5	4.20	Puffed multigrain crackers with visible seeds and a slightly tough texture. Black pepper adds heat.	
	Ak-Mak Sesame Cracker	57	↑	↓	5	110	2	0	5	19	3	1	220	4.15	2.00	Large whole-wheat crackers that are crunchy, dry, and thin. Slightly salty, with toasted whole-wheat and sesame-seed flavors.	
	Dare Breton White Bean With Salt & Pepper Crackers	56	↓	↑	4	80	3.5	1.5	2	10	2	0.5	95	4.2	3.50	Large, crisp crackers made with navy beans and tapioca flour. Tender and flaky. Beany, slightly toasted, sweet flavor. Has salt and lots of pepper.	
	Nabisco Ritz Crackers Whole Wheat	53	↓	↑	5	70	2.5	0.5	1	10	<1	2	120	12.9	3.00	Made with toasted white and whole-wheat flours. Crispy and notably tender and flaky. Buttery flavor with a hint of sweetness and some salt.	

Recommended	Product	Overall Score	Rating		Nutrition									Pricing		Flavor & Texture Description
			Nutrition	Taste	Crackers per serving	Calories	Fat (g)	Saturated fat (g)	Protein (g)	Carbohydrates (g)	Fiber (g)	Sugars (g)	Sodium (mg)	Package size (oz.)	Average price per package (\$)	
	Van's Lots of Everything Whole-Grain Crackers	53	↓	↓	30	140	4.5	0.5	2	21	2	3	180	5	4.00	Small, crispy crackers with onion, garlic, and very slight caraway flavors. Quite salty. Tender and thin; probably not sturdy enough to top.
	Kashi Red Sea Salt Teff Thins	52	↓	↓	16	130	4.5	0.5	3	21	3	0	200	4.25	4.20	Crispy, small crackers with visible seeds. Multigrain taste with slight bean and onion notes. Quite salty, and black pepper adds a little heat. Tender and thin; may break when topped or dipped.
	Mary's Gone Crackers Super Seed Chia & Hemp Crackers	48	↓	↓	12	150	7	1	3	17	3	0	230	5.5	4.50	Slightly hard, crunchy crackers made mostly of seeds. Hint of thyme with a little salt. Has a distinct toasted—almost burnt—flavor.
	Nabisco Good Thins The Chickpea One Garlic & Herb	42	↓	↓	22	140	5	1	2	20	1	3	200	5.75	3.00	Small crackers with visible herbs and spices. Crispy and tender. Salty, with hints of garlic and lots of dehydrated basil and parsley flavors.
	Glutino Gluten Free Crackers Original	39	↓	↓	8	140	4.5	2	0	23	<1	0.5	280	4.4	3.50	Crispy, crunchy, white-rice flour crackers. Dry and a little chalky. Mild-tasting, with a slight egg flavor. Better for topping than for snacking.

HOW WE TEST: CR's nutrition and food-testing team rated crackers for nutrition and taste. The **Overall Score** is a combination of the two.

The **Nutrition** score is based on energy density (calories per gram), total fat, saturated fat, fiber, sugars,

sodium, and other nutrients. Extra weighting is given for influential nutrients, either positive or negative, respective to the cracker.

Taste ratings are based on the results of a blind tasting by a trained sensory panel.

Are the 'Reduced' Versions All They're Cracked Up to Be?

Three classic crackers come in lower fat and lower sodium versions. But do you lose flavor along with fat and salt? To find out, our trained sensory panelists did a blind taste test, and we analyzed the nutrition. The results:

TRISCUIT REDUCED FAT

- Tastes similar to the original.
- Only slightly lower in calories and fat than the original, but with an extra gram of fiber.
- Though you save 100 mg of sodium with Hint of Salt Triscuits, the reduced-fat version is the top-rated cracker in our tests.

RITZ HINT OF SALT

- Same buttery flavor with the same crisp, flaky texture as the original.
- About a third of the sodium of the original (30 mg vs. 105 mg per serving).
- Reduced-fat Ritz has more sodium than the original and is noticeably drier and less tender and flaky.

WHEAT THINS HINT OF SALT

- Flavor and texture are very similar to the original.
- Big sodium savings: 55 mg per serving vs. 200 mg in the other two versions.
- Reduced-fat Wheat Thins also tastes similar to the original, but sodium savings make Hint of Salt the better pick.



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FOOD STYLING: JAMIE KIMM; PROP STYLING: KAITLYN DU ROSS WALKER FOR HONEY ARTISTS



Sugar

The Gateway to Weight Gain

How Sweet It Is
Though it's easy to spot sugar here, you'll need to scan labels to detect it in breads and other packaged foods.



RECENTLY WE LEARNED of a food fraud that may have been perpetrated on the American public. A report published in JAMA Internal Medicine suggested that in the 1960s, scientific research—secretly bankrolled by the sugar industry—was released that downplayed the health effects of a sugar-laden diet and instead called out “saturated fat” as the real dietary demon responsible for heart disease. (See “Fat,” on page 57.) And media outlets, food manufacturers, and consumers ate it up.

That bit of nutritional subterfuge may have been at least partly responsible for 50 years of misleading public health advice. And the resulting flood of packaged foods that were low in fat but high in sugars and refined grains may have contributed to the current epidemic of obesity and its related diseases, such as type 2 diabetes and heart disease, in the U.S.

Today, the typical American diet is packed with huge amounts of added sugars: We’re talking about those used as ingredients in many packaged foods—not the ones naturally found in foods such as fruit and milk. According to the most recent data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, Americans eat about 17 teaspoons (73 grams) of added sugars per day, on average, with teenagers consuming the most, about 20 teaspoons (82 grams). That’s significantly more than the American Heart Association’s recommendation of 9 (or fewer) teaspoons (36 grams) a day for men and 6 teaspoons (24 grams) for women and children. Children younger than 2 should consume no added sugars at all, the AHA advises.

One thing there’s little doubt about now: Added sugars are bad for you. “It’s settled science that a high intake of sugary drinks, the No. 1 source of

added sugars in the American diet, is associated with an increased risk of overweight and obesity—conditions that are directly linked to the development of type 2 diabetes,” says Rachel K. Johnson, Ph.D., R.D., a professor of nutrition at the University of Vermont and former chair of the AHA’s nutrition committee. A 2015 study of more than 1,700 adults found that the odds of being overweight or obese were 54 percent greater among individuals with the highest intake of sugars compared with those with the lowest intake.

According to David Ludwig, M.D., Ph.D., director of the New Balance Foundation Obesity Prevention Center at Boston Children’s Hospital, sugar has a specific metabolic effect on your body that contributes to weight gain. Most sugars are a combination of fructose and glucose. “Too much glucose raises blood sugar and insulin. And because insulin is a potent fat-storage hormone, too much insulin is linked to weight gain.” Plus, Ludwig says, “an overload of fructose goes straight to the liver, overwhelming its ability to process it.” That excess may raise the risk of fatty liver disease and type 2 diabetes.

And even if your sweet tooth hasn’t made you gain weight, it may still be putting you at increased risk of heart disease. A 2014 analysis of 40 studies published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition found that a higher sugar intake also corresponded to higher levels of total cholesterol, LDL (bad) cholesterol, and triglycerides no matter how much one weighed. Another study published in JAMA Internal Medicine found that people who got 17 to 21 percent of their calories from added sugars had a 38 percent higher risk of dying from heart disease than those who got 8 percent or less.

Perhaps the trickiest thing about

Is Sugar in Fruit Better?

The types of sugar found naturally in fruit are processed by your body in the exact same ways as the white mound you spoon into your morning coffee. The difference is the “sugar delivery system,” if you will. For example, the sugars in an apple are encapsulated by the plant-cell walls, says David Ludwig, M.D., Ph.D., director of the New Balance Foundation Obesity Prevention Center at Boston Children’s Hospital. It takes time for the body to break down the fruit, so the sugars get into your system slowly and don’t cause a spike in blood sugar (glucose) levels that triggers the body to pump out large amounts of insulin. By contrast, added sugars that are not an intrinsic part of a food cause a blood sugar spike because they are digested quickly. This can raise the risk of type 2 diabetes and weight gain. (Fruit juice, by the way, is almost as bad. Though its sugars naturally come from the fruit, they are no longer “bound,” so they are digested quickly.)

What’s more, you’d have to eat six navel oranges to get the amount of sugars (71 grams) in one 20-ounce bottle of Crush orange soda. And fruit provides antioxidants, fiber, vitamins, minerals, and other healthy compounds.

cutting back on added sugars is that you can't always rely on food labels to guide you. (See "How Food Packaging Claims Can Fool You," on the facing page.) The Food and Drug Administration's plan for new food labels that call out these worrisome sugars has been postponed. Certain food manufacturers, such as Campbell's and Mars, are using the new labels on at least some of their products, but otherwise, consumers have to fend for themselves.

How to Reduce Sugar Intake

- Swap sugar-sweetened sodas, bottled ice teas, and sports drinks for seltzer with a splash of no-sugar-added juice; reduce portion sizes of desserts and other sweets.
- Learn all the sugar synonyms on ingredients lists. That will give you a rough idea of how much "added

sugars" are present. Agave syrup, brown rice syrup, cane sugar or juice, coconut sugar, corn syrup, fruit juice concentrate, honey, and almost anything that ends in "-ose" (such as fructose) are all added sugars. Some may sound healthier, but "once it's in your bloodstream, it has the same metabolic effect," Johnson says.

- Scan for hidden sugars in foods such as bread, granola, pasta sauce, frozen dinners, and salad dressings. About three-quarters of packaged foods on store shelves contain added sugars, and a few grams here and there can easily add up to more per day than you should be consuming.
- Add your own sugar. Buy unsweetened versions of foods such as cereal, oatmeal, and yogurt, and sweeten them with a little honey or sugar yourself if you need to.

Fake Sugar Shock

Diet beverages are the top source of artificial sweeteners in consumers' diets. Some scientific evidence suggests that they don't help with weight loss and may actually lead to weight gain. More concerning, a small but growing pool of research has linked consumption of diet drinks to increased risk of type 2 diabetes, heart attack, and stroke. None of these studies prove that artificial sweeteners are to blame, says Ralph L. Sacco, M.D., professor and chairman of neurology at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. Diet soda fans may be at higher risk to begin with, he says. But until we know more, the American Heart Association advises that "people should use artificially sweetened drinks cautiously." (For more on soda and other drinks, see "Should You Drink That?" on page 110.)

3 Ways to Raise a Healthy Eater

Getting children to enjoy healthier foods may be as simple as putting a few key changes in place.

1 Eliminate Stealth Sugars.

Kids and teens should have less than 25 grams—or 6 teaspoons—of added sugars per day, according to the American Heart Association. (Children younger than 2 shouldn't have any.) But that doesn't mean no dessert. "Limiting the added sugars your child gets from everyday staples (such as cereal and yogurt) and foods you don't normally think of as sweet (such as bread, condiments, pasta sauce, and peanut butter) leaves room for the occasional cookie or ice cream cone," says Amy Keating, R.D., a CR dietitian. And don't keep sugary drinks, such as fruit drinks and soda, in the house. Kids ages 2 to 19 get about 7 percent of their daily calories from these beverages.

2 Eat Together Whenever Possible.

If your child regularly sees you eating healthy foods, he or she is more likely to do so as well. Dining as a family has been linked with better academic performance, and lower risks of depression and substance abuse, as well as lower rates of obesity and eating disorders.

3 Include Fruits and Veggies at Every Single Meal.

This is easier than it sounds with a little bit of clever camouflage. For example, serve salsa as a dip with a few low-sodium corn chips, add mashed banana to plain yogurt, and toss microwaved frozen riced cauliflower into mac and cheese. Less than 60 percent of toddlers get one serving each of fruits and vegetables on any given day, according to a recent study from the University of North Carolina. "Eating more produce is protective against cardiovascular disease and may help to prevent childhood obesity," says Jennette Palcic Moreno, Ph.D., a childhood nutrition researcher at the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

How Food Packaging Claims Can Fool You

"No artificial colors." "Good source of fiber." "Contains sea salt." All these package claims and more might make you snatch a product off the supermarket shelf and feel virtuous about doing so. "Food manufacturers use every possible word they can to magnify the desirability of a product," says Walter Willett, M.D., professor of epidemiology and nutrition at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. And that language can lead you to believe you've picked something that's going to make you healthier—even though what's inside that box may not be all that good for you.

Companies have to carefully choose their marketing pitches because certain terms are regulated by the Food and Drug Administration, such as "low sodium" (the food has 140 mg or less per serving) or "good source of" (it provides 10 to 19 percent of the daily value for a nutrient).

Little wonder, then, that food marketers strive to come up with healthy-sounding slogans that fall outside FDA regulation. It unfairly falls to shoppers, Willett says, to sleuth out what truly makes a food healthy. "Turn the package around," he says, "and read the ingredients and Nutrition Facts label, paying attention to crucial things like sodium, sugar, whole grains, type of fat, and calories." And watch out for front-of-package tricks such as these.

BEWARE WHEN

You see a nutrient claim, such as 'good source of calcium.'

Calling out just one or two nutrients can mislead consumers to assume one product is healthier overall than another. For instance, highlighting the calcium content on plain yogurt is one thing because overall, plain yogurt is a healthy food and calcium is naturally present. But a calcium claim on a cookie? It might make you feel better about eating it, but there's probably little benefit. For example, Stella D'oro Breakfast Treats carry the claim "good source of calcium," and the product does supply 10 percent of the daily value for calcium from added calcium carbonate. But with 90 calories, 6 grams of sugars, and zero fiber, the cookie is far from a health food.

BEWARE WHEN

The name of the product itself sounds healthy.

The nutrition count of Simply Lay's Sea Salted potato chips is practically identical to Lay's Classic potato chips, with just 10 fewer mg of sodium. Quaker Oats Select Starts Protein instant oatmeals have 10 grams of protein per packet (from added whey protein), but also 12 to 13 grams of sugars. Or consider Red Oval Stoned Wheat Thins: The word "wheat" in this product name may be confusing, leading consumers to believe they're getting a whole-wheat cracker. But this one is made with white flour plus a smattering of cracked wheat,

and consequently has about a third of the fiber of a true whole-wheat cracker.

BEWARE WHEN

The package is plastered with healthy buzzwords.

They can catch your attention, but you can't rely on buzzwords to be a shortcut to finding a healthy food. In some cases, the food may contain so little of the ingredient that it's nutritionally irrelevant. For example, the dehydrated vegetables in Nabisco's Ritz Roasted Vegetable crackers, which tout "made with real vegetables" on the package, don't change the nutritional makeup of the crackers much at all compared with regular Ritz. Refined wheat flour is the first ingredient listed in both, and each serving has 80 calories and no fiber. In fact, the veggie crackers have 150 mg of sodium per serving, compared with 105 in the regular version. And candy labeled "made with real honey," as Brach's Classic candy corn is, may be making a true claim. But honey is a form of added sugar, and in this case, the candy also has four other types of sugars (sugar, corn syrup, confectioner's glaze, and dextrose), for a total of 28 grams of sugars per serving. This warning applies when the package alerts you to what's not there, too. For example, Log Cabin Original pancake syrup proclaims "no high-fructose corn syrup," but the top three ingredients are corn syrup, water, and sugars, so it's still full of added sugars.

BEWARE WHEN

'Simple,' 'natural,' or 'free from' is used.

So-called clean labels are increasingly popular. "Consumers want simpler formulas, with ingredients that they can easily understand and fewer or no processed ingredients," says Francine Schoenwetter, director of content at New Hope Network, a research firm. "Label claims such as 'simple' and 'natural' have no standard definition on most foods," says Charlotte Vallaeys, Consumer Reports' senior policy analyst and food labeling expert. You need to look closely to see whether the manufacturers' definitions of the terms match yours. Kozy Shack Simply Well chocolate pudding touts that it is made with simple, wholesome ingredients, but most people probably wouldn't consider inulin (a type of added fiber), sucralose (an artificial sweetener), and carrageenan (a thickener) "simple." "Free from" claims, such as "no artificial colors," must be truthful. But the food can still be less than healthy. For example, Kraft proclaims "no artificial flavors, preservatives or dyes" on its macaroni and cheese package. But each prepared cup contains 720 mg of sodium.

Salt

How Too Much Taxes Your Heart

Top 10
Pizza is a major source of sodium in our diets.



THERE'S PLENTY OF evidence showing that too much sodium is bad for your heart. Yet most Americans are consuming about 3,500 mg of sodium per day, according to the latest Dietary Guidelines for Americans. That's about 50 percent more than the maximum of 2,300 mg per day the guidelines recommend.

Experts say that sticking to that 2,300 mg is essential to lowering your risk of high blood pressure. "There is no question that going from very "high sodium intake to moderate sodium intake improves cardiovascular health," says Andreas Kalogeropoulos, M.D., Ph.D., associate professor of cardiology at Stony Brook University School of Medicine in New York.

Consuming too much sodium can overwhelm the kidneys' ability to process and excrete it. The excess gets stored in the blood, which increases water retention and blood volume. That forces your heart to work harder to pump blood, increasing the pressure on your arteries and causing them to stiffen. Research shows that following a DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet that limits sodium to 2,300 mg per day—in addition to lowering saturated fat, sugars, and processed food—can lower systolic blood pressure by about 7 points and diastolic by about 3.5 points.

You may have heard that the need to reduce sodium is controversial. It's true that certain studies have shown no decrease in deaths from cardiovascular disease in people who ate less sodium. And others have even suggested that low-sodium diets could have adverse health outcomes, such as a rise in overall cholesterol and triglyceride levels. "Most of the latter studies showing negative effects have been done with very large, very rapid reductions

in sodium," says Dariush Mozaffarian, M.D., dean of the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University in Massachusetts. "With slow reductions over time, there is very little plausible evidence of harm."

Most experts agree that Americans eat too much salt. What is in question is whether going below 2,300 mg daily is necessary, or realistic.

How to Reduce Salt Intake

■ **Cut back by inches.** "Studies have shown that your taste buds adapt to a slow reduction in sodium," says Amy Keating, R.D., a CR dietitian. "So eventually, you won't even miss that extra salty flavor."

■ **Don't blame the salt shaker.** A 2017 study published in the journal *Circulation* found that only 11 percent of the sodium in our diets comes from the salt we add to food ourselves, and about 71 percent comes from packaged and restaurant food. You have to reduce the restaurant dishes and commercially processed and packaged food that you're eating—or always choose low- or no-sodium versions of the ones you buy often—to really make a dent. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 10 categories of food (breads, pizza, sandwiches, cold cuts and cured meats, soups, burritos and tacos, savory snacks, chicken, cheese, and eggs and omelets) account for 44 percent of our overall sodium intake.

■ **Cook at home.** The grilled chicken Parmesan at Olive Garden has 2,000 mg of sodium, and an Egg McMuffin at McDonald's has 750 mg. (And these aren't even the highest-sodium items on the menus.) A home-cooked meal allows you to control the salt shaker and to use whole foods—whole grains, fruit, vegetables, legumes—and stay below the 2,300 mg threshold.

Say So Long to Sodium

The blends below can really kick up the flavor of your food—minus the sodium. Suggestions are for 1 pound of each food.

PASTA

2 teaspoons lemon zest
1/3 cup basil, mint, chives, or parsley, or a combination

PORK

1 teaspoon fennel seed
3 tablespoons fresh rosemary or sage, or a combination

POTATOES

1 tablespoon fresh rosemary
1/4 cup fresh parsley or chives, or a combination

POULTRY AND FISH

1 teaspoon lemon zest
2 tablespoons fresh oregano or thyme, or a combination

STEAK

Make a dry rub of
1/2 teaspoon each black pepper, cinnamon, chili powder, cumin, and oregano

GREEN VEGETABLES

1 teaspoon lemon zest
1 tablespoon fresh parsley or thyme, or a combination

Smart Sodium Swaps

Packaged foods may be a big source of sodium, but the amount varies widely among brands even in the same product category. "When choosing a product, look at the labels to compare the sodium amounts of a few brands. You'll see that it's pretty easy to slash sodium just by careful shopping," says Amy Keating, R.D., a CR dietitian.

<p>0 mg sodium</p>  <p>Larabar Blueberry Muffin 1.6 ounces</p>	<p>90 mg sodium</p>  <p>Ghirardelli Double Chocolate Premium Cocoa Mix 7 ounces</p>	<p>270 mg sodium</p>  <p>Land O'Lakes Classics Chocolate Cocoa Mix 7 ounces</p>	<p>310 mg sodium</p>  <p>Muir Glen Organic Tomato Basil Pasta Sauce ½ cup</p>	<p>530 mg sodium</p>  <p>Bertolli Organic Tomato & Basil Sauce ½ cup</p>
<p>180 mg sodium</p>  <p>Clif Bar Blueberry Crisp 2.4 ounces</p>	<p>390 mg sodium</p>  <p>Healthy Choice Chicken Noodle 1 cup</p>	<p>790 mg sodium</p>  <p>Campbell's Homestyle Light Chicken Noodle 1 cup</p>	<p>0 mg sodium</p>  <p>Birds Eye Steamfresh Premium Whole Green Beans 1 cup</p>	<p>380 mg sodium</p>  <p>Del Monte Harvest Selects Blue Lake Whole Green Beans ½ cup</p>

5 Nutrients You May Be Missing

If you're eating a typical American diet, chances are you're falling short on some important nutrients. Diet changes, not supplements, are the answer. "Food supplies the proper mix of nutrients that work synergistically to promote health," says Marvin M. Lipman, M.D. "Plus it's too easy to get too much of a particular nutrient from a pill, and some supplements may be harmful.

Some people may actually need supplements, but that decision should be made with your doctor." Below are five key vitamins and minerals that your diet may be lacking, and simple dietary fixes to up your intake.

■ **Calcium.** The mineral is important for bone health and blood pressure control; adults need 1,000 to 1,200 mg per day. A cup of milk, 6 ounces of yogurt, or 1½ ounces of hard cheese (such as cheddar) supplies about 300 mg. Calcium is also found in almonds, bok choy, broccoli, broccoli rabe, kale, canned salmon with bones, tofu, and white beans.

■ **Fiber.** It helps to control your weight, lower blood pressure and cholesterol, ease constipation, fight inflammation, and boost your immune system. Adding whole grains, legumes, nuts

and seeds, and fruits and vegetables to your diet will help you to get the recommended 20 to 30 grams of fiber daily.

■ **Magnesium.** Nearly half of all Americans fail to get enough magnesium each day (experts recommend 320 mg for women and 420 mg for men), which could cause appetite loss, fatigue, weakness, nausea, vomiting, and in severe deficiencies, irregular heart rhythm, muscle cramps, personality changes, sensations of numbness and tingling, and seizures. Dark leafy greens, legumes, nuts, and whole grains are the best sources.

■ **Potassium.** Less than 2 percent of Americans get the recommended 4,700 mg per day. Too little potassium can cause abnormal heart rhythms, weak muscles, and a minor rise

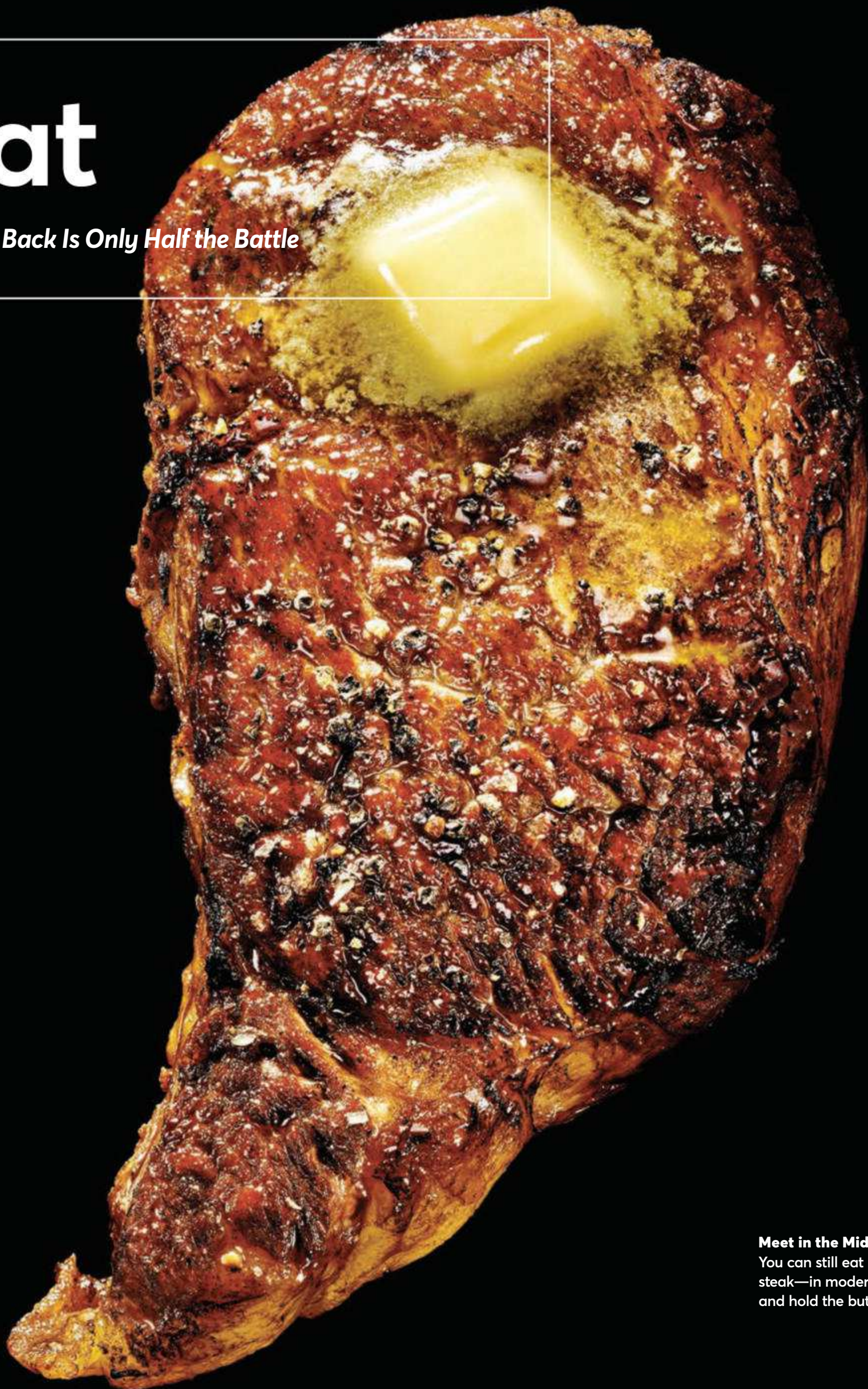
in blood pressure. Though many of us associate potassium with bananas, other foods such as leafy greens, potatoes, legumes, and salmon provide more.

A meal that includes 1 cup of Swiss chard, 1 cup of acorn squash, and 5 ounces of salmon, for example, supplies more than half your daily recommendation.

■ **Vitamin B12.** Anemia, fatigue, weakness, constipation, loss of appetite, and weight loss are signs of a B12 deficiency, which becomes more common as you age. Four ounces of fish or 6 ounces of beef provide more than the daily recommended 2.4 micrograms, but eating dairy products such as cheese, eggs, milk, and yogurt will boost B12 levels, too.

Fat

Cutting Back Is Only Half the Battle



Meet in the Middle
You can still eat
steak—in moderation,
and hold the butter.

FAT IS A COMPLICATED topic, and well-intentioned efforts to simplify public health messages have only led to more confusion.

In the 1980s and '90s, experts advised everyone to eat less fat, period. Cashews and olive oil were lumped into the same category as cheese and butter. But even back then, the research showed that different types of fats—monounsaturated, polyunsaturated, and saturated—had varied effects on health. The thought was that a one-note message—cut fat—would be easier for the public to grasp and would automatically hit the real target: reducing the amount of cholesterol-raising saturated fat people ate.

It did, but it also had unintended consequences. Low-fat became the healthy eater's battle cry, and to compensate, people downed more carbs, but not the "good" kind, such as whole grains. Instead, people traded steak for pasta, and food manufacturers used refined carbohydrates (white flour and sugars) in place of fat in processed foods. Margarine—made from partially

hydrogenated oils, a source of unhealthy trans fats—replaced butter on our morning toast. Trans fats made their way into baked goods and other packaged products, and heart-healthy monos and polys were pushed to the sidelines.

Now the fat facts are being scrambled again, with highly publicized studies suggesting that saturated fat might not be so bad for us. And again, black-and-white thinking is poised to do some dietary damage.

According to Frank Hu, M.D., Ph.D., professor of nutrition and epidemiology at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, we should still pay attention to our saturated fat intake. The likely reason that some studies have not found an association between saturated fat and heart disease is that they did not take into account what was swapped in for the saturated fat. "When we replace saturated fats with refined carbohydrates and added sugars, it's a nutritional wash," Hu says. "Both are bad." In other words, just because these studies couldn't make a clear condemnation

of saturated fat, that doesn't mean you can safely reach for a brick of butter with your toast.

On the other hand, swapping in unsaturated fats (fish, nuts, olive oil) or healthy carbs (grains, legumes, produce) for saturated fats does, in fact, protect your heart. In a study that analyzed data from the large, long-running Nurses' Health and Health Professionals Follow-Up Studies, Hu and his colleagues found that replacing 5 percent of calories from saturated fats with polyunsaturated fats reduced heart disease risk by 25 percent. When monounsaturated fats were subbed in, the risk dropped by 15 percent, and with healthy carbs by 9 percent. There was no change in heart risk in people who cut saturated fat but ate refined carbs in their place.

How to Fine-Tune Your Fat Strategy

■ **Avoid trans fats.** If there's a "bad" fat, this is it; it raises LDL (bad) cholesterol and lowers HDL (good) cholesterol. This is an easy step. In 2015 the Food and Drug Administration

Make Room for Meat

Being a part-time vegetarian may be best. Here's why and how.

More than 3 million people in the U.S. are vegetarian (avoiding meat but still eating eggs or dairy) or vegan (avoiding all meat and animal products), according to a survey from market-research firm NPD Group. Compare that with the 26 million who identify as "flexitarian," or flexible vegetarians. These are people who eat a plant-centric diet most of the time but include some fish, meat, poultry, dairy, and eggs in their meals. Those who follow a healthy vegan or vegetarian diet have

a lower risk of heart disease, obesity, and type 2 diabetes than omnivores.

But even small decreases in a person's intake of animal foods are linked with a decreased likelihood of developing heart disease, as long as he or she is eating more healthy plant foods, such as beans and vegetables, in their place, says Kim A. Williams, M.D., chief of cardiology at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago. A recent Harvard University study in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* revealed

that those who ate nutritious plant foods, even when they included an average of three servings of meat and/or dairy a day, were 25 percent less likely to develop heart disease than those who ate twice that amount. Flexitarian diets may also lower your risk of diabetes.

Some experts believe that flexitarianism may be the best choice of all because it's a more realistic option for many. "Following a strict vegan or vegetarian diet can be daunting," says Amy Keating, R.D., a CR dietitian. "And many

removed partially hydrogenated oils (the biggest source of artificial trans fats) from the list of ingredients it calls “generally recognized as safe” and gave food manufacturers and restaurants three years to phase them out of their products. The scheduled deadline for manufacturers to comply was in the spring of this year.

■ **Eat more foods that contain unsaturated fat.** Avocados, nuts, olive oil, and fatty fish should all appear regularly on your plate. The latest U.S. dietary guidelines don’t put limits on these healthy fats, as long as you keep an eye on calories. Eat too many of these healthy but calorie-dense foods and you could quickly overshoot your daily calorie goals.

■ **Follow a whole-foods, plant-based diet.** Instead of trying to slash saturated fat, make whole grains, legumes, fruit, and vegetables the focus of your meals. Minimize your intake of added sugars and refined carbohydrates. That way, you’ll naturally be getting less saturated fat in the healthiest way possible.

people replace the meat with refined carbohydrates,” such as bread, pasta, and rice. Indeed, the same Harvard study found that following a not-so-healthy vegetarian diet actually raised heart disease risk by 32 percent.

Easy, Healthy Ways to Go Flexitarian

■ Eat meat at meals, but much less of it. Instead of building your meals around a steak or chicken breast, think of meat more as a side dish. For example, toss 2 ounces of chicken into a green salad

with chickpeas, orange slices, a whole grain, and vegetables. Make a meatloaf using mushrooms or lentils in place of some of the ground meat. Or include thin strips of steak in a stir-fry that’s much heavier on the vegetables and whole grains.

■ Go pescatarian: Replace meat with fish.
 ■ Make some meals meatless. Pick an entire day or two each week to forgo meat and dairy products. Or try the “eat vegan before 6” plan, introduced by food writer Mark Bittman.

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES (9)

Healthy or Not? Test Your Food IQ

Make an educated guess and check our answers on the next page.

Eggs

● HEALTHY ● NOT HEALTHY



Honey

● HEALTHY ● NOT HEALTHY



Jerky

● HEALTHY ● NOT HEALTHY



Potatoes

● HEALTHY ● NOT HEALTHY



Pretzels

● HEALTHY ● NOT HEALTHY



Red Wine

● HEALTHY ● NOT HEALTHY



Soy

● HEALTHY ● NOT HEALTHY



Sushi

● HEALTHY ● NOT HEALTHY



Veggie Sticks

● HEALTHY ● NOT HEALTHY



TURN THE
PAGE FOR
ANSWERS

Healthy or Not? Test Your Food IQ

Continued from previous page

Eggs



● **HEALTHY.** They're rich in nutrients that are good for your brain and eyes, and though they do contain dietary cholesterol, it doesn't appear to have much of an effect on blood cholesterol levels. Even so, most doctors say you shouldn't eat more than seven eggs per week.

Jerky



● **NOT HEALTHY.** Though it's a lean source of protein, it's also a high-sodium processed meat. Frequent consumption of processed meats has been linked to an increased risk of colon cancer, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease.

Pretzels



● **NOT HEALTHY.** Though they're low in fat, most are made with refined white flour; just five twists may contain 20 percent of the maximum amount of sodium you should have all day.

Soy



● **HEALTHY.** Edamame, tofu, and tempeh are associated with a lower risk of certain cancers and heart disease. Stick with these whole forms, which are what have been used in the studies that show benefits.

Veggie Sticks



● **NOT HEALTHY.** Most are made with primarily potato starch or rice flour—not veggies—and have little fiber or other nutritional benefits. What's more, they can also have about 200 mg of sodium per ounce.

Honey



● **NOT HEALTHY.** Adding honey to foods is just like adding table sugar, as far as your body is concerned. When it's an ingredient in packaged foods, it's considered an added sugar—which you should try to avoid whenever possible.

Potatoes



● **HEALTHY.** They're a good source of fiber, potassium, and vitamin C. And unless they're fried or served with high-calorie toppings, they won't pack on the pounds.

Red Wine



● **HEALTHY.** The evidence is pretty clear that alcohol may protect your heart. But limit it to 5 ounces for women or 10 ounces for men per day. And if you don't drink, there's no reason to start.

Sushi



● **HEALTHY.** It can be a low-calorie source of lean protein and healthy omega-3 fatty acids. (Though eating raw fish may carry some food safety risks.) Just lay off the high-sodium soy sauce. And avoid tuna because it's high in mercury.



Word on the Bird
'No antibiotic' chicken is getting easier to find in the meat case and in packaged foods, such as soups and frozen dinners.

Taking Antibiotics off Your Fast-Food Menu

In an effort to help consumers to know which restaurant chains are best when it comes to offering meat and poultry raised without the routine use of antibiotics, Consumers Union, the advocacy division of Consumer Reports, and five other health and environmental groups* launched the Chain Reaction Report. It grades the top 25 fast-food and

casual chains in the U.S. on their policies and practices regarding antibiotic use in the meat and poultry they serve, and the implementation and transparency of those policies. In 2017 more than half of the chains received a passing grade. (The 2018 data was not available at publication time.)
Chipotle and Panera Bread lead the pack with A grades. Almost all their meat

*Natural Resources Defense Council, Center for Food Safety, Friends of the Earth, Food Animal Concerns Trust, and U.S. Public Interest Research Group.

How to Choose 'No Antibiotic' Meat and Poultry at Your Supermarket

More than half of consumers are concerned about some of the biggest consequences of antibiotic use in healthy animals raised for food, according to a 2016 CR nationally representative survey of more than 1,000 people. The consumer pressure is driving suppliers to give "food" animals fewer antibiotics, which in turn protects public health. "The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and most medical experts agree that widespread use of these drugs to prevent disease in healthy animals or to promote growth contributes to the spread of drug-resistant bacteria," says Jean Halloran, director of food policy initiatives at Consumers Union, the advocacy division of Consumer Reports. "As

antibiotic resistance grows, the medications used to treat infections in people become less effective."

Here are the definitions of the most common "no antibiotic" claims you'll find on supermarket labels:

Organic Meat and poultry labeled organic must be raised without antibiotics, with one exception: Chickens and turkeys can be given the drugs while the chick is still in the egg and on its first day of life. Consumer Reports recommends buying organic when possible.

Raised without antibiotics Producers who use this and related phrases, such as "no antibiotics ever" and "never given antibiotics," send documentation to the

Department of Agriculture to support their claim, but there are no inspections. However, if the package also sports a USDA Process Verified seal, it means that USDA inspectors have been to the farm to confirm that antibiotics were not used. Sick animals that need antibiotics would be removed from the "no antibiotic" line and sent for processing with animals raised conventionally.

No medically important antibiotics This means that drugs used to treat people—such as amoxicillin, erythromycin, and tetracycline—aren't given to the animals. But this still allows for the use of antibiotics that aren't medically important, which can lead to antibiotic resistance to other drugs.

No growth-promoting antibiotics This is an indication that no antibiotics were fed to the animal to accelerate growth. According to guidelines from the Food and Drug Administration, medically important antibiotics can no longer be used for growth promotion, although drugs not used in people can be used, so this practice is only a slight improvement over the industry standard. And the drugs are still given to animals to prevent disease. CR recommends that consumers look for "organic," "raised without antibiotics," or "no antibiotics, ever" labeling claims.

and poultry are raised without antibiotics. Most chains that scored in the B to D range restrict antibiotic use only in chicken. In a big move, KFC went from an F in the last report to a B- in the recent one after announcing it would stop serving chicken raised with medically important antibiotics by the end of 2018.

Some smaller chains not represented on the scorecard are also making progress. All the chicken served at Dickey's BBQ is no-antibiotic, as is

all the beef, pork, and poultry served at the Cheesecake Factory.

"Fast-food restaurants should help to protect public health by moving away from serving meat and poultry from suppliers who misuse these vital drugs," says Jean Halloran, director of food policy initiatives at Consumers Union.

"The future effectiveness of antibiotics depends on making sure they are used only to treat sick animals or to stop a verified disease outbreak."

2017 Scorecard on Antibiotics Policies & Practices					
A					
B+		B		B-	
C+		C			
D+		D			
F					
Grade Scale	A 91-100 A- 84-90	B+ 77-83 B 67-76 B- 60-66	C+ 52-59 C 43-51 C- 36-42	D+ 29-35 D 19-28	F <19

Gluten

For Most People, Eating Less Gluten May Be Risky

Diet Damage
A gluten-free diet isn't necessarily a healthy diet.



FOR ALMOST A DECADE, popular diet plans have proposed that gluten—a protein found in wheat, rye, and barley—is responsible for many common health problems, igniting an anti-gluten wildfire that just won't extinguish. About a third of Americans buy gluten-free foods, according to market research firm Mintel, believing that eliminating gluten is healthier and that it helps with weight loss, skin conditions, inflammation, and attention deficit disorder.

The craze has been making food manufacturers fat and happy with profits to the tune of a new market that's worth almost \$14 billion.

Yet there's little evidence that going gluten-free has any benefits for most. Some people must avoid gluten: those with celiac disease, an autoimmune condition, for whom gluten causes intestinal inflammation and damage, and those who have a condition known as nonceliac gluten sensitivity (NCGS), which can cause gastrointestinal symptoms in response to gluten. But these two conditions combined affect less than 7 percent of Americans.

For people without celiac disease or NCGS, there's not much to recommend going gluten-free. A 2017 study in the British Medical Journal found no connection between eating gluten and an increased risk of heart disease in people without celiac disease. In fact, giving up gluten may be harmful. The same study showed that people who chose a gluten-free diet were more likely to eat fewer whole grains—and thereby deprive themselves of the health benefits of whole grains.

What's more, because gluten-free foods can be gummy and unpalatable, manufacturers often add sodium, sugar, and fat to overcome this—which also adds calories, points out Alice Lichtenstein, D.Sc., a professor of nutrition science and policy at Tufts University. The second downside is that it could increase your intake of arsenic and other heavy metals. A recent study published in the journal *Epidemiology* showed that people who were on a gluten-free diet had up to twice the amount of arsenic and 70 percent more mercury in their systems than people

who were not. That's because gluten-free cereals, crackers, and pastas are often made with rice flour. Consumer Reports' food safety experts have found that rice and rice-based products can have worrying amounts of arsenic.

Follow These Gluten Guidelines

- **Eat whole grains.** Some popular gluten-free diets (such as Wheat Belly and Grain Brain) are essentially low-grain diets. But everyone—including those with celiac disease or NCGS—should eat more whole grains (amaranth, millet, and quinoa are a few gluten-free grains). They've been shown again and again to help to protect against cancer and heart disease. They're also high in fiber, which lowers your risk of type 2 diabetes and can help you to lose weight by making you feel full.
- **Choose gluten-free foods carefully.** You're likely to eat some no-gluten foods even if you aren't giving up gluten. Check the labels for high fat, sugars, and sodium levels. If you see any of them, consider skipping the item.

5 Healthy Whole Grains

Whole-grain foods contain the entire grain kernel: the bran, endosperm, and germ. The bran and germ are where most of the healthy stuff—antioxidants, B vitamins, fiber, magnesium, and other nutrients—is found. The best way to get your whole grains is to eat them in their most natural state, meaning the grain itself. (We're talking bulgur and oats.) Also, experiment with these less well-known but highly nutritious whole grains.



Amaranth*

Serve with fruits and nuts as a hot cereal, or with thyme or other herbs as a side dish.

251 Calories
9 Protein (g)
4 Fat (g)
46 Carbs (g)
5 Fiber (g)



Freekeh

This roasted, young, green wheat can be used in any recipe in place of rice.

173 Calories
8 Protein (g)
1 Fat (g)
37 Carbs (g)
5 Fiber (g)



Millet

To enhance flavor, toast in a skillet before boiling. Add to salads or soups. And millet flour can be used for baking.

207 Calories
6 Protein (g)
2 Fat (g)
41 Carbs (g)
2 Fiber (g)



Quinoa

Rinse before cooking. Use as a base for chili or soup, or serve with herbs and onion as a side dish.

222 Calories
8 Protein (g)
4 Fat (g)
39 Carbs (g)
5 Fiber (g)



Teff

This tiny grain can be used in place of rice in a pilaf or a porridge, or stirred into chili or soup.

255 Calories
10 Protein (g)
2 Fat (g)
50 Carbs (g)
7 Fiber (g)

*Serving size: 1 cup, cooked, for all grains.

How to Eat **Healthier** Over the **Holidays**

Use our easy expert guide to getting through all the seasonal party buffets and family feasts without discomfort, remorse—or extra pounds.

Given that food and drink go hand in hand with celebrations, it can be difficult to stick with good habits during the holidays. And let's face it: Who doesn't want to indulge a little at this special time of year? But it's no fun to feel overstuffed on rich foods—and you surely don't want your guests to leave feeling ill. Use these tips to have your fruitcake and enjoy it, too (just not too much).







TIP

Use separate cutting boards for produce and meat to avoid cross-contamination.

Make the Right Grocery Buys

Serving a delicious, healthy holiday meal begins at the grocery store, but the choices can be confusing. The trick is to know which food labels are meaningful.

■ **Look for meat labels that matter.** Whether your menu calls for turkey, beef, or pork, consider buying meat that's organic or raised without antibiotics. Experts (including 90 percent of the doctors surveyed in a Consumer Reports

poll) are concerned about the use of antibiotics for disease prevention or growth promotion in animals because it contributes to antibiotic resistance. Organic practices also call for only organic feed and no growth hormones.

■ **Pick the best produce.** Organic? Conventional? Local? The right choices will be based on availability and your personal preferences, concerns for the environment, and your budget. Organic

produce is grown without the use of most pesticides or chemical fertilizers and isn't genetically engineered. Rubbing conventional fruits and vegetables vigorously as you wash them will reduce pesticide residue, as will peeling. Still, some pesticides can remain on surfaces and some are systemic; they get into the produce flesh and can't be washed away.

Locally grown cold-season fruits and vegetables like apples, sweet potatoes, winter squash, carrots, and kale may be available during the holiday season. The benefit to buying local is supporting local farmers and economies—not necessarily more nutritious food.

■ **Spice it up right.** “Sodium is used as a preservative in many canned and packaged foods,” says Lauri Wright, Ph.D., R.D., an assistant professor of nutrition at the University of South Florida. “So they have much more than if it was added just for taste.” Look for low-sodium products; they contain 140 mg or less per serving. To avoid added sugars, use canned fruit packed in its own juice (no sugar added) and consider making cranberry sauce by boiling fresh or frozen berries with just enough orange juice and sugar to take the acidic edge off.

Prepare It All Safely

In the frenzy of meal prep, we often neglect the basic rules of kitchen safety. “This is especially true during the holidays, when you have several people in the kitchen,” says Shelley Feist, executive director at the Partnership for Food Safety Education. Consider these reminders:

■ **Plan ahead.** “I always recommend cleaning out the refrigerator and freezer before you shop, because you’re going to need all that room,” says Marianne H. Gravely, M.S., a food-safety specialist with the Department of Agriculture’s Meat and Poultry Hotline. Keep raw meat and poultry separate from other food in your shopping cart, grocery bags, and fridge.

■ **Thaw in the fridge.** “Food-poisoning bacteria grow rapidly at room temperature, and in 2 hours they can reach dangerous levels and develop toxins that can’t be killed with cooking,” Gravely warns. It takes one day of thawing for every 4 to 5 pounds of meat or poultry. Keep it in a shallow roasting pan with sides high enough to contain any juices that might leak out.

■ **Clean carefully.** Cross-contamination goes beyond rookie mistakes such as using the same plate for raw and cooked meat and forgetting to wash your hands before you start food prep. For example, a Kansas State University study found that kitchen towels were the most contaminated with bacteria of all the surfaces tested. That’s because people often use them to wipe the counter or to dry their hands after rinsing them under running water (as opposed to washing them well with warm water and soap, which would remove that bacteria,

preventing cross-contamination).

And using your cell phone or tablet can be an unexpected source of contamination. “Every time you touch something during food prep is an opportunity to introduce contaminants into your food,” Feist says. “So if you take a call, wash your hands again after you set the phone down.”

■ **Get meat up to temp.** To kill bacteria that may be present, cook beef and pork roasts and fresh ham to 145° F. For turkey, that magic number is 165° F. See “Talking Turkey,” on page 68, for more information on preparing and cooking turkey safely.

■ **Enjoy those leftovers.** Be sure your fridge is set to 37° F (use a refrigerator thermometer to check). Get leftovers into the fridge or freezer within 2 hours of cooking. Pack food in small, shallow containers (to cool it more quickly). Never store turkey on the carcass because it will take too long for all of the meat to chill.

Serve It Up Smartly

“No one wants to feel like they’re depriving themselves, especially at the holidays,” says Lisa R. Young, Ph.D., R.D., an adjunct professor of nutrition at New York University. But you can feed everyone at your table well without putting them (or yourself) into a food

coma. “You don’t necessarily need to think about eating less,” Young says. “Just think about balance.”

■ **Downsize your dishes.** Some research has shown that when using a 9½- to 10-inch-diameter plate, people typically serve themselves significantly less than they do on an oversized plate. And replacing large serving spoons with regular-sized kitchen spoons results in a similar reduction. You’re most likely going to take two or three spoonfuls of stuffing, regardless of the spoon size.

■ **Rethink what goes on the table.** Serving everything family-style is undoubtedly more festive, but research has shown that it also results in people eating about 20 percent more than they would if they had to get up for seconds—rather than just reach for them. One solution: Load the table with serving bowls of the healthiest foods in your feast (fresh veggies and salads, for example) and place the more indulgent ones (say, Grandma’s sausage stuffing) at least a few feet away.

■ **Focus on the food you love the most.** There’s a lot of pressure at the holidays to eat everything. But don’t feel you have to load up on your sister’s special casserole unless you really want it. Sample a small amount and be sure to rave about it. If you’re going to indulge, do so with the foods you wait all year to enjoy.

How Many Calories?

According to the Calorie Control Council, many Americans eat around 4,500 calories at the Thanksgiving feast. So how does the meal pictured at right have less than half that yet still look ample? It all comes down to portion sizes. Our nutrition pros followed the serving sizes specified by the Department of Agriculture or on the

labels of the packaged items we used. “Consider the portion sizes in our example at right,” says a CR dietitian, Amy Keating, R.D. “If you find you consume more than these amounts, you’ll need to double or triple the calorie count.” Not included are appetizers and dessert; eating one serving of both could add 800 to 1,000 calories.



3x3-INCH-SQUARE CORNBREAD 198 cal.

4 OZ. CANDIED SWEET POTATO 187 cal.

½ CUP GREEN BEAN CASSEROLE 227 cal.

1 CUP MASHED POTATOES 237 cal.

½ CUP STUFFING 195 cal.

¼ CUP GRAVY 25 cal.

3½ OZ. WHITE MEAT TURKEY WITH SKIN 177 cal.

¼ CUP CRANBERRY SAUCE 102 cal.

5 FL. OZ. WINE 125 cal.

TOTAL CALORIES 1,473

Talking Turkey

Make sure the star of your holiday table is extra-delicious this year—with a little help from our experts.



The food and nutrition experts at Consumer Reports aren't just scientists. They're also enthusiastic home cooks who've hosted and prepared a holiday meal or 20 over the years. So when they share their best bird tips, they cover all the bases—from food safety to serving strategies to stuffing ideas. Read on for the CR guide to your best-ever holiday turkey.



First Things First

■ **Avoid a bird treated with antibiotics.** Whether you buy your turkey at a grocery store or from a local farm, Consumer Reports recommends buying one that's certified organic, which means an independent certifier has verified that the farm raising the turkey meets the Department of Agriculture's standards. Among the many requirements in the USDA Organic standards is a prohibition on the use of antibiotics after turkeys are 2 days old. The USDA Organic seal also indicates that the birds were fed organic feed, from crops grown without the use of synthetic pesticides and genetically engineered seed, and that the feed does not contain animal byproducts or drugs that can be added to the diet of a conventional turkey to promote growth. Organic turkeys cost a little more, so if organic

isn't an option for you, your next best bet is to look for one with a label that has both a "raised without antibiotics" claim and the USDA Process Verified seal, which guarantees that this claim has been met.

■ **Size it right.** To make sure you'll have enough for all your guests, plus leftovers, CR dietitian Amy Keating, R.D., says to plan on about 1 pound of turkey for each person. "That sounds like a lot, but that includes the skin, bones, and other parts we don't usually eat," she says. "Plus, everyone likes a little extra for leftovers."

■ **Leave time to thaw.** If you buy a frozen bird, plan to thaw it in a refrigerator set to 37° F for 24 hours for each 4 to 5 pounds of meat. "A 16-pound turkey will take about four days to thaw," says CR food tester Ellen Klosz. "Put the wrapped turkey on a tray on

the bottom shelf of the refrigerator," she says. "As it thaws, some water and juice will leak out of the plastic wrapping, and you don't want that to get all over the fridge, spreading bacteria onto surfaces and other foods."

Safe Preparation

■ **No bird baths.** "You can't wash off bacteria with water, and rinsing out the turkey risks splashing its juices all over the sink and anything within several feet," Keating says. Instead, open the plastic wrap and drain any liquid into the sink before discarding the wrapper. Pat the turkey dry, inside and out, with paper towels. Wash your hands and any utensils, using hot water and soap. **Don't stuff it.** "According to the USDA, the safest way to cook stuffing is outside of the turkey," Klosz says.

Roasting Right

■ **Watch the temperature.** A crispy golden-brown exterior may be your goal, but it's the interior temperature that matters: Too low and you risk food poisoning; too high and your bird may turn out dry. CR's tests have shown that the pop-up thermometers that come with many turkeys are not 100 percent accurate. Use a digital thermometer instead.

■ **Learn correct placement.** "Take the turkey out of the oven, closing the oven door to keep the heat inside in case you need to roast it longer," Klosz says. "Insert the thermometer into the thickest part of the thigh (not the drumstick), pushing it in about 2 inches and making sure you don't hit a bone. Then check the thickest part of the breast and the innermost part of the wing, keeping the thermometer horizontal as you insert the probe. Both should be 165° F."

■ **Let the turkey rest.** When the turkey has reached 165° F, remove it from the oven and let it rest, loosely covered, for at least 20 minutes to let the juices redistribute into the meat, Keating says. "That's when you can make the gravy and finish up last-minute dishes." Don't let the bird sit unrefrigerated for more than 2 hours, however.

3 Creative Ways to Spruce Up Stuffing

The stuffing mixes we tested are good (see the facing page), but a little customization can make them better. Start with one of the Pepperidge Farm winners as your base, follow the directions on the package, then pick from the three options here.

CORN, BLACK BEANS, AND CHILIES

- 1 cup frozen corn kernels, thawed
- 2 tablespoons chipotle chilies, chopped
- ¾ cup canned black beans, drained and rinsed

Combine corn and chilies with celery and onions called for in the package recipe. Add stuffing mix, broth, and beans. Heat through and serve.

MUSHROOM-PECAN

- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1½ cups diced mushrooms
- ½ cup toasted pecans
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped chives
- 1 large egg

Using 1 tablespoon of olive oil (instead of the butter called for in the package recipe), sauté mushrooms with celery and onions. Add stuffing mix and broth. When liquid is absorbed, add pecans, chives, and egg, and toss. Place mixture in a buttered 8x8-inch dish; bake 30 minutes at 400° F.

SWEET POTATO-ORANGE

- 1 sweet potato, peeled, diced, and roasted
- ¼ cup orange juice
- 2 teaspoons crystallized ginger, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon orange zest

(For this recipe, use ½ cup broth instead of the 1½ cups called for in the package recipe.) Combine roasted potatoes, sautéed celery, and onions. Heat through. Add stuffing mix, broth, and orange juice. Mix well. Reduce heat and add crystallized ginger and orange zest. Heat through and serve.

The Best Stuffing Mixes

Consumer Reports' top picks, plus tips on making store-bought tastier and healthier

Our expert tasters tried nine stuffings in two categories—herb/chicken and cornbread—in separate taste groups. Over a period of two days, each stuffing was prepared twice following the manufacturers' instructions. Some called for the addition of only broth or water, and butter, while others suggested adding fresh onion and celery, and even carrots.

Of all the tested stuffings—including gluten-free and whole-wheat varieties—Pepperidge Farm Herb Seasoned Classic Stuffing, Stove Top Cornbread Stuffing Mix, and Pepperidge Farm Corn Bread Classic Stuffing, ranked in order, received Good taste ratings, with a moist and soft (but not mushy) texture and well-balanced flavors.

Nutrition Notes

All the stuffings except one received Fair nutrition scores. Stove Top Whole Wheat Stuffing Mix for Chicken scored a Good for nutrition because it was higher in fiber than the others and the directions called for just 1½ tablespoons of butter per package, vs. 4 tablespoons for the other products.

But this stuffing ranked at the bottom of the herb stuffings in our tests for taste. It received a Good rating, but the harsh, dehydrated seasonings

overwhelmed the flavor, and the stuffing had a slightly bitter taste, with chewy dehydrated vegetable pieces.

Per ½ cup as prepared, the stuffings we tested ranged from 132 calories in Aleia's Gluten Free Savory Stuffing Mix to 177 calories in Great Value (Walmart) Chicken Flavored Stuffing Mix and Stove Top Lower Sodium Stuffing Mix for Chicken.

To cut back on the sodium in the stuffings, we used chicken broth with 33 percent less sodium, and our tasters did not find a big difference in flavor compared with stuffings made using regular broth. We also used unsalted butter. Still, the per-serving sodium count ranged from 250 mg for Stove Top Lower Sodium Stuffing Mix for Chicken to 727 mg for Pepperidge Farm Herb Seasoned Classic Stuffing.

Making Stuffing Healthier

In addition to using lower-sodium broth and unsalted butter, try using less butter than the instructions call for, or switch to olive oil or a lower-fat vegetable oil-based spread. Adding plenty of chopped vegetables—onions, carrots, and celery—or even fruit such as apples or pears will stretch the stuffing and lower the calorie, fat, and sodium content per serving.



THE TOPS FROM OUR TESTS



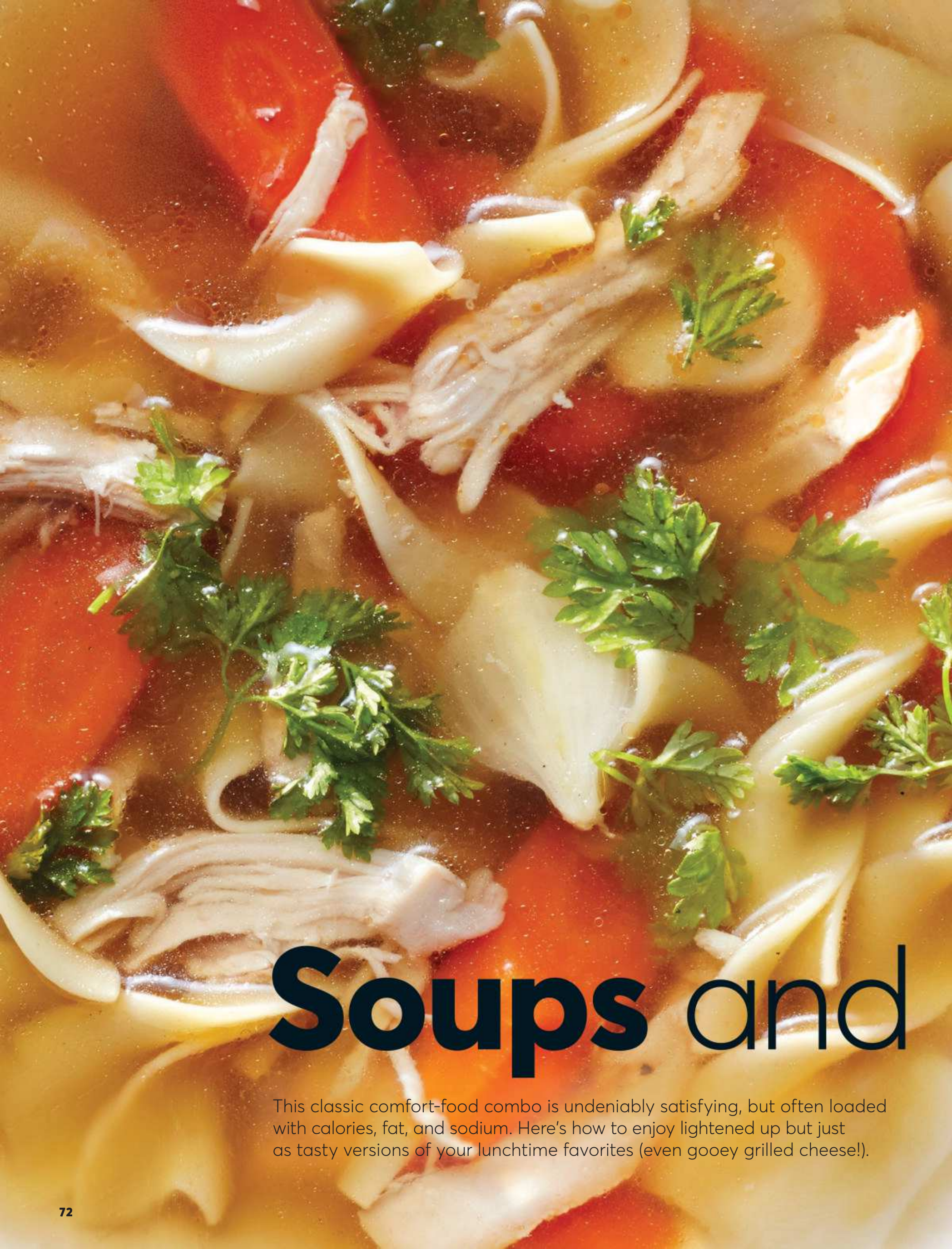
PEPPERIDGE FARM
HERB SEASONED
CLASSIC STUFFING



STOVE TOP
CORNBREAD
STUFFING MIX



PEPPERIDGE FARM
CORNBREAD
CLASSIC STUFFING



Soups and

This classic comfort-food combo is undeniably satisfying, but often loaded with calories, fat, and sodium. Here's how to enjoy lightened up but just as tasty versions of your lunchtime favorites (even gooey grilled cheese!).



Sandwiches

When the weather turns cool, comfort-food cravings can start to build like fallen leaves on the lawn. Good news: You can indulge your desires for such treats as a rich and crispy grilled cheese or a hearty bowl of soup without derailing your nutrition goals. In fact, sandwiches and soups can be great vehicles for adding more veggies and whole grains to your diet. Read on to learn how.

Sandwiches

Sandwiches are easy to make—and just as easy to eat. Not surprisingly, they’re a popular lunch choice: According to a recent report published by the market research firm Datassential, 58 percent of adults pack a sandwich for lunch at least once a week; 68 percent do so for their children.

But not every sandwich is actually good for you. “When you get a takeout sandwich, you don’t have as much control over what goes into it,” says Amy Keating, R.D., one of Consumer Reports’ nutrition experts. For example, a 6-inch Subway Italian B.M.T. (with ham, pepperoni, and salami) has 390 calories, 17 grams of fat, and 1,330 mg of sodium. That’s more than half the maximum recommended

2,300 mg of sodium you should have in a day. “And even the sandwiches you make for yourself can be loaded with calories, fat, and sodium if you aren’t careful,” Keating says.

But there are simple ways to cut out the bad stuff without compromising on taste. Here, tips from CR’s nutrition team on how to make the most of your bagged lunch.

■ **Rethink the bread.** According to the Datassential report, 25 percent of consumers are willing to pay a higher price for healthier “carriers” such as sandwich bread. White breads and rolls are the classic go-to, but they’re much less nutritious than those made from whole grains, such as whole wheat. Two slices of Oroweat’s Country White, for example, have 40 more calories than their whole-grain Double Fiber bread and about 10 fewer grams of fiber.

Look for breads with fewer than 150

calories per slice. A healthy sandwich, including the bread and fillings, should have no more than about 400 calories. Tip: Beware of wraps. They look lighter, but many sandwich wraps are high in sodium and have 300-plus calories and just as many carbs as regular bread.

■ **Get creative with condiments.** Butter, mayonnaise, ketchup, and mustard can jazz up a sandwich, but they can be packed with calories, fat, and sodium, and offer little in the way of healthy nutrients. Just 1 teaspoon of Heinz yellow mustard has 60 mg of sodium, for example. And a tablespoon of Hellmann’s mayonnaise has 90 calories, 10 grams of fat, and 90 mg of sodium.

Use some guacamole (or just some smashed avocado) as a spread instead to add nutrients, such as folic acid and vitamins B6, C, E, and K, as well as fiber and healthy fats. If the spread is too bland on its own, try a sprinkle of salt and pepper or a drizzle of balsamic vinegar. Hummus is another healthy sandwich spread (learn more about this good-for-you bean dip on page 42).

■ **Steer clear of processed meats.** Cold cuts are often loaded with sodium as well as nitrates and nitrites, preservatives that have been linked to an increased risk of cancer. The occasional deli-meat sandwich or BLT is fine, but processed meat shouldn’t be on your daily lunch menu. In fact, a recent World Health Organization report classified processed meats as carcinogenic to humans and found that a daily dose of 1.8 ounces of processed meat—the equivalent of about two slices of deli

Grilled Cheese Makeover

A few simple tweaks give you all the rich flavor, with less fat, calories, and sodium

Grilled cheese sandwiches are an American favorite. They're so popular, in fact, that according to a recent report published by the market research firm Datassential, 51 percent of consumers love them, beating out the sub, chicken sandwich, and Philly cheesesteak.

And while grilled cheese sandwiches don't usually win any nutrition awards, a few updates to the traditional slathered-in-butter, dripping with cheese recipe can turn a nutritional dud into a healthy winner.

Use these tips to make your own, or try our recipe for a tasty, healthy grilled cheese sandwich.

Toast Instead of Fry

To make a grilled cheese sizzle, butter is spread on the outside of the bread, but that can increase the calorie and fat count significantly. A tablespoon of butter has 100 calories and 11 grams of fat. To get a

satisfying crunch without dousing your bread in butter or oil, top one slice of bread with cheese, then toast it along with the other side of the sandwich in a toaster oven. And pick whole-wheat bread over white (see "Rethink the Bread," on the facing page).

Power Up With Produce

Veggies are tasty—especially when tucked into a healthy grilled cheese—but so is fruit. And the ones you add to your sandwich count toward your produce servings for the day. Studies show that the more fruit and vegetables you eat, the lower your risk of a number of chronic diseases.

Try tomatoes or apples with cheddar cheese, beets or pears with goat cheese, avocado or peaches with blue cheese, pineapple or avocado and peppers with Monterey Jack, or apricots or sweet potatoes with Havarti cheese.

Leafy greens are another option. We used Swiss chard in the recipe at right. It's packed

with fiber, magnesium, and potassium, as well as vitamins A, C, E, and K. You can sub in other greens, such as arugula or spinach, for a similar nutritional punch, though spinach will have a milder flavor.

Use a Flavorful Cheese

We know it's the best part of the sandwich, and if you use cheese with a strong, satisfying taste, you can get by with using less. We used 1 ounce (one slice) of low-sodium Swiss cheese instead of two, saving 105 calories and 8 grams of fat in our recipe. The flavorful, nutty taste of the cheese complements the Swiss chard, allowing you to get by with less. Swapping a regular slice with a low-sodium version knocks out 48 mg of sodium.

Winning Combo

Layering in tomato or other veggies adds lush flavor and texture, so you won't need as much cheese.

SWISS CHARD GRILLED CHEESE

- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 small bunch Swiss chard (about 4 oz.), stems removed, large ribs cut out, sliced and washed
- 2 slices whole-wheat bread
- 1 slice (1 oz.) Swiss cheese (preferably lower-sodium)
- 2 slices tomato

1. In large skillet, heat oil over medium-low heat. Add garlic and Swiss chard and cook until wilted, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat and let cool.
2. Place cheese on one slice of bread. Top with Swiss chard and tomato. Place the slice of bread with the cheese and chard directly on rack in toaster oven. Place other slice of bread next to it in toaster oven. Toast until cheese is melted and bread is browned. Top the slice of bread with the chard, cheese, and tomato with the plain slice.
3. Cut sandwich in half and serve with a side of raw vegetables or a side salad.

Per Serving: One sandwich contains 400 calories, 19 g fat, 6 g saturated fat, 18 g protein, 39 g carbohydrates, 6 g fiber, 6 g sugars, and 520 mg sodium.



Super Bowls

Kick the can and stir up a pot of these easy, satisfying soups to serve with your favorite sandwich

CHICKEN NOODLE SOUP

- 1 chicken breast half, with skin (about ¾ pound)
 - ¼ cup finely chopped shallots
 - ½ cup finely diced celery
 - 1 cup sliced carrots
 - 4 cups low-sodium chicken broth
 - 2½ cups water
 - ½ teaspoon salt
 - ⅛ teaspoon marjoram
 - ⅛ teaspoon thyme
 - Pinch of black pepper
 - 3 ounces (about 2 cups) cooked wide egg noodles
1. Place chicken, skin side down, in preheated 4-quart sauce pan. Brown over medium heat for about 5 minutes to render some

- of the chicken fat.
 2. Remove chicken and reduce heat to low. Add shallots and stir briefly (1 to 2 minutes); do not brown.
 3. Return chicken to the pan and add remaining ingredients, except noodles. Bring to a boil.
 4. Reduce heat and simmer uncovered for 30 minutes, or until chicken is tender. Remove chicken and let cool. Discard bones and skin.
 5. Dice chicken meat and return to pan. Add cooked noodles. Serve or refrigerate. (Bring refrigerated soup to a boil before serving.)
- Makes eight 1-cup servings.

Per Serving: 100 calories, 1.5 g fat, 460 mg sodium, 1 g fiber, 2 g sugars, and 11 g protein.

Note: You can modify this recipe by adding onions instead of shallots, or whole grains or your favorite pasta in place of the egg noodles. Though carrots and celery are traditional in chicken noodle soup, you can include any vegetable you like in addition to or in place of them.

ONION-LEEK SOUP

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 5 cups sliced onions (about 2 large)
- 2 cups sliced leeks (about 1 bunch)
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 2 teaspoons flour
- 1 cup white wine, such as sauvignon blanc
- 8 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 sprigs each thyme and parsley plus 2 bay leaves, tied together with string

1. Melt butter in a large soup pot over medium heat. Add onions and leeks. Cook, stirring frequently until they're soft and turn a dark straw color, about 30 minutes.

2. Add ¼ teaspoon each salt and pepper and the flour. Cook 3 minutes, stirring frequently.
 3. Add wine, increase heat to medium-high, stirring and scraping to loosen bits on the bottom, until liquid is mostly evaporated, about 5 to 8 minutes.
 4. Add broth and herb bundle. Reduce heat and simmer for 20 minutes. Remove herb bundle, add remaining salt and pepper. Serve or refrigerate. (Bring refrigerated soup to a boil before serving.)
- Makes about ten 1-cup servings.

Per Serving: 90 calories, 3.5 g fat, 180 mg sodium, 1 g fiber, 2 g sugars, and 4 g protein.

LENTIL AND SPINACH SOUP

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 cups lentils
- 4 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
- 4 cups water
- 1 sprig (2 to 3 inches) fresh rosemary
- 1 package (7 ounces) baby spinach, roughly chopped
- 2 large tomatoes, chopped
- ½ teaspoon black pepper

1. Heat oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add onion and garlic, and cook until onion is soft, about 5 minutes, stirring often.
 2. Add lentils, broth, water, and rosemary sprig. Bring to a boil.
 3. Reduce heat and simmer uncovered until lentils are tender, about 20 minutes.
 4. Add spinach and tomatoes. Simmer 10 minutes. Remove rosemary stem. Stir in pepper. Serve or refrigerate. (Bring refrigerated soup to a boil before serving.)
- Makes about ten 1-cup servings.

Per Serving: 170 calories, 3.5 g fat, 180 mg sodium, 7 g fiber, 3 g sugars, and 9 g protein.



meat or four strips of bacon a day—raises one’s risk of colorectal cancer by 18 percent.

Instead of buying your lunch meat at the deli, make your own. Use leftovers from a roast chicken or pull some from a roast pork. Fatty fish such as salmon and canned tuna are high in inflammation-busting omega-3 fatty acids (though Consumer Reports’ experts don’t recommend eating canned tuna if you’re pregnant because of high mercury levels). If you do buy deli cold cuts, try to avoid smoked meats, which are often particularly high in sodium.

■ **Cut back on cheese.** A good Gouda or aged cheddar can take a sandwich from so-so to superb. But even just a few slices can put a serious dent in your daily calorie, fat, and sodium allotment. Two slices of cheddar, for example, can add 230 calories, 19 grams of fat, and 370 mg of sodium to your sandwich. If you can’t forgo it completely, try cutting the amount you use: one slice instead of two, for example. Or go for low-fat or low-sodium alternatives.

TIP

Most soup recipes are flexible, so don’t be afraid to add additional vegetables or swap the herbs for your favorites.

Swapping one slice of regular Swiss with a low-sodium option can save you 48 mg of the mineral, for example.

■ **Veg out.** Consider skipping the meat and cheese altogether on some days. Try marinated tofu and veggies on a whole-grain roll; black beans, onions, peppers, and salsa in a whole-wheat wrap; or almond butter and sliced pears on whole-wheat bread.

■ **Add a healthy side.** Instead of a pile of potato chips, choosing a side of fruit or veggies, such as an apple, sliced carrots, bell peppers, or cucumbers, can add a healthy crunch to your meal without too many extra calories. If you’re in the mood for something warm, try a half sandwich and a bowl of homemade soup.

Soups

To steal a line from Campbell’s, soup is good food—but homemade soup is the best. And there’s no better partner to a healthy sandwich. Sure, canned soup is more convenient, but there are a few health reasons why you might want to make your own:

■ **You can control the salt.** Soup is one of the top 10 sources of sodium in the American diet. In just 1 cup, you can easily get about a third or more of the 2,300 mg maximum you should have in a day. For example, Campbell’s Well Yes Chicken Noodle has 640 mg, Pacific Organic French Onion has 740 mg, and Progresso Lentil has

810 mg. If you’re buying canned soup, check the label for low-, lower-, or reduced-sodium varieties.

■ **Scope out the added sugars.** We typically think of soups as savory, but many have added sugars. Check ingredients lists for cane sugar, evaporated cane juice, honey, or other forms of sugars. Sugars are usually added to “sweeter” soups, such as butternut squash, pumpkin, and tomato. Because those vegetables have natural sugars, it’s difficult to suss out how much comes from the vegetable and how much is added. And the sugars count varies. Health Valley Organic No Salt Added Butternut Squash soup contains evaporated cane juice and has 3 grams of sugars per cup. Campbell’s Homestyle Butternut Squash Bisque contains sugar and apple juice concentrate and has 11 grams.

■ **Reconsider the can.** Cans may be lined with BPA, or bisphenol A. It’s a compound that may be found in the epoxy-based materials that line the inside of cans. It can leech into the foods, and studies have linked BPA exposure to reproductive abnormalities and a heightened risk of breast and prostate cancers, diabetes, and heart disease. Some companies promote their cans as BPA-free, or you can buy soups and broths packaged in cartons.

Though it may not be as fast and easy as opening a can, you can make homemade soup more convenient by cooking up a big batch and freezing it. Try the healthy homemade soup recipes from CR’s nutrition team (see previous page) to get you started.

Chill Out

Research shows that frozen veggies don't deserve their bad rap for being less nutritious than fresh.



Veggies Made Easy

From mashed cauliflower to broccoli tots, the frozen food aisle is making it faster and tastier than ever to put more produce on the menu.

With so many varieties of fresh produce available year-round, why consider frozen veggies? For starters, it's not always easy to find—or afford—what you want in the supermarket produce aisle. And how many of us have gleefully scooped up a basket's worth of goodies only to find that we didn't have time to prepare a meal fast enough before the bounty wilted in the crisper drawer?

NO MATTER HOW you get your veggies, we all need to get more: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that only about 1 in 10 Americans consumes his or her daily recommended amounts of veggies (3½ and 2½ cups, respectively).

If you're struggling with the prep and cooking time for veggies, you'll be cheered to learn about the greater number of inventive new frozen offerings. You'll find veggies that are mashed, riced, roasted, and spiralized, as well as mixed with grains and beans. There's also a cost advantage: Data from the Department of Agriculture show typically higher average prices for fresh produce, with some items (cauliflower, for one) significantly cheaper in frozen form.

Consumer Reports' food testers sampled a variety of frozen vegetable products, rating them for nutrition, flavor, and texture. Some missed the mark in terms of taste, and others lost points for excess sodium or other concerns. But overall, our testing team found plenty to be both healthy and tasty.

A Nutritional New Day

It's a long-held belief that anything not fresh can't possibly be good for you. But when it comes to frozen vegetables, recent research shows that's not the case. Culinary scientist Ali Bouzari, Ph.D., led a study at University of California, Davis, in which his team tested eight hand-harvested items—blueberries, broccoli, carrots, corn, green beans, peas, spinach, and strawberries. They then flash-froze half of the bounty and stored the other half in typical industry conditions for fresh produce. The researchers periodically tested the content of 11 nutrients in both groups.

Comparing like fruits and vegetables with like, there was little difference in nutrient content overall. In some cases, fresh items were slightly better; in others, frozen items had a slight edge. Nutritionally speaking, "good frozen produce is essentially a head-to-head toss-up with good fresh produce," Bouzari says.

Crazy for Cauliflower

If you're browsing the supermarket frozen veggie aisle, you may be surprised by the wealth of cauliflower in the cases. What's up with that?

Cauliflower mania is real, with sales of products containing the cruciferous vegetable rising 71 percent in the last year, according to market research firm Nielsen. The cauliflower craze, says Kara Nielsen, culinary trends analyst at the marketing firm CCD Innovation, took hold when paleo dieters and other carb-averse eaters discovered that processing it into small, rice-shaped pieces could create a substitute for carb-heavy items like potatoes and rice. The new diet star—bagged, riced cauliflower—became a supermarket fixture, both in the produce and the freezer aisles.

Riced cauliflower fared particularly well in our tests. The four products that were rated Excellent overall each contain riced cauliflower. Our testers found it to be a fairly versatile ingredient. It has enough flavor that you could eat it on its own, but riced cauliflower can also replace some of the rice in recipes. Mashed cauliflower also got high marks.

Though your healthiest option will always be to buy plain veggies and season them yourself, one of our recommended products was preseasoned.

Green Giant Riced Veggies Cauliflower with Lemon & Garlic got a high nutrition score in part because it contained no added salt, but our tasters also rated it highly for its fresh lemony flavor. "It goes to show that there are other ways to add flavors besides salt," says CR nutritionist Amy Keating.

Birds Eye Veggie Made Mashed Cauliflower Original and Alexia Mashed Cauliflower with Sea Salt had their nutrition ratings dinged for rather high (470 and 460 mg, respectively) sodium counts. But they were the only products in our test to earn an Excellent rating for taste.

From Spirals to Tots

Spiralized veggies—low-calorie, low-carb substitutions for pasta—are also big news in the frozen food aisle. It's not surprising: Spiralizing from scratch takes time and specialized kitchen equipment. For fans of these, we found that the frozen packaged Carrot Spirals from Trader Joe's received one of our highest nutrition and sensory scores. (Green Giant recently released a spiralized frozen veggie line, but the items were not available in time for our tests.)

Also popping up in the freezer section are veggie "tots"—similar to kids' fried potato tots but with other vegetables inside. "They are lower in calories,

fat, and sodium, and have more fiber than potato tots," Keating says. Of the three in our tests, the Green Giant Veggie Tots Broccoli got the highest Overall Score. But they're not twins to kids' beloved potato versions: According to Keating, the broccoli filling was flavorful, but the texture was mushy, unlike typical tots.

Powering Up the Protein

Consumers looking to bump up their plant protein intake will also find frozen blends of vegetables, grains, and beans. We found these to be of varying quality. Sodium was a problem, but for Birds Eye Steamfresh Protein Blends California Style—which received Very Good nutrition and taste scores—its 12 grams of fiber and protein per cup compensated for the 450 mg of sodium.

The most disappointing innovation: The line of roasted vegetables from Green Giant. Keating says the CR food tasting team had high hopes for the concept because roasting brings out vegetables' sweetness, and having a frozen option means that you can skip the time-consuming process of roasting them yourself. But most of these frozen roasted veggies were barely edible, with a smoky, ashy flavor, according to our tasters.

Should You Swallow the Health Claims on Packages?

It's common to see lots of exciting-sounding health promises on food packages at the supermarket, and frozen vegetables are no exception. But a little skepticism is in order. "I'm all for touting the benefits of vegetables if it convinces people to eat more of them," says Consumer Reports nutritionist Amy Keating, R.D. "But you don't know how meaningful the claims are unless you check the nutrition facts panel on the back of the package."

SUSS OUT THE SODIUM.

"If a product is seasoned or in sauce, it likely contains added salt," Keating says. Birds Eye Veggie Made Mashed Cauliflower, for example, says on its packaging: "50% fewer carbs than the leading mashed potato brand," but it also has 470 mg of sodium in just ½ cup. A healthy sodium level for a vegetable side dish is 140 mg or less.

CHECK THE CALORIES.

Green Giant Riced Veggies Cauliflower & Sweet Potato claims to be a "reduced calorie food" and a "good alternative to potatoes, pasta, or rice." While true, these statements may give you the impression that those foods are packed with calories. But 1 cup of skinless baked potato has just 114 calories, for example, and 1 cup of cooked pasta just 200—higher than the 50 in 1 cup of the cauliflower/sweet potato product but certainly not a calorie bomb.

BE SURE ABOUT THE SUGARS.

Birds Eye Steamfresh Superfood Blends Quinoa & Spinach is claimed to be a good source of antioxidant vitamins, but it also has 10 grams of total sugars per cup. A little of that may come from the sugars naturally present in the veggies, but the majority is likely from the dried cranberries and sugars added to the sauce, Keating says.



✓ GREEN GIANT
RICED VEGGIES
CAULIFLOWER

85 OVERALL
SCORE

HANOVER BLENDED
PROTEINS STEAM-IN-BAG
SICILIAN STYLE

64 OVERALL
SCORE

BIRDS EYE
STEAMFRESH
SUPERFOOD BLENDS
BARLEY & KALE

72 OVERALL
SCORE

5 COOKING TIPS FROM CR'S COOKING PROS

It's important to cook your frozen foods so that they maintain their nutritional integrity and taste their best. Here, tips from Consumer Reports' nutritionists Amy Keating and Ellen Klosz.

1. DON'T THAW FIRST.

Cooking your vegetables straight from the frozen state (photo upper left) is the best way to maintain their texture. Also, frozen veggies aren't intended to be served raw, like on a crudité plate.

2. COOK IN AS LITTLE WATER AS POSSIBLE.

The veggies' valuable nutrients can leach out if you use too much water. Steaming and microwaving require little or no water. If you opt for a pot, use a cover (as shown) so that the veggies heat through faster.

3. MIX & MATCH.

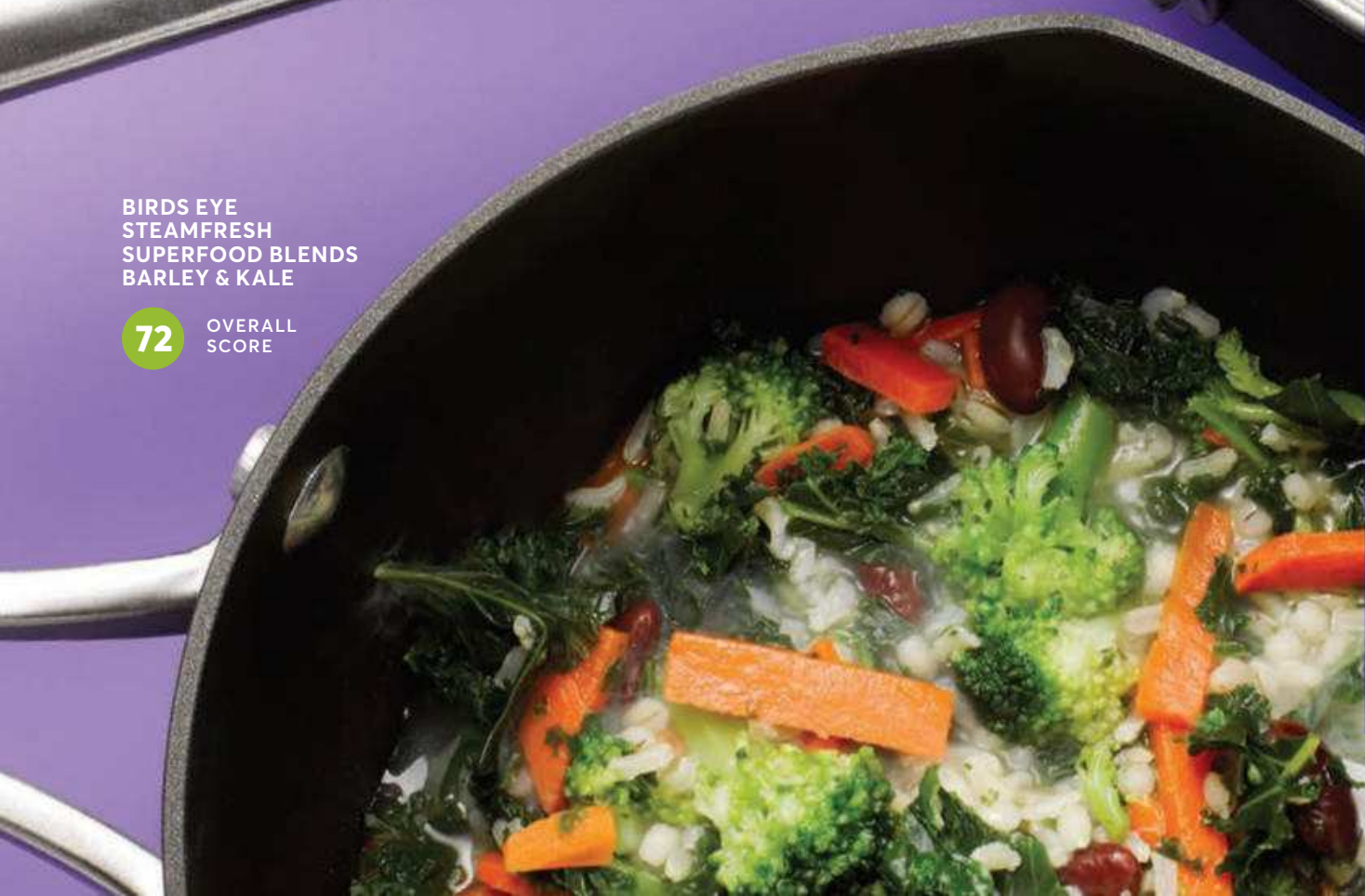
Sure, veggies make for a healthy side dish—and vegetable grain and bean blends (photo lower left) can even be served as the main meal—but you can also incorporate them into soups, casseroles, rice dishes, and more. Veggies not only provide layers of complexity but also boost the health factor of, say, mac 'n' cheese or other pasta dishes.

4. STEP AWAY FROM THE SALT SHAKER.

Extra sodium can detract from the health benefits of your veggies, so get creative with seasonings such as pepper flakes, garlic, citrus zest or juice, herbs, or even a splash of balsamic vinegar.

5. SWAP YOUR CHEESE.

Instead of goopy cheddar cheese sauce, sprinkle Parmesan or Romano on your veggies. These cheeses pack a powerful flavor punch, so a little goes a long way.



Ratings > **What's Hot in Frozen Veggies** You'll find more choices in your supermarket. But choose carefully, because flavor and texture can vary widely.

Recommended	Product	Overall Score	Rating		Nutrition Information								Pricing		Flavor & Texture Description	
			Nutrition score	Sensory score	Serving size (cup)	Calories	Fat (g)	Saturated fat (g)	Protein (g)	Carbohydrates (g)	Fiber (g)	Sugars (g)	Sodium (mg)	Average price per package (\$)		Package size (oz.)
CAULIFLOWER																
\$	Green Giant Riced Veggies Cauliflower	85	↑↑	↑	1	20	0	0	2	4	2	2	20	3.00	12	Larger bits of plain cauliflower, mild flavor. Slightly firm and chewy.
\$	Green Giant Riced Veggies Cauliflower with Lemon & Garlic	84	↑↑	↑	1	30	0	0	2	5	2	2	20	3.50	12	Small cauliflower bits, with fresh-tasting lemon zest and parsley. Slightly chewy, like rice.
	Birds Eye Veggie Made Mashed Cauliflower Original	76	↓	↑↑	½	50	3	2	2	6	3	2	470	4.00	12	Tastes like cauliflower, but the texture, black pepper, and cream make it mashed-potatolike.
	Birds Eye Steamfresh Veggie Made Riced Cauliflower Original	73	↑	↑	¾	25	0	0	2	3	2	2	210	3.00	10	Small bits of plain cauliflower. Slight natural sweetness. Chewy, like rice.
	Hanover Steam-in-Bag Riced Cauliflower Garlic & Herb	70	↑	↑	1	40	1.5	0	2	6	2	3	150	2.00	10	Pieces are larger than other riced products. Slight garlic, black pepper, and herb flavors. Slightly chewy texture.
	Green Giant Mashed Cauliflower Original with Olive Oil & Sea Salt	69	↓	↑	½	80	5	1.5	3	7	2	3	380	5.00	20	Has dairy flavor, a hint of cheese, very slight garlic, and slight white pepper. Creamy.
	Alexia Cauliflower Risotto with Parmesan Cheese & Sea Salt	68	↓	↑	½	80	4.5	3	3	6	2	2	410	4.00	12	Cauliflower bits with buttery, cheesy flavors, and slight garlic and herbs. Chewy texture, like rice.
	Alexia Mashed Cauliflower with Sea Salt	67	↓	↑↑	½	70	3.5	2	1	7	2	2	460	4.00	12	Richly flavored with butter and cream. Strong cauliflower taste. Creamy.
	Trader Joe's Mashed Cauliflower	56	↓	↓	½	50	2	1	2	7	2	3	270	3.00	16	A bit bland with a slight milk flavor and slight white pepper. Cauliflower bits throughout.
	Green Giant Veggie Tots Cauliflower	54	↓	↓	½	110	4.5	0.5	2	15	5	2	370	4.00	16	Mild and slightly bitter. Somewhat crispy coating with a pronounced oily flavor. Slightly mushy filling with chewy bits.
MIXED VEGETABLES																
\$	Green Giant Riced Veggies Cauliflower Risotto Medley	85	↑↑	↑	1	20	0	0	2	4	2	2	15	3.50	12	Small bits of cauliflower, asparagus, and mushrooms; amounts varied in the tested samples. Slightly chewy, like rice.
\$	Green Giant Riced Veggies Cauliflower & Sweet Potato	84	↑↑	↑	1	50	0	0	2	11	2	3	15	3.50	12	A little more sweet potato than cauliflower flavor. Slightly chewy, like rice.
✓	Birds Eye Steamfresh Protein Blends California Style	74	↑	↑	1	240	4.5	0	12	38	12	3	450	3.00	10.8	Mix of peas, edamame, lentils, and whole grains. Slight garlic and onion flavors; moderate heat. Pleasantly chewy texture.
	Birds Eye Steamfresh Superfood Blends Barley & Kale	72	↑	↓	1	160	2.3	0.3	6	27	6	4.7	387	3.50	10	Mix of broccoli, carrots, kidney beans, kale, barley, and brown rice. Lightly seasoned with garlic and tangy flavor from vinegar. Slightly bitter. Pleasantly chewy texture.
	Birds Eye Steamfresh Superfood Blends Quinoa & Spinach	71	↑	↑	1	207	3.3	0.7	6	38	4	10	387	3.50	10	Brown rice and quinoa with spinach, red peppers, and dried cranberries in a slightly sweet and tangy sauce. Moist and chewy.

Recommended	Product	Overall Score	Rating		Nutrition Information									Pricing		Flavor & Texture Description
			Nutrition score	Sensory score	Serving size (cup)	Calories	Fat (g)	Saturated fat (g)	Protein (g)	Carbohydrates (g)	Fiber (g)	Sugars (g)	Sodium (mg)	Average price per package (\$)	Package size (oz.)	
	MIXED VEGETABLES <i>Continued</i>															
	Green Giant Steamers Healthy Weight Sauced Vegetable Blend	70			2/3	90	2.5	1	5	14	5	3	220	2.00	7	Carrots, black beans, edamame, and snow peas in a light butter sauce. Soft texture.
	Birds Eye Steamfresh Protein Blends Italian Style	70			1	270	4.5	1.5	12	45	12	2	450	3.00	11.5	Mix of broccoli, white beans, lentils, spinach, whole grains with nutmeg flavor, slight garlic, and very slight dairy note. Pleasantly chewy texture.
	Trader Joe's Riced Cauliflower Stir Fry	69			1	50	2	0	2	7	2	3	190	3.00	16	Mix of cauliflower bits, roasted corn, red peppers, green onions, and peas with tamari (soy) flavor. Overall flavorful and well-blended. Pleasantly chewy texture.
	Green Giant Mashed Cauliflower Broccoli & Cheese	68			1/2	90	5	3	3	8	2	2	430	5.00	20	Broccoli flavor dominates. Milk and cheese flavors come through. Moderately salty with slight garlic. Some small lumps.
	Hanover Blended Proteins Steam-in-Bag Sicilian Style	64			1	213	4.7	0.7	13	30	12	3.3	133	3.00	10.5	Blend of navy beans, peas, edamame, and a few red bell pepper pieces with kale in a tomato paste sauce. The slightly firm beans contribute to a dryness overall.
	Birds Eye Steamfresh Protein Blends New England Style	64			1	260	4	1.5	11	46	12	4	500	3.00	11.2	Lentils, potatoes, corn, red beans, green beans, and bulgur with flavors of garlic, slight onion, black pepper, and cheese. Pleasantly chewy texture.
	Green Giant Veggie Tots Broccoli	63			1/2	110	4.5	0.5	3	15	6	1	370	4.00	16	Browned, slightly crispy outer coating with a moist, soft, slightly mushy filling. Flavorful, seasoned with onion and garlic.
	Green Giant Steamers Antioxidant Blend with Broccoli, Carrots, and Peppers	60			2/3	50	3	0	1	7	2	3	115	2.00	7	Broccoli, carrots, and red and yellow peppers in a mild sauce with slight garlic and dehydrated spice flavors. Soft texture.
	Green Giant Veggie Tots Sweet Potato & Cauliflower	59			1/2	150	5	0	2	24	5	4	340	4.00	16	Browned, slightly crispy outer coating with soft sweet potato and cauliflower pieces. Strong sweet potato flavor with a hint of black pepper. Sweet and slightly bitter.
	Alexia Riced Vegetable Pilaf with Sea Salt	58			1/2	40	2	1	1	5	2	1	420	4.00	12	Small bits of cauliflower and butternut squash. Peppery, with some heat, and slight onion, garlic, and buttery notes. Mild vegetable flavors. Overall slightly chewy texture, like rice.

HOW WE TEST: CR's nutrition and food-testing team rated frozen vegetables for nutrition and taste qualities. The **Nutrition score** is based on energy density

(calories per gram), total fat, saturated fat, fiber, sugars, sodium, and other nutrients. **Sensory score** (taste and texture) is based on the

results of a blind tasting by a trained sensory panel. The **Overall Score** is a combination of the two. **NOTE:** For the most part, the serving sizes are what's listed on

the product package, but for a few our testers modified some recommended portion sizes for comparison purposes.





Home Cooking Helpers

The best of the new countertop appliances make it faster and easier to make meals in your own kitchen. We put them to the test to help you decide which deserve a place in your space—and provide ratings on blenders, toaster ovens, and more.

When the going gets tough, the tough eat out. In 2016, Americans spent about \$799 billion at restaurants, more than half of what we spent on food overall. But restaurant meals—and frozen foods—are often high in fat and sodium, so what we gain in ease we may lose in terms of a healthy diet. “One of the best ways to control ingredients and portions is to prepare food at home,” says Amy Keating, R.D., a CR dietitian. But finding time can be tricky.

ONE WAY COOKS are bucking the take-out trend and eating more healthy foods is by using appliances that reduce prep and cooking time and do more of the work. “Sales of multi-cookers, air fryers, and toaster ovens are up,” says Joe Derochowski, an industry analyst at the market research firm NPD Group. “This is due in part to consumers’ desire to eat healthier.”

But in a field crowded with appliances that manufacturers claim can save the consumer time and effort (like the \$100 Instant Pot that “speeds up cooking by 2 to 6 times” or the \$1,000 All-Clad Prep & Cook that’s supposed

to act as “your very own sous-chef”), it’s hard to tell what’s worth the investment—and the precious real estate on your counter.

To guide you, we’ve put a collection of trendy, time-saving specialty kitchen appliances to the test, along with the blenders, food processors, and toaster ovens we evaluate throughout the year. Read on to get our experts’ tips on how to get the best performance from the small appliances you may already have, plus their takes on which new ones will save you precious time, provide convenience, and make a worthwhile addition to your countertop arsenal.

Make the Most of Mainstay Appliances

Blenders rank high on the must-have list, and many consider a toaster oven or food processor important enough to clear counter space. If you already have or are considering buying one of these standard appliances, why not make it earn its spot in the kitchen? Here’s how to save time using these standard appliances for more tasks than you might have considered.

Toaster Ovens

A toaster oven can cook, roast, broil, bake, and reheat foods. Some even defrost foods, and the Breville Smart Oven BOV900BSSUSC has an air-fryer feature, but at \$400, it’s among the most expensive toaster ovens tested. Given a toaster oven’s small capacity, it heats up quickly and is ideal when cooking for just a few people. If countertop space is tight, be sure to note the dimensions in our toaster oven ratings.

- Cook fish in your toaster oven and dinner is fast, and cleanup is faster.
- Chop or slice veggies, toss with olive oil and seasoning, and place in a single layer on a light-colored aluminum pan to prevent their natural sugars from burning. (Heat transfer is accelerated in a dark pan, and food can darken faster.)
- Roast veggies quickly at 400° F. “A pan of trimmed asparagus takes about 8 minutes,” says Claudia Gallo, a CR food tester. “Brussels sprouts and root veggies need a bit longer.”

Food Processors

A food processor can purée, chop, slice, and grate. See our food processor ratings for the best of the bunch.

- “Chop, slice, and shred enough veggies for several days, then store them in a sealed plastic bag and refrigerate for snacking or adding to recipes,” says Keating.
- Make simple soups by sautéing a variety of vegetables, such as butternut squash and onions, until tender. Purée

Continued on page 88 >

Multi-Cookers

These multitaskers are big time-savers, too

Like a slow cooker on steroids, multi-cookers steam, slow-cook, brown, bake, and keep food warm without the constant supervision that stovetop cooking entails.

We tried out the cookers below, using them to prepare stir-fried Kung Pao chicken, slow-cooked beef stew, roasted chicken breasts, steamed

broccoli, brown rice, white rice, risotto, quinoa, and even yogurt. They come in particularly handy when a recipe requires more than one form of cooking, such as a roast that calls for browning and then slow cooking. For best results with these, chop veggies in uniform sizes to ensure even cooking, and don’t crowd the pot when searing meat.



KitchenAid KMC4241 Multi-Cooker

\$250 | Capacity 4 quarts

This multi-cooker made dishes as good as—or better than—those made on a rangetop, though not as quickly. It’s also a bit noisier than other models we tested. The \$150 Stir Tower KST4054 accessory adds considerably to the cost, but it frees you from stirring risotto or caramelized onions.

WARRANTY 1 year



Cuisinart 3-in-1 Cook Central MSC-600

\$159 | Capacity 6 quarts

Though this model doesn’t prepare rice, it fared better in cooking, generally, than the lower-priced Black+Decker, providing a better sear and a more uniform sauté. Its functions include simmering, slow cooking, steaming, and high-heat cooking (up to 400° F).

WARRANTY 3 years



Black+Decker MC1100s

\$100 | Capacity 6.5 quarts

Less powerful than the Cuisinart, this cooker is slower to heat. Cooking temperatures range from 200° F to 450° F, but generally we found that food didn’t turn out as well. The roast function was disappointing: The chicken we made wasn’t well-browned and tasted steamed, not roasted.

WARRANTY 2 years



PHOTO, PREVIOUS SPREAD: BAUER SYNDICATION/TRUNK ARCHIVE. PHOTO, TOP RIGHT: JENNIFER DAVICK



Air Fryers

How to conquer your fear of frying

The allure of air fryers is that they deliver the crunchy taste of fried food, using little or no oil. To see how this new appliance performs, CR bought and tested seven models.

Turns out, they aren't really fryers. They're counter-top convection ovens that use a fan to circulate hot air to cook food, which you place in a small removable basket. Because they're made to fit on your counter, most aren't big enough to cook for a crowd.

We wanted to know how air-fried food tastes, so we gathered staffers in the lab

to try food that the owner's manuals recommend—french fries, chicken wings, and chicken nuggets, for starters. For the sake of comparison, we also cooked the same foods in a deep fryer. "Staffers weren't told which cooking method was used for each food, yet everybody could tell which foods were deep-fried," says Larry Ciufo, the CR engineer who ran our air-fryer tests.

While none of the air fryers replicated deep-fried results exactly, they all turned out nicely cooked food, in short order. Joe Pacella, an engineer

at CR and the father of four young children, says his family uses their air fryer almost daily: "My wife doesn't want to pull hot pans of chicken nuggets or French fries out of the oven with our toddler running around like a maniac," says Pacella, who also prefers to reheat foods in the air fryer rather than a microwave.

The Power AirFryer XL, \$138, (left), is one of the largest we tested and is the easiest to clean and has easy to use settings and controls. For more models, online members can visit cr.org/air-fryers.



Rec.	Brand & Model	Overall Score	Price	Test Results								Features	
				Baking	Color range	Reheat	Toasting time	Full batch	One slice	Ease of cleaning	Ease of use	Convection oven	Dimensions (HxWxD)
TOASTER OVENS													
✓	Breville BOV650XL Oven	76	\$180	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	9x17x15
✓	Breville Smart Oven Pro BOV845BSS	73	\$270	↑	↑	↓	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑	•	11x19x16
✓	Breville Smart Oven BOV800XL	72	\$250	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	•	19x11x16
✓	KitchenAid Digital Convection Countertop KCO273SS	71	\$250	↑	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑	•	12x18x14
✓	Breville Smart Oven Air Convection BOV900BSSUSC	71	\$400	↑	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑	•	13x21x18
	Black+Decker 8-Slice Digital Extra Wide TO3290XSD	68	\$100	↑	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑	↓	•	11x22x15
	Cuisinart Deluxe Convection TOB-135N	66	\$160	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	•	10x18x16
	Hamilton Beach 6-slice 31411	66	\$50	↑	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑	↑		9x17x15
	Black+Decker 4-Slice TO1755SB	66	\$50	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓		9x16x11
	DeLonghi Livenza Stainless EO 241250M	65	\$269	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓	↑	↑	↑	•	12x19x18
	Cuisinart Convection Steam CSO-300N	62	\$300	↓	↑	↓	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	•	11x20x15
	Cuisinart Chefs Convection TOB-260N1	60	\$260	↑	↑	↓	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑	•	11x21x17
	Krups DeLuxe Convection OK710D51	60	\$120	↑	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑	↑	•	12x20x17
	Hamilton Beach Easy Reach 4-Slice 31334 Oven	59	\$35	↓	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑	↑		9x16x12
	Cuisinart TOA60	58	\$200	↓	↑	↑	↓	↓	↑	↑	↑	•	14x16x16
	Panasonic FlashXpress NB-G110P Oven	58	\$125	↓	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑		10x13x12
	Black+Decker 6-Slice Digital Convection CTO6335SS	57	\$80	↓	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↓	↑	•	11x19x13
	Oster Designed for Life TSSTVDFL2 6-Slice	56	\$40	↑	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑	↑	•	10x17x13
	Black+Decker Spacemaker TROS1000	56	\$130	↓	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓		8x17x12
	Nostalgia Electrics Retro RTOV220	56	\$80	↑	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓	•	11x18x13
	Hamilton Beach Easy Reach 6-Slice 31126	56	\$70	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑	↑	•	9x19x15
	Bella 4-slice 14326	55	\$45	↓	↑	↓	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑		9x17x11

Rec.	Brand & Model	Overall Score	Price	Test Results						Features	
				Chopping	Slicing	Shredding	Pureeing	Grating	Noise	Weight (lb.)	Claimed capacity (cups)
FOOD PROCESSORS											
✓	Breville Sous Chef BFP800XL/A	81	\$400	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	19	16
✓	Cuisinart Elite Collection 2.0 FP-12BCN	67	\$200	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓	↑	16	12
✓	Oster Pro 1200 Plus Food Processor Attachment BLSTMB-CBF-000	67	\$90	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	6	5
✓	Cuisinart Custom 14 DFP-14BCNY	66	\$180	↑	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	15	14
	Breville Sous Chef 12 BFP660 SIL	64	\$300	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓	↑	16	9
	Oster Versa 1100 Series Performance	64	\$150	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓	↓	7	5
	Cuisinart Elite Die-Cast 16-Cup	63	\$300	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓	↑	19	16
	Cuisinart Prep 11 Plus DLC-2011CHBY	63	\$180	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑	↑	13	11

Rec.	Brand & Model	Overall Score	Price	Test Results						Features		
				Icy drinks (smoothies)	Convenience	Purée	Ice crush	Noise	Durability	Weight (lb.)	Height (in.)	Claimed capacity (cups)
FULL-SIZE BLENDERS												
	Vitamix Professional Series 750	85	\$650							13	18	8
	Blendtec Designer 725	84	\$650							11	16	5
	Cuisinart Hurricane Pro CBT-2000	80	\$300							11	18	8
	Vitamix 5200	79	\$400							11	20	8
	Dash Chef Series Digital	78	\$200							11	22	8
	Ninja Professional NJ600	78	\$100							7	18	9
	Ninja with Auto-iQ BL642-30	77	\$200							17	18	9
	L'Equip RPM Professional	77	\$380							9	19	7
	Blendtec Designer 625	74	\$500							9	15	5
	Wolf Gourmet High Performance WGBL100S	73	\$600							13	17	8
	Breville The Boss BBL910XL	71	\$400							13	18	8
	Dash Chef Series Power Blender	70	\$180							11	21	9
	Breville Hemisphere Control BBL605XL	69	\$200							9	17	6
	Oster Versa 1100 Series Performance	68	\$150							7	17	8
	Ninja BL770 ¹	68	\$200							9	18	9
	Hamilton Beach Commercial Tempest HBH650	68	\$450							12	18	8
	Cuisinart Hurricane 2.25Peak HP CBT-1500	68	\$200							8	17	8
	Electrolux Masterpiece ELJB74D9PS	68	\$350							9	16	6

Rec.	Brand & Model	Overall Score	Price	Test Results	
				Yogurt blend	Soup purée
IMMERSION BLENDERS					
	Breville Control Grip BSB510XL	92	\$100		
	Cuisinart Smart Stick CSB-75	76	\$35		
	Electrolux Masterpiece ELHB10B9PS	69	\$230		
	Bodum Bistro Blenderstick	64	\$60		

Online members can go to [CR.org](https://www.consumerreports.org) for complete up-to-date ratings.

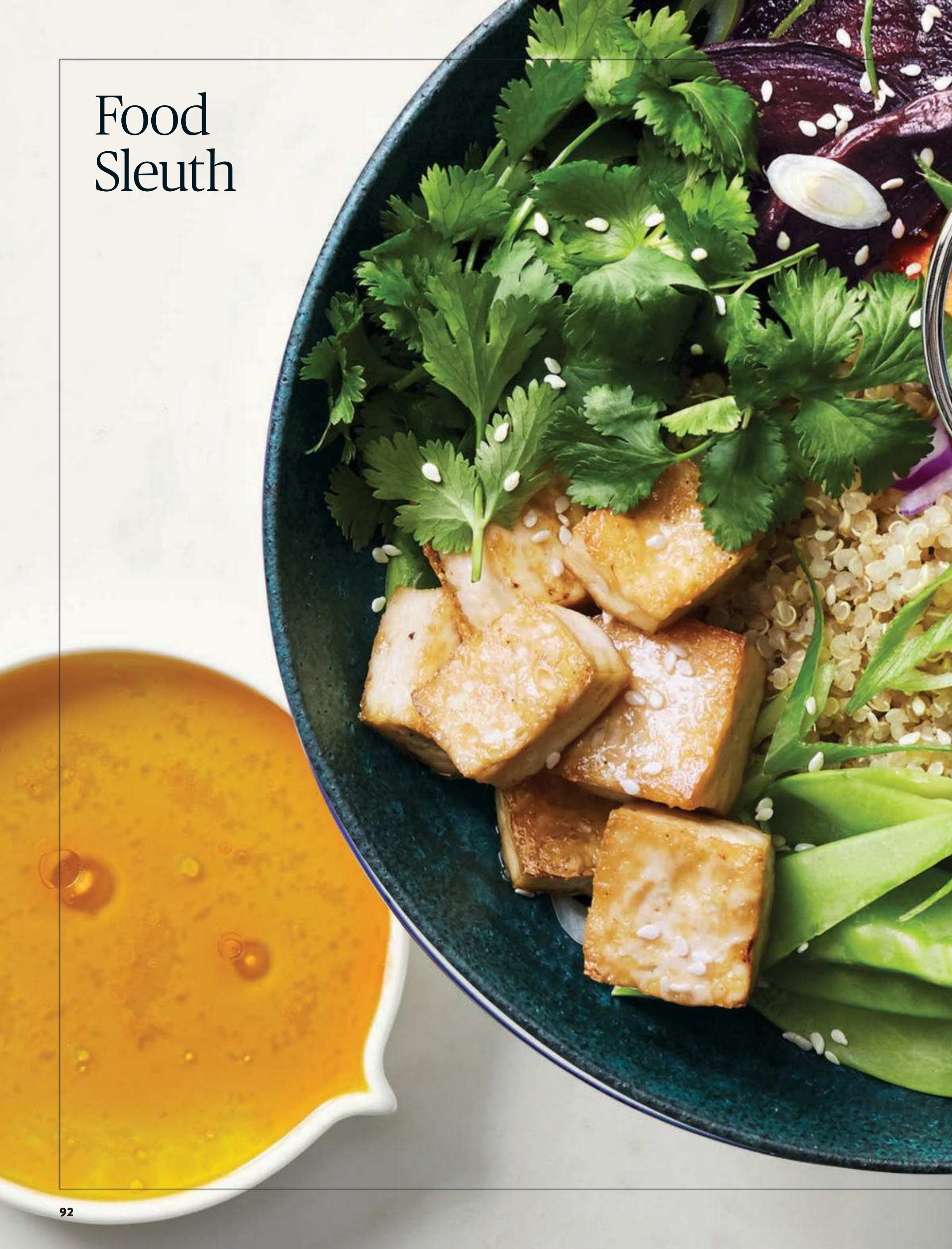
HOW WE TEST: To calculate the **Overall Score** for toaster ovens, we reheat lasagna, bake muffins and cookies, evaluate them for ease of use and ease of cleaning, and put them through three separate

toasting tests to determine which excel at making light, medium, and dark toast. The Overall Score for full-sized blenders takes into account how well they make icy drinks and

smoothies, and how well they purée soup and crush ice. We factor in convenience and noise levels on maximum speed. We also test for durability, crushing ice 45 times over two days. To test food processors,

we evaluate how well they chop almonds and onions, slice celery and onions, shred carrots and cheddar cheese, purée peas and carrots, and more. **Prices** are approximate retail.

Food Sleuth





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How much protein do you really need to be healthy? The answer just might surprise you.

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Good news! Bran flakes aren't your only option. Many favorite fruits and veggies boast impressive amounts of this key nutrient.

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Breakfast on the Run

Our nutrition pros tasted and rated morning meals from fast-food chains. Here's their pick of the best (and worst) grab-and-go grub.

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Should You Drink That?

Fruit juice, diet soda, green tea, wine ... which are diet do's and which are don'ts? Get the real deal here.

The Truth About Protein

How much is enough for good health?
Probably less than you think.

Smoothies, shakes, supplements: There's no shortage of products that come with promises to boost your protein intake. But do you really need that extra protein? "I think a lot of people feel pressured by all the marketing out there, making them feel like their diet is protein-deficient," says Douglas Paddon-Jones, Ph.D., a professor of nutrition and metabolism at the University of Texas Medical Branch.

TIP

Combining animal and plant-based protein sources is the best way to get your daily requirement and boost your health.







BEFORE YOU START eating extra steak or mixing protein powder into your smoothies, it's important to assess what your protein requirements actually are and the best ways to get the right amount.

How Much Protein Do You Need?

Protein is the building block for most of our cells; dietary protein helps us build muscle and maintain healthy bones. It also boosts energy and helps us feel full.

According to the Dietary Reference Intakes from the USDA, most people need about 0.4 gram of protein per pound of body weight. So someone who weighs 150 pounds would need about 60 grams of protein each day. (For a more individualized estimate of how much protein you need, you can enter your height, weight, and age into the USDA's calculator.)

Considering that one 6-ounce skinless, cooked chicken breast contains 54 grams of protein, achieving the recommended daily intake isn't a high hurdle for most. Despite the crowded market for protein supplements and all the manufacturers that tout the high protein content in their products, "most of us are already getting an adequate amount in our diet," says Paddon-Jones.

Certain people, such as very strict vegans and those who lack access to healthy food in general, may have a much harder time hitting even those modest goals.

Who Needs Extra Protein?

If you're trying to build lean muscle mass or you're a serious athlete, your daily protein needs can be up to double that of the average person's. Paddon-Jones cautions that this doesn't really apply to someone who hits the

The Problem With Protein Powder

Besides the nutritional drawbacks of relying too much on protein powders and shakes, frequent consumption may carry serious risks.

In a recent study, the Clean Label Project, a nonprofit group focused on labeling and safety issues, tested 134 of the most popular protein products for the presence of heavy metals. About three-fourths had detectable levels of inorganic arsenic, lead, and cadmium, which have been linked to heart disease, neurodegenerative problems, and many types of cancer.

Levels varied widely;

some products had very low amounts. In general, whey and egg powders were less contaminated than soy or other plant proteins.

For some people, drinking meals instead of eating them may be easier. If you want a healthy protein smoothie—without worrying about toxic heavy metals—get out your blender and try these easy recipes from CR's test kitchen. Each recipe makes 1 serving.

FRUITY FIBER FRAPPE

(17 grams of protein)

Blend $\frac{1}{4}$ cup oats until powdery. Add $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups frozen mixed berries, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup nonfat plain Greek yogurt, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup orange juice, 1 Tbsp. maple syrup and 1 tsp. orange zest. Blend until smooth.

TROPICAL TEMPTATION

(19 grams of protein)

Blend 1 cup frozen tropical fruit mix, 6 oz. nonfat plain Greek yogurt, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup unsweetened coconut-flavored almond milk, and 2 tsp. sugar. Blend until smooth.

gym a few times each week. "We're talking about a small group of people who are working their bodies hard, every day," he says.

Dieters also sometimes increase their protein intake in order to achieve a feeling of fullness without adding the empty calories of, say, refined carbohydrates. If you're trying to lose weight, research suggests that aiming for 0.7 gram of daily protein for every pound you weigh might help you reach your goals more easily.

After age 60, getting at least 0.6 gram per pound of body weight daily can help prevent age-related muscle degeneration, or sarcopenia,

which increases the risk of disability.

If you have certain medical concerns—you're recovering from broken bones or a severe burn, for example—your doctor may advise you to up your protein intake. The nutrient could help with regrowth and cell generation, and might speed the healing process.

What Are the Best Protein Sources?

Ideally, shoot for a diet that includes a variety of protein sources, such as lean meat, seafood, eggs, yogurt, tofu, quinoa, nuts, and beans. These types of whole foods aren't just good sources of protein; they're also rich sources of



Are Plant Proteins Complete Proteins?

What you should know if you're a vegan or vegetarian, or just cutting back on meat

People who are trying to eat more plant protein—as nearly 30 percent of Americans are, according to the market research firm Mintel—often wonder how to put the right foods together in the right combinations to make sure they're getting the “complete” protein they need. But you really don't need to worry about that. Though plant proteins technically aren't “complete,” as long as you're eating a variety of plant protein sources, your body does the work of “completing” the proteins for you.

Complete proteins are protein foods that contain all of the essential amino acids—those your body can't produce itself. Amino acids are often called the building blocks of protein because your body puts them into different

combinations to create the various types of proteins it needs. They're required for digestion, muscle and hair growth, the production of various enzymes and antibodies, and more.

Animal protein—beef, pork, poultry, fish, dairy products, and eggs—contains all nine essential amino acids. Some plant proteins, such as those found in buckwheat, quinoa, and soy, are complete proteins as well. But the majority of plants contain just some of the essential amino acids.

“We used to think you had to combine certain incomplete proteins, like the ones in rice and beans, in the same meal to get all the essential amino acids,” says Dana Hunnes, R.D., Ph.D., an adjunct assistant professor at the Fielding School of Public Health at

UCLA. “Now we know that you can meet your needs by eating a variety of plants throughout the day.” And if you're eating any animal protein, you're getting all the essential amino acids.

Getting more of your protein from plants actually has health benefits. (Beans, grains, lentils, nuts, and tofu are all good sources of plant protein.) In a Harvard Medical School study, researchers found that substituting 3 percent of calories from animal protein with plant protein was linked to a 12 percent reduced risk of dying from heart disease and a 10 percent reduced risk of dying from any cause during the 32-year study period. And sources of plant protein also supply fiber, antioxidants, and other nutrients that we need more of in our diet.

vitamins, minerals, and a host of other beneficial nutrients. (For more details on plant-based protein, see “Are Plant Proteins Complete Proteins,” above.)

Federal dietary guidelines show that Americans get most of their protein from meat, poultry, and eggs.

In general, avoid using protein supplements and shakes in place of whole-food protein sources. Though protein-packed meal-replacement shakes can seem convenient, they often come with unwanted sugars and other additives, and they generally lack the key nutrients you get from whole foods. And independent testing has shown that some protein products contain high amounts of arsenic, cadmium, and other heavy metals. For more, see “The Problem With Protein Powder,” page 97.

Can You Overdo It?

Research has shown that the body has a limited capacity to process large amounts of protein all at once. One study in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* found that someone who ingests 90 grams of protein in a single meal gets roughly the same benefits as someone who ingests 30 grams.

It's better to space out your protein intake over the course of the day in order for your body to use it all effectively. Start with, say, yogurt or eggs in the morning, get some tuna for lunch, then lean meat at dinner. You can supplement throughout the day with smart protein snacks like hummus and veggies or peanut butter on crackers or sliced apples.

For most healthy adults, there isn't a significant danger to getting more than

the recommended amount of protein naturally in your diet.

Unless you're genetically predisposed to kidney issues such as advanced type 2 diabetes and kidney disease, there are few established health risks of ingesting too much protein, says Jamie Baum, Ph.D., an associate professor of nutrition at the University of Arkansas.

Some research has shown potentially adverse effects of excess protein intake, such as straining the kidneys and the liver. But that's generally only among people who are upping their intake with supplements. And if your protein is coming predominantly from animal sources, you could face coronary risks associated with high-meat diets, such as higher rates of coronary heart disease—so it's best to mix it up, with plant protein sources as well.



TIP

Plant-based sources of protein, such as beans, quinoa, and tofu, provide essential nutrients in your diet.

The Skinny on **Fiber**

You've probably heard that foods high in fiber are beneficial, but do you know why? Here are the basics on this essential, often overlooked element of a healthy diet.

Fiber gets a lot of credit for keeping the digestive system in good working order, but it does plenty more. It's a major player in so many of your body's systems that getting enough can actually help keep you youthful. In fact, older people who ate fiber-rich diets were 80 percent more likely to live longer and stay healthier than those who didn't, according to a recent study.



**TIP**

Steam up a medium artichoke and you'll get 7 grams of fiber, plus magnesium, folate, vitamin C, and vitamin K.

THE TROUBLE IS, few Americans consume the amount they should. For people age 51 and older, government guidelines recommend at least 28 grams per day for men and 22 grams for women (based on a 2,000-calorie diet). But the Department of Agriculture says adults in this age group average just about 16 grams per day.

What Is Fiber, Anyway?

Fiber is a carbohydrate found in plant foods: beans, fruit, grains, nuts, and vegetables. Technically, it isn't a nutrient because it isn't broken down and absorbed. But that's what makes it so beneficial. There are several types of fiber, but they all fall into two broad categories: soluble and insoluble.

Soluble fiber is soft and dissolves in water, forming a gel-like substance. It bulks up your stool, making it easier to pass. Sources include beans, oats, sweet potatoes, and the flesh of some fruit.

Insoluble fiber is found in whole grains, vegetables, and fruit skin. "This kind of fiber promotes contractions of the digestive tract that move food and waste through the body," says Lindsay Malone, R.D., a dietitian at the Cleveland Clinic Center for Functional Medicine.

Many plant foods contain both types of fiber, so by eating a variety of produce, you'll cover all your bases.

How It Keeps You Young

The study mentioned earlier—from the Journal of Gerontology—followed more than 1,600 healthy adults for 10 years. Those who had “aged successfully” after a decade (meaning they were free of cancer, heart disease, and diabetes, and had good overall cognitive, physical, and cardiovascular function) consumed an average of 29 grams of fiber per day. How is it that this simple substance can have such a powerful effect on health and longevity? It turns out there are many ways that fiber works its magic.

■ **Cutting cholesterol.** Soluble fiber binds to bile acids, substances produced by the liver that aid in digestion and fat absorption, and it helps your body excrete them. “The body then needs to produce more bile acids, and it pulls cholesterol from the blood to do it,” says JoAnn E. Manson, M.D., chief of the division of preventive medicine at Brigham and Women’s Hospital. A 2016 Cochrane Review of 23 studies found that increasing fiber led to a 7.7 mg/dL reduction in total cholesterol and a 5.4 mg/dL drop in LDL (“bad”) cholesterol.

■ **Protecting against diabetes.** A study published in 2009 in Diabetes Care found that people who got less than 20 grams of fiber per day had about a 50 percent greater risk of developing type 2 diabetes than those who got 31 grams or more per day. “Eating a food that’s high in fiber slows the absorption of carbohydrates into your bloodstream,” Manson says, “so blood sugar levels rise more slowly

and the pancreas has more time to react and produce insulin.”

■ **Controlling weight.** Fiber adds bulk, so you feel full faster and stay full longer. And many high-fiber foods are low in calories.

■ **Lowering colorectal cancer risk.** A recent report by the World Cancer Research Fund International/American Institute for Cancer Research found that eating 90 grams of fiber-rich whole grains daily could lower colorectal cancer risk by 17 percent.

■ **Reducing inflammation.** Chronic inflammation has been linked to many diseases, such as arthritis, certain cancers, and even Alzheimer’s. “Many studies have shown that increased insoluble fiber intake leads to reduced inflammation,” says Qi Sun, M.D., Sc.D., an assistant professor in the department of nutrition at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. This may be because other beneficial components of whole grains, such as polyphenols and magnesium, also have anti-inflammatory properties.

■ **Protecting joints.** If fiber can reduce inflammation, it stands to reason that it may help reduce the risk of arthritis. And a recent study, published in the Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases, offers some proof. Researchers evaluated two groups of people and found that in one group, those whose daily fiber intake averaged 20 grams had a 30 percent lower risk of knee osteoarthritis than people who ate about 8 grams. In the other group, those who averaged

about 25 grams of fiber per day had a 61 percent lower risk compared with those who consumed about 14 grams.

■ **Boosting good bacteria in the gut.** “Fiber doesn’t digest, it ferments,” Malone says. “By the time it reaches the colon, the fermented material supplies food to help those good bacteria multiply and thrive.” A healthy supply of good bacteria can have far-reaching health effects, such as strengthening the immune system and helping to control inflammation.

Natural ... or Not

Beta glucan, cellulose, chicory root, inulin, pectin, psyllium, and xanthan gum are types of fiber that are added to some packaged foods. The Food and Drug Administration is reviewing some of those ingredients to determine whether to allow manufacturers to continue to count them as part of a product’s total fiber content.

The question is whether there’s enough evidence to prove they have the same physiological benefits as natural fiber, says Joanne Slavin, Ph.D., a professor of food science at the University of Minnesota. “The advantage of adding fiber into foods and beverages is to increase fiber without increasing calories,” she says. But critics worry that this practice may make something that’s essentially junk food appear to be healthy because the label touts its fiber content. “Foods that are naturally high in fiber are some of the healthiest foods,” Manson says. “You’re not going

PHOTO, PREVIOUS SPREAD: BRUCE JAMES/STOCKFOOD. PHOTOS, THIS SPREAD, FROM LEFT: GETTY IMAGES (10); JAMES WOJCIK/TRUNK ARCHIVE

Beyond Bran Flakes

Adding fiber to your diet can be delicious. Try these high-fiber foods.



AVOCADOS
1 medium (about 4 oz.)
Fiber 9 grams



GREEN PEAS
1 cup
Fiber 9 grams



LENTILS
½ cup, cooked
Fiber 8 grams



ALMONDS
½ cup
Fiber 6 grams

TIP

Eat a cup of raspberries and you'll get 8 grams of fiber, plus disease-fighting antioxidants.

to get the same health effects from eating highly processed foods with a sprinkling of added fiber.”

Tips for Boosting Fiber Intake

Getting your fiber from foods is your best bet. “Using a supplement as a replacement means missing out on all the other benefits of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains,” Manson says.

People often cite gas and bloating as reasons for not adding more fiber-rich foods to their diets. That concern is warranted. “You don't want to go from 5 grams a day to 30 all at once,” Manson says. “There are enzymes that need to be cultivated so that the intestines are ready to handle the increased load.”

So up your intake gradually, spread it across meals, and drink plenty of water.

“Fiber in the presence of fluid adds bulk and softens stool,” Malone says. Without enough water, fiber can actually be constipating. It's also worth experimenting with a variety of high-fiber foods to find which ones your digestive system tolerates best.



SWEET POTATOES
1 large (about 6 oz.)
Fiber 6 grams



PEARS
1 medium (about 6 oz.)
Fiber 5.5 grams



EDAMAME
½ cup (shelled)
Fiber 6 grams



BULGUR
½ cup, cooked
Fiber 4 grams



POPCORN
4 cups, popped
Fiber 4 grams



✓ Panera Bread
Avocado, Egg
White & Spinach
on Sprouted Grain
Bagel Flat \$5

75
OVERALL
SCORE

Breakfast on the Run

We ate and rated grab-and-go morning grub from fast-food chains. Find out which are the healthiest (and tastiest) of the bunch.



Science agrees with your mom: Breakfast really is the most important meal of your day. “Research shows that people who eat breakfast tend to have a healthier body mass index and lower rates of obesity, heart disease, and type 2 diabetes than people who skip it,” says Marie-Pierre St-Onge, Ph.D., associate professor of nutritional medicine at the Columbia University Irving Medical Center.

EATING A MORNING MEAL is also linked with improved cognitive function.

But home-cooked breakfasts are increasingly a thing of the past—and even cold-cereal sales are getting soggy. “As people are pressed for time, they want faster ways to get their breakfast fix,” says Amanda Topper, associate director of food service research at market research firm Mintel. According to market research firm NPD Group, the number of Americans eating breakfast outside the home was up 5 percent in 2016 over 2015, continuing a steady upward trend. NPD estimates that we now eat roughly one-third of our breakfasts at fast-food and coffee chains.

Are we sacrificing healthfulness for speed and convenience? Potentially. “It can be tricky to find a breakfast item that’s reasonable in calories, fat, sodium, and sugars while high in valuable nutrients, especially fiber—and that also tastes good,” says Amy Keating, R.D., a Consumer Reports nutritionist. That’s why she and the rest of CR’s food-testing team scrutinized offerings at six popular chains to help you make smart morning choices.

Happily, they found some comparatively healthy and tasty options.

What’s on the Menu?

We looked at six chains—Au Bon Pain, Dunkin’ Donuts, Jamba Juice, Panera Bread, McDonald’s, and Starbucks—that Antonella Pomilla, a senior market analyst at CR, says “represent examples of national fast-food and fast-casual restaurants, smoothie chains, and coffee shops you’re likely to find in strip malls or at an airport.” From there, our dietitians scanned the calories, fat, saturated fat, sodium, sugars, and fiber content. “We then fully tested only items that had some baseline possibility of being nutritious,” Keating says. This left 48 options to try—only a fraction of the total items available.

To be recommended, an item had to receive at least a Very Good rating for nutrition and taste. The offerings fall into four categories.

On-the-Go Good Guys

It's often cheaper and healthier to cook breakfast at home, but for times when you can't, here's a look at six fast-food choices that scored among the best in our nutrition and taste tests.

✓ Au Bon Pain
Greek Vanilla Yogurt
& Wild Blueberry
Parfait \$4.50

66

OVERALL
SCORE



✓ Jamba Juice
Fruit and Greek
Yogurt Energy
Bowl \$7.40

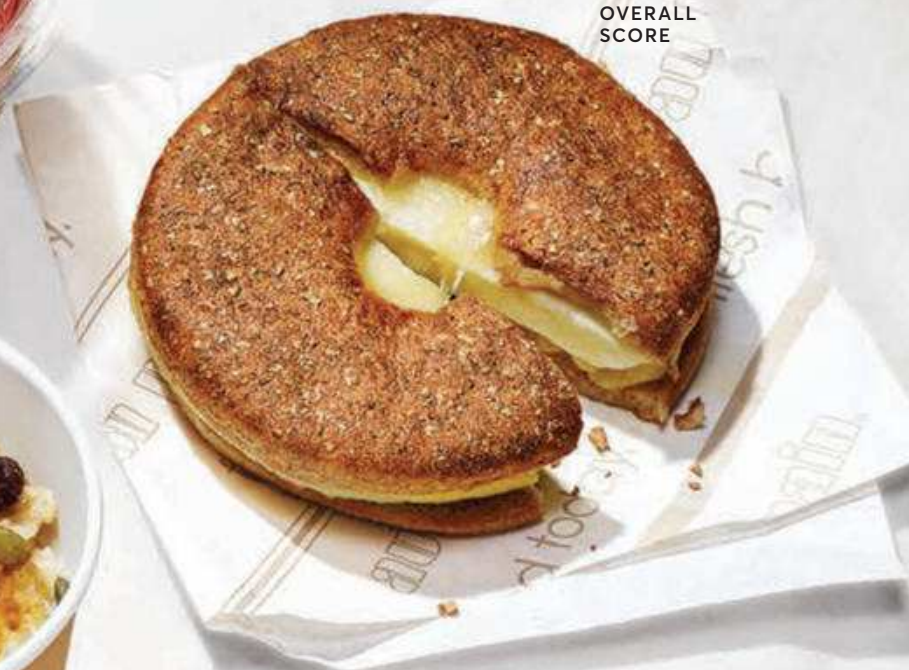
71

OVERALL
SCORE

✓ Au Bon Pain
Egg
Whites &
Cheddar on
a Skinny
Wheat Bagel
\$4.95

73

OVERALL
SCORE



✓ Starbucks
Hearty
Blueberry
Oatmeal with
Fruit, Nuts,
Seeds & Agave
Syrup \$3.75

73

OVERALL
SCORE



✓ Jamba Juice
Spinach
'n Cheese
Breakfast
Wrap \$3.60

67

OVERALL
SCORE



✓ Panera
Bread
Steel Cut
Oatmeal with
Strawberries
& Pecans
\$4.60

75

OVERALL
SCORE

Egg-and-Cheese Sandwiches

The No. 1 restaurant breakfast item in America, according to Mintel, is a combination of eggs, cheese, and some kind of meat on a bagel, croissant, wrap, or other type of bread. These are tasty, filling, and easy to transport, but they're also often loaded with fat and sodium.

Consider McDonald's sausage biscuit with egg (which we eliminated as an option in our menu review), with 530 calories, 1,140 mg of sodium, and 34 grams of fat. "We don't think anyone should get half their day's sodium in one meal," Keating says, because the odds are good that you'll end up eating far more sodium than the recommended daily limit, which is 2,300 mg.

The items that fared best in this category tended to use whole-grain breads, egg whites, and leaner proteins (such as turkey bacon) or veggies. Top-rated among all the sandwiches CR tested was Panera Bread's Avocado, Egg White & Spinach on a sprouted-grain bagel flat, which got an Excellent rating for taste and a Very Good rating for nutrition.

MAKE IT HEALTHIER "Flat bagels are a good way to cut down on carb calories," Keating says. Also, skipping cheese can slash fat and sodium. Going meatless at least some of the time is also a good idea. "Sandwiches with

veggies like spinach and tomato were healthier than anything with ham, bacon, or sausage," Keating says.

Oatmeal

Oatmeal is a great source of antioxidants and dietary fiber—especially soluble fiber, which has been shown to help lower cholesterol levels. But our testers found that the nutritional quality of this category varied widely. For example, the oatmeal at McDonald's is premixed with brown sugar, fresh apples, and dried fruit, and has a whopping 33 grams of sugars (though there is an off-menu unsweetened option). Compare this with the Steel Cut Oatmeal with Strawberries & Pecans at Panera Bread, with just 16 grams of sugars.

Starting with unsweetened oatmeal and adding your own toppings and sweeteners gives you more control. But be mindful of what you pick. "Chocolate chips, sweetened coconut, and granola can significantly up the calorie and sugars count," Keating says. "And no one type of sweetener is any healthier than another. Brown sugar, maple syrup, and honey all supply about the same amount of added sugars, teaspoon for teaspoon."

MAKE IT HEALTHIER Order unsweetened oatmeal if available, then ask for your

sweeteners on the side so that you control the amounts. When it comes to toppings, stick with fruits and nuts.

Smoothies and Energy Bowls

Jamba Juice bills itself as a "healthful, active-lifestyle brand." But CR found that the high sugars in many of its options belied those healthy claims.

Similar offerings at other chains fared poorly, too, for the same reasons. Only one—Jamba Juice's Fruit and Greek Yogurt Energy Bowl—is recommended. It has less sugars than other bowls and smoothies, and it gets an added boost for containing an abundance of fresh fruit.

MAKE IT HEALTHIER If it's an option, ask for sweeteners on the side. Also, look for items that contain whole fruit—which supply a hit of dietary fiber and sweetness without added sugars.

Breakfast Boxes

Au Bon Pain and Starbucks offer boxes filled with cheeses, nut butters, hard-boiled eggs, and fruit. Au Bon Pain's healthy salmon box scored only Fair for taste, and its fruit-and-cheese option had too much fat to make our list.

The one recommended box, Starbucks' Eggs & Cheese Protein Box, has more fat than most options in our ratings—but much of it is unsaturated fat from peanut butter.

Breakfast Bombs

These babies may blow your nutrition budget for the entire day in one sitting.

MCDONALD'S

The Big Breakfast with Hotcakes weighs in at 1,350 calories, 65 grams of fat, and 2,100 mg of sodium—close to the daily recommended maximum.

DUNKIN' DONUTS

At 710 calories and 1,120 mg of sodium—49 percent of the max amount you should have in a day—steer clear of the sausage, egg, and cheese on a (high-fat) croissant.

AU BON PAIN

Two eggs, sausage, and cheddar on an Asiago bagel has 660 calories, 1,140 mg of sodium, and 16 grams of saturated fat—80 percent of the per-day max most people should get.

PANERA BREAD

A spinach and artichoke soufflé may sound healthy, but it has 520 calories, 33 grams of fat (19 saturated), and 890 mg of sodium.

JAMBA JUICE

A large banana berry classic smoothie has 510 calories, 110 mg of sodium, and a whopping 106 grams of natural and added sugars.

STARBUCKS

The chicken, sausage, and bacon biscuit has 450 calories, 22 grams of fat, and 1,160 mg of sodium—nearly half the daily recommended maximum.

Ratings > Fast Food Breakfasts

Recommended	Menu Item	Overall Score	Rating		Nutrition Information									Price	Flavor & Texture Description
			Nutrition score	Sensory score	Serving size (oz.)	Calories	Fat (g)	Saturated fat (g)	Protein (g)	Carbohydrates (g)	Fiber (g)	Sugars (g)	Sodium (mg)		
AU BON PAIN															
✓	Egg Whites & Cheddar on Skinny Wheat Bagel	73	↑	↑	5.7	210	7	4.5	19	22	6	1	490	4.95	Fluffy egg white. Lightly toasted, thin bagel. Balanced flavor and texture.
✓	Classic Oatmeal (With Raisins, Almonds, and Brown Sugar) ¹	72	↑	↑	9.5	338	9	1	10	59	6	22	12	3.40	Soft, small-grain oatmeal with a variety of topping options.
✓	2 Eggs, Cheddar & Ham on Skinny Wheat Bagel	66	↑	↑	6.3	300	14	5	26	24	7	3	790	4.75	Slightly rubbery eggs. Slightly sweet, smoky ham. Thin, toasted bagel.
	Greek Vanilla Yogurt & Wild Blueberry Parfait	66	↓	↑	10.2	340	6	1	24	51	5	34	160	4.50	Creamy nonfat yogurt; real vanilla flavor. Sweet granola. Scant fruit.
	2 Eggs on a Bagel (Skinny Wheat)	64	↑	↓	4.8	240	11	4	17	21	6	1	370	3.55	Slightly rubbery eggs. Slightly dry.
	2 Eggs on a Bagel With Cheese	62	↓	↑	6.8	430	16	7	22	50	2	5	650	4.10	Slightly rubbery eggs. Bready bagel.
	Smoked Salmon Wasabi on Skinny Wheat Bagel	60	↓	↑	6.3	370	11	5	17	54	2	8	900	4.85	Slightly smoky salmon. Sauce adds heat and a sweet note. Very thin bagel.
	The Good Egg Sandwich	59	↓	↑	9.6	540	28	9	24	47	4	2	670	4.70	Fresh and tasty. Crunchy, fresh baguette with spinach and avocado.
	2 Eggs on a Bagel	56	↓	↓	6.3	380	11	4	19	50	2	5	560	3.55	Firm eggs. Slightly sweet bagel.
	Smoked Salmon Bon to Go Box	53	↑	↓	5.3	210	10	4.5	12	19	3	5	550	6.55	Slightly fishy salmon. Tough roll.
	Muesli	51	↓	↓	8.0	370	6	0.5	10	74	7	39	40	2.85	Chewy cold oats with nuts and fruit.
	Overnight Oats	49	↑	↓	8.0	410	13	3	15	61	8	20	40	2.70	Chewy cold oats. Add-ins just okay.
	2 Eggs & Turkey Sausage on Skinny Wheat Bagel	48	↑	↓	6.2	310	16	6	23	22	7	1	660	4.20	Slightly rubbery eggs. Very spicy, moist sausage. Seasonings overpower.
DUNKIN' DONUTS															
	Whole Grain Oatmeal Original With Dried Fruit Topping ¹ ²	53	↓	↓	8.0	310	2	0	5	66	7	35	250	2.50	Slightly mushy small-grain oats. Moderately sweet; slight maple flavor.
	Veggie Egg White on English Muffin	51	↓	↓	5.2	330	14	7	18	33	3	5	570	3.80	Bland, slightly spongy egg white. Soft, thick English muffin.
	Egg & Cheese Wake-Up Wrap	50	↓	↓	1.9	180	10	4	7	14	0	1	470	1.70	Cheesy and flavorful. Small portion.
	Egg & Cheese on English Muffin	50	↓	↓	4.8	340	15	5	14	37	1	4	640	3.40	Slightly spongy, bland egg with cheese. Soft, bready English muffin.
JAMBA JUICE															
✓	Oatmeal (With Strawberries and Brown Sugar Crumble) ¹ ²	74	↑	↑	9.3	250	3	0.5	9	49	5.5	15	28	3.75	Small, chewy oats. Fresh strawberries. Tasty.
✓	Fruit and Greek Yogurt Energy Bowl	71	↑	↑	15.8	390	4	0.5	31	62	5	42	105	7.40	Creamy nonfat yogurt. Slightly sweet, crunchy granola. Fresh fruit.
✓	Spinach 'n Cheese Breakfast Wrap	67	↑	↑	5.3	240	8	6	15	30	3	1	530	3.60	Fresh-tasting spinach and onion. Flavorful whole-grain wrap. Mild flavor overall.
	Acai Primo Energy Bowl ²	62	↓	↑	18.5	490	10	3	8	99	11	67	40	7.40	Thick smoothie. Fresh fruit. Crunchy granola. Generous portion.
	Chunky Strawberry Energy Bowl ¹ ²	60	↓	↑	19.9	590	17	2.5	19	96	12	58	150	7.40	Thick smoothie; big peanut butter flavor. Fresh fruit. Generous portion.
	Kale-ribbean Breeze Whole Food Nutrition Smoothie	57	↓	↑	16 ³	320	3	0	10	66	6	48	75	6.25	Thick nonfat yogurt smoothie. Big kale flavor; tangy. Slightly chalky.
	Bacon, Roasted Tomato & Spinach Breakfast Sandwich	50	↑	↓	4.6	250	9	3	12	30	4	2	600	4.00	Smoky bacon. Spongy egg white. Cheese-and-spinach spread overpowers.
	Protein Berry Workout Smoothie With Whey	48	↓	↓	16 ³	290	1	0	16	56	3	48	170	6.15	Tastes mostly of whey powder; could use more berry flavor. Slightly chalky.
	Turkey Sausage, Roasted Red Pepper & Gouda Breakfast Sandwich	45	↓	↓	5.3	320	16	7	17	29	1	1	550	3.85	Spongy egg white. Spicy sausage patty and red pepper spread overpower.
	Turkey Sausage 'n Cheese Breakfast Wrap	45	↓	↓	4.6	320	16	7	17	29	1	1	550	3.60	Mild egg white, slightly greasy sausage bits. Tortilla raw or doughy in spots.

Recommended	Menu Item	Overall Score	Rating		Nutrition Information									Price	Flavor & Texture Description
			Nutrition score	Sensory score	Serving size (oz.)	Calories	Fat (g)	Saturated fat (g)	Protein (g)	Carbohydrates (g)	Fiber (g)	Sugars (g)	Sodium (mg)		
MCDONALD'S															
	Egg White Delight McMuffin	66	↓	↑	4.8	280	10	6	16	29	2	2	680	3.70	Fresh-tasting egg white. Slightly sweet and smoky Canadian bacon. Flavorful.
	Egg McMuffin	64	↓	↑	4.8	300	12	6	18	30	2	3	730	3.70	Firm egg. Slightly sweet and smoky Canadian bacon. Flavorful.
	Fruit & Maple Oatmeal With Brown Sugar	55	↓	↓	8.9	310	4	1.5	6	62	5	33	140	2.65	Slightly mushy maple-flavored oats. Tasty fresh fruit.
	Fruit 'N Yogurt Parfait	45	↓	↓	6.1	150	2	1	4	30	1	22	75	1.50	So-so low-fat yogurt. Hard granola.
	Sausage Burrito	44	↓	↓	3.9	300	16	6	13	26	1	2	780	1.00	Egg, chiles, slightly greasy sausage bits.
PANERA BREAD															
✓	Steel Cut Oatmeal with Strawberries & Pecans ¹	75	↑	↑	11.3	340	14	2	6	51	9	16	180	4.60	Chewy unsweetened oats. Fresh strawberries. Flavorful nuts.
✓	Avocado, Egg White & Spinach on Sprouted Grain Bagel Flat	75	↑	↑	7.6	410	14	6	21	52	7	4	590	5.00	Cheddar, avocado, baby spinach, and tomato. Fresh-tasting; flavorful.
✓	Steel Cut Oatmeal with Almonds, Quinoa & Honey	74	↑	↑	10.9	300	7	1	8	51	8	7	220	4.60	Chewy unsweetened oats; slight nutty flavor. Toasted almond slices.
✓	Steel Cut Oatmeal with Apple Chips & Pecans ^{1 4}	73	↑	↑	10.2	370	15	2	6	53	9	18	170	4.60	Chewy unsweetened oats. Flavorful nuts. Crispy apple chips.
✓	Egg & Cheese on Sprouted Grain Bagel Flat	64	↑	↑	5.9	410	16	7	20	48	5	4	640	4.00	Scrambled egg. Dense, slightly chewy bagel flat. Sharp, melted cheddar.
	Greek Yogurt with Mixed Berries	62	↓	↑	8.6	300	10	5	15	39	3	30	55	4.05	Creamy, thick whole-milk yogurt. Toasted granola. Fresh berries.
	Ham, Egg & Cheese on Whole Grain Bread	59	↓	↑	6.0	350	16	7	23	30	4	3	910	5.00	Fresh over-easy egg. Thin, smoky, slightly sweet ham slices.
STARBUCKS															
✓	Hearty Blueberry Oatmeal With Fruit, Nuts, Seeds & Agave Syrup ¹	73	↑	↑	8.5	271	5.5	1.5	7	46	6	13	125	3.75	Chewy unsweetened oats. Crunchy mixed nuts and dried fruit. Fresh berries.
✓	Reduced-Fat Turkey Bacon & Cage Free Egg White Breakfast Sandwich	70	↑	↑	4.2	210	5	2	18	26	3	2	560	3.75	Flavorful egg white, thin slices of smoky turkey bacon, and mild cheddar.
✓	Eggs & Cheese Protein Box	67	↑	↑	8.8	460	24	7	23	40	5	11	530	5.75	Egg, cheese, fruit, and nut-butter combo. Pita tastes slightly doughy.
✓	Certified Gluten-Free Breakfast Sandwich	65	↑	↑	4.3	280	13	4	18	18	6	2	740	4.75	Mild egg. Flavorful Canadian bacon. Salty, sweet, and slightly smoky overall.
	Spinach, Feta & Cage Free Egg White Breakfast Wrap	65	↑	↓	5.6	290	10	3.5	19	33	6	4	830	3.75	Soft egg white. Herbed, whole-grain flatbread. Slightly sour flavor overall.
	Classic Oatmeal With Dried Fruit, Nut Medley & Brown Sugar ¹	63	↓	↑	8.5	410	12.5	1.5	8	66	7	35	130	3.25	Chewy unsweetened oats. Crunchy toasted nuts with plump dried fruit.
	Sous Vide Egg Bites: Egg White & Red Pepper	59	↓	↑	4.6	170	7	5	13	13	1	2	500	4.45	Soufflé-like egg whites with strong red bell pepper flavor. Mildly spicy heat.
	Berry Trio Yogurt	53	↓	↓	5.8	230	2.5	0	14	39	3	25	125	3.75	Tart vanilla-bean nonfat yogurt. Scant berries in very sweet juice.
	Strawberry Smoothie	48	↓	↓	16 ³	300	2	1	16	60	7	41	130	4.25	Thick and smooth; a little icy. Banana flavor. Could use more strawberry.

HOW WE TEST: Nutrition information for breakfast items was reviewed to identify healthier breakfast options

from six fast-food chains. Single items, not meals, were evaluated. Nutrition information was from the

manufacturer. An item had to score at least a Good for nutrition to be included in the test. Items were

tasted by professionally trained tasters at different locations for each chain.

¹ Vegan (no meat, dairy, egg, or honey). ² Contains soy milk. ³ Fluid ounces; all other serving sizes are by weight in ounces. ⁴ Seasonal item.

Should You Drink That?

Juice, diet soda, green tea, and wine have all had their turns as health-food darlings. But these drinks might not be as good for you as you've heard, and some may even be harmful. Here's what to know before you wet your whistle.

When you're trying to make good diet decisions, it's as important to watch what you drink as what you eat. You probably don't need Tom Brady to tell you that water is the best thirst quencher (for eight reasons, see page 117), and you're probably aware that sugary soda is loaded with calories. But the potential downsides to some other "healthy" drinks like diet soda, juice, wine, and green tea may surprise you.

Fruit Juice

If you're trying to decide on something sweet to drink, 100 percent fruit juice (that is, juice that has nothing added) is certainly healthier than juice drinks with added sugars. A cup of it can even count as a daily serving of fruit, according to the Department of Agriculture's dietary guidelines. And it contains many of the vitamins and minerals found in the whole fruit it comes from.

Nevertheless, drinking juice isn't the best way to get your daily dose of fruit, says Wendy White, Ph.D., R.D., an associate professor in the department of food science and human nutrition at Iowa State University.

A key reason: Fruit juice contains little fiber, if any. "Most Americans substantially underconsume fiber," White



TIP

If the choice is between juice and soda, 100% juice wins. But for fewer calories and more fiber, pick whole fruit over juice.



TIP

Research has linked diet sodas to a higher risk of disease, so it's best to drink them rarely, if at all.

Blueberries, grapes, and apples, in that order, had the greatest effect. Swapping three fruit-juice servings per week for whole fruit led to a 7 percent decrease in diabetes risk.

Diet Soda

Many people think of diet sodas as healthy, low-calorie alternatives to sugary drinks. Yet a small but growing body of evidence suggests that diet sodas may have a health downside and may not even provide the benefits some people turn to them for, such as weight loss.

The strongest evidence so far links regular diet soda intake with cardiovascular conditions, such as stroke and heart attack, as well as type 2 diabetes and obesity (which are also risk factors for cardiovascular disease), says Ralph L. Sacco, M.D., a professor of neurology at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine.

For example, in 2017 a widely reported study of about 4,400 people age 45 and older found that those who drank one or more diet sodas every day were three times more likely to have a stroke than those who didn't, says Matthew P. Pase, Ph.D., a research fellow in neurology at the Boston University School of Medicine, who led the study. The research was published in the American Heart Association's journal *Stroke*. This study had several limitations and didn't prove that diet sodas themselves caused people to

says. Fiber is linked with benefits, including a reduced risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and constipation. (See "The Skinny on Fiber," on page 100.)

Fiber also helps you feel fuller longer, and that can help control your weight. Juice is digested faster than a piece of whole fruit. "As a result, fruit juice is less filling," White says.

Then there's the sugar content. Although nutrition experts generally say not to worry about the sugars that are naturally present in fruit (and in milk, plain yogurt, and some vegetables), many make an exception for fruit juice because the lack of fiber means your body absorbs the sugars more rapidly.

And fruit juice is a more concentrated source of sugars than whole fruit. For example, there are 12 grams of sugars in a medium orange, but a cup of orange juice has 21 grams. A cup of grape juice has about as much sugar as 50 grapes.

A serving of fruit juice also has more calories. A cup of orange juice, for instance, has 112 calories compared with 65 calories in a medium-sized orange, according to data from the USDA.

And a 2013 study in the *British Medical Journal* found that the more fruit juice you drink, the higher your risk of developing type 2 diabetes, while eating whole fruits was associated with a lower risk of the disease.

have strokes, Sacco says. It could be that people who drink diet sodas are in poorer health than people who don't, for instance. The findings do jibe with earlier research, he says.

For example, three large studies published between 2007 and 2009 found that people who drank diet sodas regularly were more likely to develop type 2 diabetes and had a 30 to 55 percent







higher risk of metabolic syndrome (a constellation of health problems that could increase the risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke) than those who didn't. Two other studies from 2012 further bolstered these results: Researchers linked daily diet-soda consumption to about a 45 percent higher risk of heart attack, stroke, and early death in a study of about 2,600 people,

and about a 30 percent increased risk of hemorrhagic stroke—a less common type of stroke where a ruptured blood vessel or burst aneurysm causes loss of blood flow to the brain—in the other study of 130,000 people.

Past research has also found links between diet sodas and conditions such as depression or preterm delivery. For example, one study of almost

Just Say No to Soda: Make These Smart Swaps

If you drink a 20-ounce sugary cola 365 days a year, you'll consume 119 cups of sugar and 87,600 calories. Replace that soda with one of these better-for-you options.

If you swap that daily soda for...	Cups of sugar you would eliminate per year	Pounds of body weight you could lose per year	Pros and cons
Water <i>Any amount</i> 	119 cups	14 pounds	Water is the best option because it does wonders for the daily workings of your whole body while contributing 0 calories to your daily intake.
Milk <i>2 percent 8 oz.</i> 	97 cups	6.5 pounds	Ounce for ounce, reduced-fat 2 percent milk has more calories than soda, in part because it has protein, fat, and naturally occurring sugar. But going with an 8-ounce carton spares you about half the calories while providing calcium, protein, potassium, and vitamin D.
Dunkin' Donuts Iced Coffee <i>Whole milk, sugar 16 oz.</i> 	84 cups	9 pounds	Yes, you're eliminating some sugar, but you're replacing one sugary, caffeinated beverage for another. If you love coffee, add the sugar yourself, sparingly.
Honest Organic Lemon Tea <i>16.9 oz.</i> 	80 cups	9.5 pounds	This brand of iced tea contains less added sugar than some other popular brands but still packs about 5 teaspoons of sugars per bottle. A better bet: Brew your own and add less sugar.
Gatorade <i>Original Thirst Quencher Orange 20 oz.</i> 	57 cups	6 pounds	This switch is better than soda, but because it's mostly added sugars and water, the calories are still empty ones. Plus, unless you're exercising vigorously, you really don't need the extra sodium.
Tropicana Orange Juice <i>14 oz.</i> 	47 cups	3 pounds	Like milk, pure fruit juice offers vitamins and minerals—but also contains more natural sugars, upping its calorie count. Instead, drink water and eat a whole piece of fruit for the filling and healthy fiber.



TIP

Drinking a cup or two of green tea daily provides disease-fighting antioxidants and may boost metabolism.

320,000 people published in the journal PLoS One in 2014 found that those who drank four or more cans of diet soda each day were about 30 percent more likely to be diagnosed with depression than those who didn't.

The studies linking diet sodas and cardiovascular risk are intriguing, says Sacco, but they still need to be repeated in more rigorous settings. And not every study has shown that diet sodas negatively affect health. For example, in 2012 researchers from the Harvard School of Public Health analyzed the drinking habits of almost 43,000 men and found that those who drank sugary drinks had a higher risk of coronary heart disease, but those who drank diet sodas did not.

Another reason scientists hesitate to say definitively that diet sodas are bad

for your health is that they aren't sure how they increase disease risk. Sacco believes the ingredients in the drinks, such as artificial sweeteners, may damage blood vessels—possibly explaining their link to diseases such as diabetes and stroke. Some evidence has also suggested that the artificial sweeteners in diet sodas can cause inflammation, a condition often associated with heart disease.

It's also possible that the artificial sweeteners commonly used in diet sodas may "trick" the brain into craving rich, high-calorie foods, leading to weight gain. And they might cause changes in hormone levels or gut bacteria, both of which play a role in weight and insulin management. For example, a study published in the journal Nature in 2014 found that artificial sweeteners altered the gut bacteria in people and mice, increasing their risk of glucose intolerance, a condition often preceding diabetes. But "we're not sure of the mechanism at all," says Sacco, and all of these ideas warrant larger, more rigorous studies.

In general, your best bet is to avoid regular altogether. Not all experts say you should cut out diet sodas completely, however. In response to the Stroke study, Rachel K. Johnson, Ph.D., M.P.H., R.D., past chair of the American Heart Association's Nutrition

Committee and a professor of nutrition at the University of Vermont, says that limiting sugars is important for health, and "until we know more, people should use artificially sweetened drinks cautiously."

Green Tea

Tea, including green tea—made by steeping tea leaves or blending green tea powder in hot water—is the second most popular beverage worldwide, surpassed only by water. In recent years, green tea has gained tremendous popularity as an all-around health elixir, touted to burn fat and prevent an array of illnesses, including cancer and heart disease.

But is there scientific substance behind the claims that green tea is good for your waistline or your health?

It's true that green tea can raise your metabolic rate so you burn more calories, says David Nieman, DrPH., director of the human performance laboratory at Appalachian State University in Boone, N.C. He says this effect is probably due to a combination of its caffeine and catechins—antioxidants that are plentiful in green tea and present in smaller amounts in some fruits,

ASK THE EXPERTS

Green Tea Extract

Q. Are green tea supplements healthy?

Green tea, the drink, and green tea extract (GTE), the supplement, contain compounds called catechins, which have been found to have antioxidant properties that may prevent cellular damage that can lead to cancer and other ills. However, an excess of catechins appears to harm the liver.

GTE, sold on its own and in multi-ingredient blends, and often marketed as a fat-burner and weight-loss aid, can contain dangerously high amounts of those catechins.

A study of postmenopausal women published in August 2017 in the journal Cancer Prevention Research found that participants who took green tea extract supplements twice

a day for 12 months (containing a total of about 1,315 mg of catechins) were seven times more likely to have abnormally elevated liver enzymes than those who took a placebo. "Those levels are markers for liver injury, much as you might see with alcohol abuse," says Marvin M. Lipman, M.D.

Consumer Reports believes that green tea extract is so potentially harmful that we include it on our list of

15 supplements to always avoid.

Also, dietary supplements are loosely regulated, so you can't be sure that what you're taking contains what's listed on the label, or in what amounts. Consumer Reports has long advocated for measures to give the Food and Drug Administration more authority to remove potentially harmful dietary supplements from the marketplace.

dark chocolate, and red wine.

But the effect is likely to lead to little change on the scale, if any. “People think if you drink a few cups of green tea, you’ll see the fat melt away,” Nieman says. “That’s just not going to happen.”

Still, when it comes to losing weight, working a few cups of brewed green tea into your diet isn’t a bad idea. “Green tea may give you a mild boost, and if you don’t add sugar, it has no calories,” notes Marvin M. Lipman, M.D. “So drinking it in place of sugary drinks can help you cut calories.”

Just don’t guzzle gallons of it. Studies show that drinking three to five cups per day (up to about 40 ounces) is generally considered safe.

Catechins are also credited for green tea’s cancer-fighting potential. These antioxidants have the ability to block the action of unstable molecules called free radicals, which can cause changes in healthy cells that sometimes lead to cancer. But there’s no solid proof yet that the catechins in green tea help to prevent cancer in humans.

There’s some data to suggest that green tea can reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease—a narrowing of the arteries that can lead to a heart attack, chest pains, or a stroke.

It doesn’t take much to achieve significant benefits. For example, in a study of more than 40,500 adults, researchers in Japan found that those who had five or more cups of green tea per day were 26 percent less likely to die of cardiovascular disease over an 11-year period than those who drank just one cup per day. Similarly, a study of 76,979 people published in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* in 2011 found that women who drank one to six cups of green tea per day had a reduced risk of dying of cardiovascular disease (over an average of 13 years) compared with those who didn’t drink any.

How might green tea protect the heart? Experts say it might reduce high cholesterol levels and high blood pressure, both of which are important factors in

causing cardiovascular disease.

“These findings are intriguing, but green tea is no miracle cure,” Lipman says. To reduce your risk of diseases such as cancer and heart disease (as well as keep your weight in check), he says you need to eat a healthy diet that includes plenty of fruit, vegetables, and whole grains. You should also exercise and avoid smoking.

Wine

We’ve long heard that a little wine may help prevent heart disease and offer other health benefits. But some researchers are now questioning whether the perks of moderate drinking—one drink per day for women, two for men—outweigh potential downsides.

We know that for older adults, too much alcohol can exacerbate high blood pressure, increase the risk of falls and fractures, and lead to strokes, memory loss, and mood disorders. And in this group, problems with alcohol, such as the uncontrollable urge to drink, shot up 107 percent between 2001 and 2013, according to a study published in August 2017 in *JAMA Psychiatry*.

Even small amounts of alcohol can interact with medication and contribute to cancer risk and potentially cognitive decline. Here’s the latest research and tips on how to ensure you’re not going overboard:

More than 100 studies have found that a drink or two per day is linked to a 25 to 40 percent reduced risk of a heart attack, a stroke, and death from cardiac-related problems, according to the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Another study published in August 2017, one that followed more than 333,000 people for 12 years, found that light to moderate drinkers were 21 to 34 percent less likely to die from cardiovascular disease.

But no studies have yet proved directly that alcohol boosts human health. Most research in this area has looked

at whether people’s reported drinking behaviors are “associated” with positive or negative health outcomes.

A growing stack of research also suggests that regular, moderate alcohol consumption may have its hazards. A 30-year study published in June 2017 in the *British Medical Journal* found that men who consumed eight to 12 drinks per week had three times the odds of having an atrophied hippocampus, which is a possible sign of early Alzheimer’s. That’s according to the study’s author, Anya Topiwala, Ph.D., a clinical lecturer in the department of psychiatry at the University of Oxford in the U.K. And other research has found that moderate drinking may be linked to an elevated risk of breast cancer and—especially in smokers—esophageal, mouth, and throat cancers.

A daily glass of wine, however, is generally fine, says George F. Koob, Ph.D., director of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, even if you’re in your 80s or 90s.

“We don’t want to panic people,” Topiwala adds. But if you don’t drink, she says, there’s no reason to start for your health’s sake.

And if you find yourself exceeding the U.S. Dietary Guidelines, Koob says, consider cutting back. These strategies can help:

- **Size up your pour.** It can be near impossible to eyeball a standard drink (5 ounces of wine, 12 ounces of beer, and 1½ ounces of distilled spirits). Some wine glasses can hold up to 22 ounces, more than the amount in four drinks. So use a measuring cup or a shot glass to get it right.
- **Keep tabs.** Tracking how many drinks you have per day or week—perhaps with tick marks on a cocktail napkin—can help you stay within your limit.
- **Alternate with water.** Sipping a glass of water or club soda after each alcoholic drink will help you slow down.
- **Talk to your doctor.** If you’re concerned about your drinking, don’t be afraid to bring up the issue at your next checkup.

The Healing Power of Water

Our bodies are 60 percent water. It's the main ingredient of our blood, which keeps our brain, heart, kidneys, and other organs functioning. How much do we need? Generally, men should aim for roughly 16 eight-ounce cups a day and women 11, though you may need a little more or less depending on your size, your activity level, and the weather. Just remember that water found in foods and all beverages counts toward the total.

PAMPER YOUR TICKER

Good hydration increases the volume of blood in your arteries, which means fewer heartbeats to transport blood around your body, so it's less taxing on the heart muscle itself.

BOOST YOUR MOOD

Experts aren't exactly sure why, but research suggests that people who are well-hydrated tend to be in better moods.

KEEP YOUR COOL

Staying hydrated helps you sweat more, which is essential for cooling down your body on hot days or after exercise, and can help you avoid heatstroke, too.

STOP A HEADACHE

Dehydration can trigger headaches—and drinking up can sometimes help cure one.

UP YOUR GAME

Hydrated runners tend to be faster than dehydrated ones and feel better afterward, too, possibly because they eliminate lactic acid more quickly.

FIGHT A FEVER

When you're sick with, say, the flu, drinking plenty of water can limit the rise of your body temperature when taken in conjunction with fever-reducing medication.

HEALTHY FLUSH

Ample water helps ensure that your digestive tract has enough fluid to effectively eliminate waste.

CURB APPETITE

Drinking water before a meal can make you feel full without any calories and help prevent overeating.

Eat Well, Live Well

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Eat to Beat Inflammation

Learn how inflammation can affect your health and which (delicious!) foods can help you feel better.





PHOTOGRAPH BY TRAVIS RATHBONE
FOOD STYLING: JAMIE KIMM; PROP STYLING: KATLYN DU ROSS; WALKER FOR HONEY ARTISTS

The Vitality Diet

Yes, the right foods can make you feel healthier and more energetic, and can taste great, too. These 6 superfoods are delicious (chocolate, anyone?) and worth squeezing into your diet.

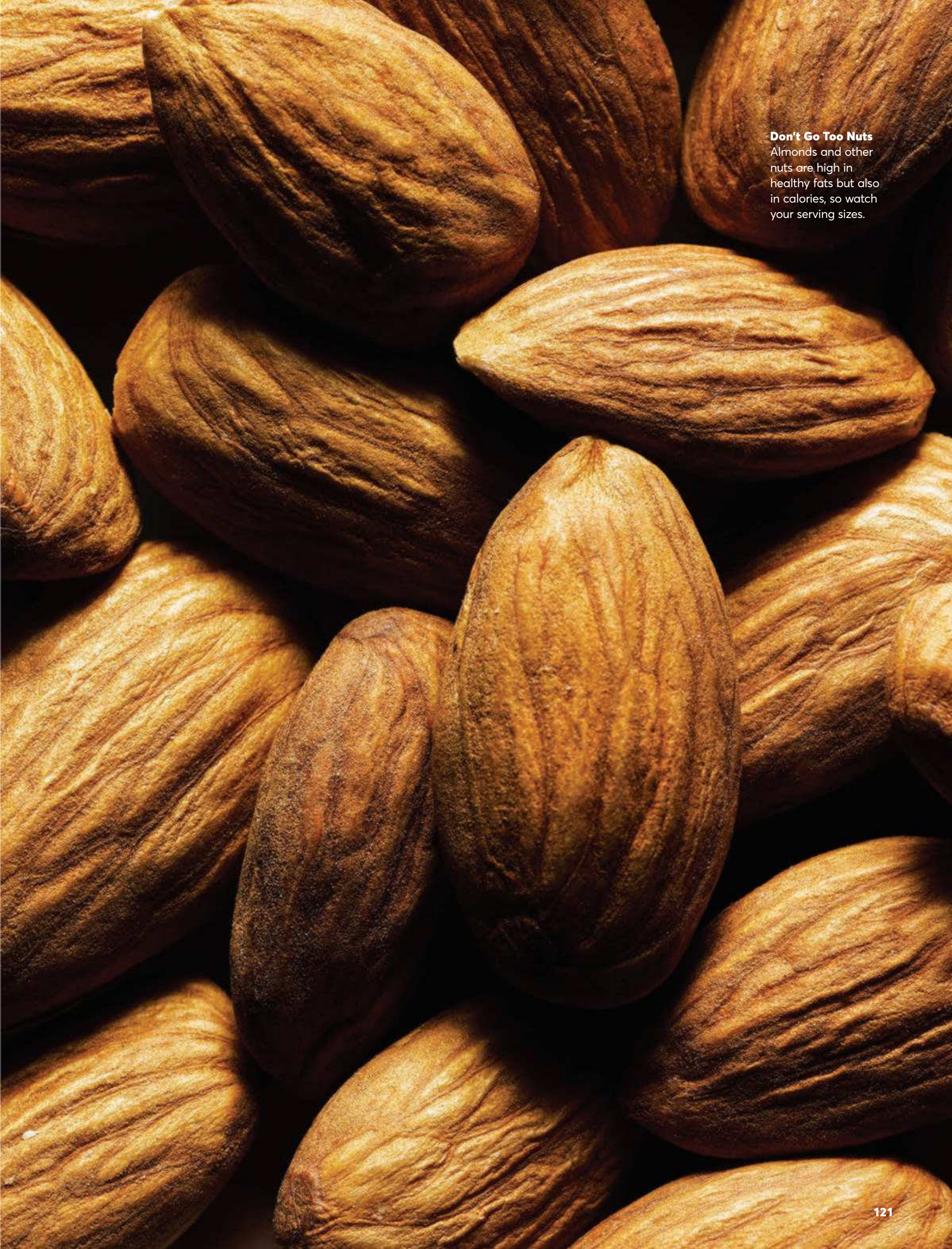
Would you rather add years to your life or life to your years? Smart food choices may help you do both. Diet appears to play a role in free-radical damage (which alters the way cells function), inflammation, and gut bacteria. And it has an impact on conditions like heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke, hypertension, respiratory disorders, cognitive decline, and infection.

“WE’RE TRYING TO target the biology of aging to delay the onset of age-related diseases and extend the number of healthy, active, productive years,” says Nathan LeBrasseur, Ph.D., director of the Healthy Aging and Independent Living Program at the Mayo Clinic. “Diet can play a major role in that.” Research suggests that incorporating certain foods into your diet may give you an extra boost. Here, six foods to consider:

1. **Nuts**

According to studies, nuts may be tiny packages of healthy goodness. Take, for example, a New England Journal of Medicine study that followed almost 120,000 men and women for 30 years. Study volunteers who ate at least an ounce of nuts daily (about 23 almonds, 18 cashews, 12 macadamia nuts, or 14 walnut halves) had a 20 percent lower risk of dying from several conditions—especially cancer, heart disease, and respiratory problems—during the study period. Even those who downed nuts two to four times per week had a 13 percent lower risk of dying.

Nuts are high in mono-unsaturated fat, which helps lower LDL (“bad”) cholesterol. Their anti-oxidants may also keep blood vessels supple (hardened arteries are a sign of heart disease) and improve the body’s use of insulin. Nuts have about 160 to 200 calories per ounce, but in the study cited above, frequent nut eaters weighed less than those who abstained.



Don't Go Too Nuts
Almonds and other nuts are high in healthy fats but also in calories, so watch your serving sizes.

2. Hot Peppers

If you can tolerate them, chilies are good for your heart and waistline. A large study published in the journal PLOS One found that people who ate hot red chili peppers regularly were 13 percent less likely to die from any cause over a 19-year period compared with those who didn't.

Capsaicin, which gives peppers their heat, may also help improve blood flow, boost metabolism, and protect against bacteria that have been linked with inflammation and diseases. "Inflammation is the nail in



the coffin of conditions like heart disease, rheumatoid arthritis, inflammatory bowel disease, type 2 diabetes, cancer, and more," says Carin Kreutzer, Ed.D., R.D., an assistant instructional professor of nutrition at the University of Southern California Leonard Davis School of Gerontology. "Many plant foods have phytochemicals that reduce the inflammatory response at the cellular level."

In addition to green and red chilies, cayenne, jalapeños, and tabasco peppers all contain high levels of capsaicin. Sweeter peppers have less of that compound.

3. Whole grains

Despite carbs' bad reputation in many circles, research shows that whole

grains (instead of refined carbs like white bread and white rice) reduce your risk of cancer, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, obesity, infectious disease, and respiratory problems. A review of 45 studies found that people who ate seven daily servings of whole grains were far less likely to have the above conditions or die from any cause during the study period. Even one or two daily servings may have a benefit.

"They're the total nutrient package," says one of the researchers, Penny Kris-Etherton, Ph.D., R.D., a distinguished professor of nutrition at Pennsylvania State University. "They have antioxidants, B vitamins, fiber, polyphenols." These substances, she says, help reduce heart disease risks.

4. Beans

Beans are not only a versatile and affordable staple, they're also rich in protein, fiber, vitamins, minerals, and plant polyphenols that have pro-



protective benefits, especially for your heart. A large research review in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition found that eating four half-cup servings of beans, peas, lentils, or tofu per week was linked to a 14 percent decrease in the risk of dying from ischemic heart disease (when the arteries of the heart become blocked).

Beans are a good source of soluble fiber, too, which helps lower levels of LDL cholesterol and triglycerides.

6. Chocolate


A study of nearly 21,000 adults published in the journal Heart found that those who ate the most chocolate (½ to 3½ ounces daily) had a 25 percent lower risk of dying from heart disease and were 23 percent less likely to have a stroke over an 11-year period. The flavonoids in chocolate may aid blood-vessel function, which can lower blood pressure and clotting. It's high in calories, sugar, and fat, though. Dark chocolate has more flavonoids and less sugar than milk chocolate.



5. Fish

Fatty fish is high in omega-3 fatty acids, which fight inflammation and may help protect the heart and brain. Research has shown a significant 33 percent drop in the risk of sudden heart-attack death in people who ate two or more servings per week. Some interesting preliminary research shows that people with cognitive impairment who supplemented their diet with EPA and DHA—omega-3 fatty acids found in certain types of fish—had less decline over time, Kris-Etherton says.

Studies of supplements have had mixed results. Experts advise eating fish for your dose: 8 ounces per week of sustainably farmed or wild-caught, low-mercury fish, such as Atlantic mackerel, Pacific sardines, freshwater (farmed) coho salmon and wild-caught salmon, and Alaskan sablefish (black cod).



Eat Your Omega-3s
Experts agree: It's better to get your omega-3 fatty acids by eating fish than by taking supplements.

Four Foods That Can Harm Your Health

Research has linked these foods to heart disease, cancer, and other illnesses.

CHARRED MEAT Grilled or well-done meat has compounds associated with an increased risk of colon, pancreatic, stomach, and other cancers.

PROCESSED MEATS Salami, pepperoni, ham, and other cured meats may predispose you to esophageal, kidney, prostate, and stomach cancer.

REFINED CARBOHYDRATES Diets high in added sugars (candy, some cereals, pastries,

sodas) and carbohydrates that have been stripped of many of their important nutrients (white flour and white rice, for example) may hike the risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke, especially in those who are overweight.

PREPACKAGED MEALS

These food products may be convenient, but they are often extremely high in sodium. That has been linked to a higher risk of hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and kidney disease.

How to **Lose Weight** and Keep It Off

The best diet may be the one you can stick to. Here, a hard look at five popular eating plans.

These days, “diet” truly is a four-letter word. Though 69 percent of people are actively trying to manage their weight, the focus has shifted from formal diets to a do-it-yourself approach, according to the market research firm Mintel. “‘Dieting’ doesn’t really work long term,” says Ellen Klosz, a Consumer Reports nutritionist. “When people go on diets, they tend to go off them, too, because restrictive eating plans are hard to stick to.”

TIP

Check the calorie count on processed gluten-free substitutes, or you could find yourself gaining unintentionally.

PHOTO: JAMIE CHUNG/TRUNK ARCHIVE



TODAY, WEIGHT MANAGEMENT is all about the individual, and to be successful, it's important to find the best way to lose weight for you. "No one approach is going to be right for everyone," says Lawrence Cheskin, M.D., director of the Johns Hopkins Weight Management Center in Baltimore. Determining the nutrition strategy that enables you to consume fewer calories—and stick with it—is your best bet for reaching your goals, he says.

To help you zero in on the best way to lose weight for you, we've looked at the pros and cons of five popular eating styles.

Lose Gluten, Lose Weight?

Gluten-free diets for weight loss have been a trend that has stuck for many years. The theory is that steering clear of wheat, rye, and barley, which contain the protein gluten, helps people feel and look better. Recently, this kind of elimination diet has expanded to reducing lectins—other proteins found in foods like grains, beans, and certain vegetables—that some blame for a host of health issues ranging from digestive distress to weight gain.

"Unless you have celiac disease or a true gluten sensitivity, there's no reason to exclude it from your diet," Klosz says.

People may initially lose weight when they go gluten- or lectin-free, but that's only because they've eliminated a huge source of calories in the form of foods like bread, pasta, and muffins. What's more, there are now so many gluten-free, high-calorie processed food options available that you could easily put on pounds even though you're not eating any gluten. And it's possible to take in plenty of calories without ingesting a significant amount of lectins, too.

THE UPSIDE If you've been diagnosed with celiac disease or gluten sensitivity, a gluten-free diet is a necessary treatment, but not for weight loss. In fact, people with these conditions often gain weight when they adopt a gluten-free diet. The damage gluten does to their intestines can prevent them from digesting food properly. Once that is corrected, more calories may be absorbed. If you suspect that you're sensitive to lectins, gluten, or any other food compound, see a specialist to get a diagnosis. A short-term elimination diet may help you pinpoint what's giving you trouble; a registered dietitian can walk you through how to do one safely.

THE DOWNSIDE Going gluten-free can have unintended consequences. "Even if you take a supplement, you could still miss nutrients that you need," Klosz says. People who ate less gluten were at a greater risk for developing type 2 diabetes, according to a study presented at an American Heart Association meeting in 2017. Research shows that going on a gluten-free diet



TIP

When eating a low-carb diet, protect your health by limiting the amount of red and processed meats you eat.

may also decrease the number of healthy bacteria in the gut, which scientists say might make a person more susceptible to infections and the overgrowth of harmful bacteria.

And fruit, vegetable, legume, and whole-grain consumption is consistently linked with decreased inflammation and risk of chronic diseases—a good reason to not eliminate lectin-containing foods like beans, tomatoes, potatoes, and quinoa.

THE MIDDLE GROUND If your diet is heavy on carbs, dialing back your servings of bread, pasta, and more (gluten-free or not) can help you cut calories. And soaking, sprouting, cooking, and fermenting will break down lectins and help make foods easier for the body to process, in the event that they're giving you a digestive problem.

Drop Carbs, Drop Sizes?

Cutting back on carbohydrates is nothing new. At the height of the Atkins craze in the early 2000s, a Gallup poll found that 27 percent of Americans said they were avoiding carbohydrates. And while Atkins still has its devotees, other low-carbohydrate plans, like Paleo, are getting more attention these days. Another popular low-carb approach is the Ketogenic diet, a very low-carbohydrate, high-fat, moderate-protein plan. The premise: Cut back on carbohydrates and sugars so that the body burns fat for fuel instead of carbs (its preferred source) in a metabolic state called ketosis.

People lost more weight and even improved their cholesterol more on a low-carb diet (defined as fewer than 40 grams of carbohydrates per day) compared with those on a low-fat diet, according to research published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* from Tulane University. And a 2017 study published in the *Journal of Medical Internet Research* found that overweight adults with type 2 diabetes lost more weight and improved their blood sugar more on a ketogenic diet than on a conventional low-fat diabetes plan.

THE UPSIDE Eating fewer carbs and

4 Ways to Maintain Weight Loss

As anyone who's ever been on a diet knows, dropping pounds is the (relatively) easy part. It's maintaining weight loss that's difficult. "Losing weight slows down your metabolism a bit," says Corrine I. Voils, Ph.D., professor of surgery at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, "and afterwards, people stop engaging in weight-maintenance behaviors, such as weighing themselves regularly."

A study by Voils and her colleagues published in *Annals of Internal Medicine* shows that having a post weight-loss plan in place may be the key to long-term success.

About 220 obese men and women who had lost an average of 16 pounds in a 16-week weight-loss program were assigned to either receive regular follow-up phone calls from dietitians for about a year or have no contact with professionals.

The purpose of the calls was to provide individualized support to help participants refine and practice strategies to help them maintain weight loss. At the end of the 56 weeks, the group that received the support regained about 1½ pounds on average, while the other group regained about 5 pounds.

During each call, the discussion focused on four strategies to help maintain weight loss. They included recalling the good things that have happened as a result of weight loss; setting a schedule for stepping on the scale and sticking to it; making a plan for coping with situations that could trigger old habits; and identifying family members and friends who could offer support, and determining what they could do that would be most helpful.

"Weight loss and weight maintenance are different processes," says James O. Hill, Ph.D., director of the Center for Human Nutrition

at the University of Colorado, who was not involved in the study. "The important takeaway from this study is rather than just focusing our efforts on weight loss, we should be trying to better understand how to help people keep off the weight they lose."

DIY Weight-Loss Maintenance

"This study shows that you do have to maintain your focus on your body and your behaviors even once you're off the diet," says Martica Heaner, Ph.D., adjunct associate professor of nutrition at Hunter College in New York City, who was not involved in the study. "Keeping yourself accountable and developing healthy new behaviors are the keys to lasting success." Voils says, "Our study did not allow us to say which component was the most effective. And there may not be a magic bullet."

However, she says, whether you've lost 10 pounds or 100, you can put some of the strategies tested in this study to work yourself in lieu of a formal support program:

Weigh yourself often. Use sticky notes or calendar alerts to remind you to step on the scale.

Set a warning weight. If the scale creeps up by more than a few pounds, examine how your habits may have changed. Address those changes, or go back to the strategies you used to lose weight in the first place.

Know your triggers. Identify in advance any situations, such as parties or eating out, in which you're prone to overeat and make a plan ahead of time to reduce your risk.

Ask for help. In the study, having a support person was important, but because support looks different to different people, let those around you know what you need to help you maintain weight loss.

more protein may help to rein in your blood sugar—meaning, for most people, less hunger and cravings. “Low-carb diets make it a little bit easier to cut the calories and not be starving; they’re easier to stick to,” Cheskin says. A ketogenic diet where most of the calories come from fat may drive up hunger initially. However, once that feeling subsides after about three weeks in, hunger levels decrease—along with weight—according to a 2017 study from Norway published in the *International Journal of Obesity*.

THE DOWNSIDE Revert to non-ketogenic eating after a period of time on the plan, according to the same Norwegian study, and feelings of hunger are likely to bounce back. The whole grains, legumes, and fruit that many people cut back on while on a low-carb diet are loaded with filling fiber and are linked with decreased rates of heart disease, diabetes, and more.

Cheskin notes that people with type 1 (insulin-dependent diabetes) should not follow a ketogenic diet. What’s more, overdoing certain fat and protein sources can be problematic for many people. “Some observational studies have found that people who consumed a diet with high amounts of animal protein and fat—mostly from red and processed meats—and relatively low amounts of carbs had increased risk of cardiovascular disease and mortality,” says Frank Hu, M.D., Ph.D., chair of the nutrition department at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health in Boston.

Too much protein can also worsen kidney function in people who have kidney disease, which affects more than 30 million people in the U.S., most of whom don’t know they have it, according to the National Kidney Foundation. People at risk for kidney problems include those with diabetes and high blood pressure.

THE MIDDLE GROUND Trim excess carbs, particularly sugars and other refined carbs such as white flour and white rice, to cut back on calories. Include protein from sources like beans, fish,

lean meats and poultry, and nuts and seeds in meals and snacks to help boost satisfaction.

Go Mediterranean, Get Slim?

The Mediterranean diet is one example of a plant-based eating plan that can help with weight loss. Interest in plant-based diets has increased in recent years because of the benefits to health and the environment. The Mediterranean diet for weight loss is a balanced regimen abundant with produce, nuts, legumes, and olive oil, along with fish and some poultry and dairy.

Other approaches are: vegan (someone who avoids all animal products, including dairy and eggs), vegetarian (one who avoids meat, poultry, and fish but not dairy or eggs), flexitarian (a person who eats meat, poultry, or fish infrequently), and pescatarian (a vegetarian whose diet includes fish but no other animal products).

Vegans and vegetarians—particularly those who focus on whole foods like produce, nuts, and beans—may be at a lower risk for obesity than nonvegetarians, according to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. And when overweight adults were assigned to a standard reduced-calorie weight-loss diet or a lacto-ovo vegetarian diet, they lost roughly the same amount of weight over the 18 months researchers from the University of Pittsburgh tracked them, according to a 2008 study published in the *International Journal of Obesity*.

The Mediterranean diet has been shown in studies to produce greater weight loss than low-fat diets. It also may reduce the accumulation of belly fat specifically. Fat stored in the abdomen is more harmful to health than fat stored in the hips or thighs, raising the risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes. A plant-based diet, however, is still subject to many of the same pitfalls of a meat-containing one. “Vegetarian food includes french fries and potato chips and lots of other high-calorie food,” says Cheskin.

THE UPSIDE It can be easier to lose

weight on a plant-based diet because it allows you to eat a higher volume of food for fewer calories, Cheskin says. It’s important to eat less processed foods and more whole grains, beans, vegetables, and fruit. Eating more plant foods and fewer animal foods can also cut your risk of health conditions like heart disease, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and more, according to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics; the American Institute for Cancer Research encourages a plant-based diet for cancer prevention. And plant-based eating can be more sustainable for the environment than a meat-based diet.

THE DOWNSIDE When people give up foods like dairy, eggs, and meat but compensate by adding in more refined carbohydrates and sugars, they are likely to put on weight. “You can still get plenty of calories on a vegetarian diet,” Cheskin says.

THE MIDDLE GROUND Adding more produce to your diet (particularly fruit and non-starchy vegetables) is linked with lower weight. Each extra daily serving of fruit led to about a half-pound weight loss, and each serving of non-starchy vegetables was linked to a quarter-pound weight loss in a 2015 Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health review that involved 133,468 men and women. With few calories and loads of fiber, produce can be satiating, researchers say. Upping your daily intake can crowd out higher calorie foods even if you’re not planning to commit to a completely plant-based lifestyle.

TIP

If you’re tempted to try a diet to fit your genes, be sure the company will protect the privacy of your information.





Fast for Fast Losses?

Rather than consistently cutting calories, adherents to the intermittent fasting approach to weight loss alternate between periods of unrestricted eating and periods that allow for few calories. There are several approaches. The 5:2 Diet, for instance, allows five days per week of normal eating while limiting you to around 500 to 600 calories on the other two days. Alternate-day fasting is one day on, one day off. Time-restricted eating limits food intake to a certain number of hours per day, every day of the week. Biohacking, popping up recently in Silicon Valley circles, takes intermittent fasting to an extreme, with plans that have adherents going without food for as long as seven consecutive days.

Fasting every other day may be as effective for weight loss as old-fashioned calorie cutting (but not more so), according to a 2017 study from the University of Illinois at Chicago published in *JAMA Internal Medicine*. Researchers asked 100 obese adults to follow a reduced-calorie diet, an intermittent fasting plan, or no regimen at all. At the end of the year, both the reduced-calorie and alternate-day fasting groups had lost roughly the same amount of weight—5.3 percent and 6 percent, respectively. Another study published in 2011 in the *International Journal of Obesity* that compared a 5:2 approach with a less drastic but consistent calorie-cutting approach found similar, comparable weight loss between the two styles.

TIP

Intermittent fasting schedules come in several varieties, some as easy as not eating between dinner and breakfast.

THE UPSIDE Short-term studies suggest that intermittent fasting may activate immune responses that improve blood lipids, blood sugar, blood pressure, and inflammation, Hu says. Some studies show that intermittent fasting may also preserve learning and memory functioning—in animals. The research on the effects of intermittent fasting on human brains is lacking, says Mark Mattson, Ph.D., though he is currently studying its long-term impact on cognition and markers of human brain health at the National Institute on Aging in Maryland.

THE DOWNSIDE It's hard to stick with—almost 40 percent of the intermittent fasters in the University of Illinois at Chicago study dropped out, compared with 29 percent in the calorie-restricted research group.

And people may react differently to fasting. “A person might feel lightheaded, tired, and nauseous, and will not have the energy to exercise,” Klosz says. Experts say those with diabetes, hypoglycemia, or a history of disordered eating, as well as teens and pregnant and nursing women, should sit this one out.

THE MIDDLE GROUND Close the kitchen after dinner is over and skip the late-night snack, so you actually “break the fast” with your morning meal the next day. Putting even a small limitation on the hours in which you eat can help rein in the calories.

Tap Into Your Genes to Fit in Smaller Jeans?

Nutrigenomics, the study of the interaction of nutrition and genes and how that may affect human health, has been around for a long time. The completion of the Human Genome Project, sequencing the entire human genome, in 2003 increased interest in the idea of using people's genetic information to determine their ideal diets.

Today, more than a dozen companies offer individualized nutrition recommendations based on a blood sample or cheek swab—usually a test you perform

on yourself at home and then mail in for analysis.

The one-size-fits-all approach to weight loss has failed many people, so nutrition tailored to your unique needs sounds especially promising. But the technology may not be there yet, experts say. Both the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, based in the U.S., and the European Union-funded research project called Food4Me say that the science is still emerging.

THE UPSIDE People may be more motivated to follow guidelines that feel specific to them. Some early research was promising. When adults who had previously tried—but failed—to lose and keep off weight were put on a plan tailored specifically to their genes, 73 percent had lost weight after 300 days, compared with 32 percent of those on a general diet. Those on the genetically tailored diet who started with elevated blood sugar were twice as likely as those on the general plan to have numbers in the healthy range. However, a new study published in February in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found that genetic makeup did not determine how much weight people lost on either a low-fat or a low-carbohydrate diet.

THE DOWNSIDE They're not cheap: Expect to spend at least \$200 for an analysis and personalized advice. And there is the possibility that too much information could be discouraging. “A person might say, ‘I am doomed, I might as well throw in the towel,’” Cheskin says.

Several organizations have also expressed privacy concerns regarding potentially sensitive genetic information. For example, the Federal Trade Commission advises consumers to consider the privacy implications of DNA test kits.

THE MIDDLE GROUND Discussing your family history with a doctor or registered dietitian might help you draw some of the same conclusions you'd arrive at from a DNA test, without the steep price or privacy risks.



Inflammation-Fighting Choices

Filling your plate with plenty of produce, lean protein, and healthy fats can help prevent inflammation.

Eat to Beat Inflammation

A few simple tweaks to your diet and other habit changes can reduce this risk factor for heart disease, cancer, and more.

The term “inflammation” gets thrown around a lot these days. But what does it really mean, how does it affect your health, and what can you do to control it? “Inflammation is, very basically, the body’s reaction to something that’s not supposed to be there,” says Keenan Walker, Ph.D., a postdoctoral fellow in the department of neurology at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in Baltimore.

INFLAMMATION IS WHAT your immune system sets in motion when it perceives a threat. It can be as simple as the swelling that occurs after an ankle sprain as more blood flows to the area.

In such a case, inflammation is temporary and beneficial. But it can also be chronic, affect a variety of systems and organs, and become a foe instead of a friend. Here’s what you need to know about chronic inflammation.

Learn How It Can Harm

Scientists have long known that autoimmune conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis and lupus—where the immune system mistakenly attacks healthy cells—cause chronic inflammation. Recently they’ve linked low-level chronic inflammation to heart disease, dementia, type 2 diabetes, cancer, and more. The relationship between inflammation and disease, however, is complicated and not fully understood.

In autoimmune diseases, chronic inflammation can trigger redness, swelling, and pain. Often, though, you can’t feel its effects. Doctors can measure your blood for certain markers, such

as C-reactive protein. Your CRP levels can help determine which risk-lowering steps you should take. Given the uncertainty, our experts say it's wise to make the following healthy lifestyle changes. They can reduce inflammation and benefit you in other ways, too.

Eat Intentionally

A lot of research has linked a healthy diet with lower levels of chronic inflammation. Consider taking these steps:

Go Mediterranean. A review of 17 studies published in 2014 in the journal *Nutrition, Metabolism & Cardiovascular Diseases* found that the

Mediterranean diet—which focuses on fruits and vegetables, whole grains, fish, and healthy fats such as olive oil—was associated with lower levels of CRP.

Limit food that can cause inflammation. “A pro-inflammatory diet is high in red meat, processed meat, organ meat, refined grains, and sugar-sweetened beverages,” says Fred Tabung, Ph.D., a research associate in the department of nutrition at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health in Boston. Don't consume more than one alcoholic drink per day if you're a woman (two for men), because alcohol may also contribute to inflammation.

Stay slim. “Obesity-associated chronic inflammation is well recognized, which in part explains the high risk of chronic diseases in obese individuals,” says Dayong Wu, M.D., Ph.D., a scientist in the Nutritional Immunology Laboratory at the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University in Boston.

Get Moving

Exercise can help lower inflammation, but it's important to do it regularly. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends 150 minutes of moderately intense exercise per week, which can mean 30 minutes of brisk walking five days per week.

Be Heart-Smart

“Physicians really understand now that cardiovascular disease is a disorder both of cholesterol and also of inflammation,” says Paul Ridker, M.D., a cardiologist at the Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston and a professor at the Harvard Medical School.

So keep your cholesterol within healthy levels, and do the same with blood pressure and blood glucose. Diet, exercise, and weight loss are a good start. If you smoke, work to quit. Smoking puts “tremendous inflammatory pressure on the lungs,” Ridker says.

Take Other Preventative Steps

Avoiding injury and illness helps prevent inflammation levels from rising. Talk to your doctor about vaccinations, including those for pneumonia, shingles, and the flu. Also, take good care of your teeth because poor oral health can lead to infection and chronic inflammation, says Nancy Jenny, Ph.D., an associate professor of pathology and laboratory medicine at the Larner College of Medicine at the University of Vermont in Burlington.

And try to aim for 7 or more hours of sleep each night. Too little sleep is associated with higher levels of markers for chronic inflammation, according to a 2015 study in the journal *Sleep*.



Get More Greens
Smoothies, such as the one in our recipes on the facing page, are an easy way to boost your daily servings of veggies and fruits.

PHOTO, PREVIOUS SPREAD: DAVIDE ILLINI/STOCKSY. PHOTO, LEFT: MARIA FUCHS/GETTY IMAGES

Low-Inflammation Recipe Plan

A diet rich in produce, whole grains, healthy fats, and fish can reduce the likelihood of chronic inflammation. Each recipe below makes one serving.

Breakfast

SPINACH-TOMATO FRITTATA

In a medium bowl, whisk **2 eggs**, **1 tbsp. skim milk**, and a pinch of **black pepper**. Stir in **2 tbsp. grated Parmesan** and **1 small tomato**, chopped. In a small nonstick pan over medium heat, heat **1 tsp. olive oil**. Sauté **1 chopped scallion** until softened. Add **2 cups baby spinach** and cook until just wilted. Pour egg mixture over spinach and cook, covered, until set, about 2 minutes. Sprinkle with **1 tbsp. chopped parsley or basil**. Serve with an orange wedge.

Per serving: 340 calories, 17 g fat, 5 g sat. fat, 27 g carbs, 16 g sugars, 7 g fiber, 21 g protein, 420 mg sodium

'PB&J' OATMEAL

Boil **1 cup water** in a small saucepan. Add **½ cup old-fashioned oats**. Cook about 5 minutes over medium heat, stirring. Remove from heat and stir in **2 tsp. peanut or almond butter**. Top with **½ tsp. cinnamon**, **½ cup sliced berries**, and **1 tsp. maple syrup**.

Per serving: 260 calories, 9 g fat, 1 g sat. fat, 41 g carbs, 10 g sugars, 7 g fiber, 8 g protein, 25 mg sodium

GREEN SMOOTHIE

In a small cup, mix **1 tbsp. chia seeds** and **¼ cup almond milk**. Refrigerate for 10 minutes, allowing the chia seeds to soften. Place **2 cups chopped kale**, stems and center ribs removed; **¾ cup fresh pineapple**; **½ cup nonfat Greek yogurt**; the almond milk-chia

mixture; and **1 tsp. honey** into a blender. Blend until smooth.

Per serving: 250 calories, 7 g fat, 0.5 g sat. fat, 35 g carbs, 22 g sugars, 9 g fiber, 17 g protein, 150 mg sodium

Lunch

HUMMUS AND VEGGIE WRAP

Heat grill pan over medium heat. Cut a **small zucchini** lengthwise into **¼-inch slices** and **½ red bell pepper** into **½-inch slices**. Brush with **1 tsp. olive oil** and cook until tender, about 4 minutes on each side. Cool. Spread **¼ cup hummus** on a **whole-wheat tortilla** (about 9 inches wide). Top with veggies, **½ cup baby lettuce leaves**, a **few thin red onion slices**, **1 tbsp. feta**, and **1 tbsp. parsley**. Roll up. Serve with **½ cup raspberries**.

Per serving: 350 calories, 15 g fat, 3 g sat. fat, 50 g carbs, 12 g sugars, 7 g fiber, 14 g protein, 660 mg sodium

ARUGULA, GRAPEFRUIT, AND CHICKEN SALAD

Toss **2 cups baby arugula** with **½ grapefruit**, segmented; **½ avocado**, cut into chunks; **3 oz. sliced grilled chicken**; **2 tsp. chopped walnuts**; **1 tbsp. pomegranate seeds**; and **1 tbsp. fresh mint leaves**. Dress with **1 tbsp. olive oil** whisked with **2 tsp. fresh lemon juice** and **½ tsp. Dijon mustard**.

Per serving: 510 calories, 35 g fat, 5 g sat. fat, 24 g carbs, 12 g sugars, 10 g fiber, 31 g protein, 125 mg sodium

BOXED LUNCH

In a bento-style box, put **3 oz. light canned tuna in water**,

drained; **¼ cup edamame**; **1 oz. low-fat Swiss cheese**; **4 reduced-sodium whole-wheat crackers**; and **¼ cup each Kalamata olives** and **grape tomatoes** dressed with **1 tsp. each olive oil** and **red-wine vinegar** and a pinch of **oregano**, and **⅓ cup fresh cherries**.

Per serving: 390 calories, 15 g fat, 2 g sat. fat, 29 g carbs, 8 g sugars, 3 g fiber, 36 g protein, 440 mg sodium

Dinner

PASTA WITH SWISS CHARD AND WHITE BEANS

Cook **1 cup whole-wheat penne** according to package directions. Drain; save **2 tbsp. cooking water**. In a small skillet over medium heat, sauté **1 clove minced garlic** in **1 tsp. olive oil** until fragrant. Add **3 chopped sun-dried tomatoes**; **2 cups Swiss chard**, chopped (tough stems removed); **⅓ cup white beans**; and a pinch of **crushed red pepper**. When chard is wilted, add pasta and reserved water; toss to coat. Top with **2 tbsp. grated Parmesan** and **½ tsp. chopped fresh oregano**.

Per serving: 500 calories, 12 g fat, 3.5 g sat. fat, 84 g carbs, 6 g sugars, 6 g fiber, 22 g protein, 450 mg sodium

BLACK-BEAN BOWL

Cook **¼ cup quinoa** according to package directions. Toss **½ cup butternut squash cubes** with **1 tsp. olive oil**, **½ tsp. turmeric**, and a pinch each of **cumin**, **kosher salt**, and **black pepper**. Bake on a foil-lined baking sheet at **400° F** until tender, about 20 minutes. Heat

1 tsp. olive oil in a skillet over medium heat. Sauté **¼ sliced onion** and **¼ red bell pepper** until softened. Add **½ cup black beans** and **1 cup chopped baby kale**. Heat until kale is just wilted. Place in a bowl with squash, quinoa, **2 tbsp. chopped cilantro**, and **1 tbsp. pumpkin seeds**. Toss with **1 tbsp. each tahini, lime juice, and water**.

Per serving: 550 calories, 24 g fat, 3.5 g sat. fat, 68 g carbs, 6 g sugars, 16 g fiber, 20 g protein, 480 mg sodium

ROASTED SALMON WITH BROCCOLI AND TOMATOES

Cook **¼ cup dry brown rice** according to package directions. Place a **4-oz. piece of salmon** skin side down on a foil-lined, rimmed baking sheet. In a small bowl combine **½ chopped scallion** (white part only, saving green part), **1 tsp. olive oil**, **1 tsp. reduced-sodium soy sauce**, **½ tsp. fresh grated ginger**, and **¼ tsp. sesame oil**. Brush mixture over salmon. Combine **1 cup broccoli florets**, **½ cup halved cherry tomatoes** and **½ small chopped shallot** in a bowl with **1 tsp. olive oil** and a pinch of **salt and pepper**. Place broccoli mixture on baking sheet with salmon. Bake at **400° F**. Transfer salmon to a plate when cooked through, about 6 to 8 minutes. Top with reserved green part of scallion. Continue cooking broccoli and tomatoes until tender, about 5 minutes more. Serve with prepared brown rice.

Per serving: 470 calories, 19 g fat, 2.5 g sat. fat, 45 g carbs, 4 g sugars, 5 g fiber, 31 g protein, 510 mg sodium

Super Foods to Go

Eating better on the run is easy with these nutritious (and delicious) combos from CR's team of food-testing experts.



1. BULGUR WHEAT WITH CHICKPEAS AND ORANGE

Layer ¼ cup cooked bulgur wheat, ¼ cup orange segments, ½ cup chickpeas, 2 tablespoons crumbled goat cheese, 1 cup arugula, and 1 tablespoon sunflower seeds in a container. Drizzle with 2 tablespoons prepared honey mustard dressing.

2. YOGURT PARFAIT

Spoon 1 cup nonfat Greek plain yogurt into the bottom of a container. Top with ¼ cup raspberries, ¼ cup blueberries or blackberries, and 2 tablespoons of granola.

3. HUMMUS WITH CELERY AND CARROT STICKS

Spoon 4 tablespoons prepared hummus into the bottom of a container. Layer celery and carrot sticks (about five each) on top. Optional (not shown): Add three reduced fat whole-wheat crackers (such as Triscuits Thin Crisps Original Crackers triangles) for extra crunch.

4. NICOISE SALAD

Layer ½ cup blanched green beans; ¼ cup Kalamata olives, halved; ¼ cup chopped artichoke hearts (not in oil); ½ tablespoon chopped red onion; 1 tablespoon parsley leaves; 2 ounces canned salmon; and ¼ cup sliced red peppers in a container. Drizzle with 2 tablespoons prepared Italian dressing. Top with ¼ of a whole-wheat pita, cut into strips.

5. FRUIT SALAD

Layer ¼ cup strawberry halves, ¼ cup sliced kiwi, ¼ cup blueberries, and ¼ cup pineapple chunks in a container. Top with 1 teaspoon chopped mint leaves and 1 teaspoon lemon zest.

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