Three out of five Canadian adults are overweight or obese. Obesity rates have doubled in children and teens. What has McDonald’s done to help the nation slim down?

In 2008, the fast-food giant introduced the Angus Burger. It’s got more calories (and more saturated fat) than the Quarter Pounder or Big Mac. Those burgers start at 430 to 540 calories and 8 to 10 grams of sat fat (before you add cheese to the Quarter Pounder).

By contrast, the plain Angus Burger, (burger, bun, sauce, lettuce, tomato, onion, pickles, mustard, seasoning) packs 590 calories, more than half a day’s damaging fat (11 grams of saturated plus 1 gram of trans), and 700 milligrams of sodium.

An Angus Burger with Cheddar reaches 700 calories, 18½ grams of bad fat, and 920 mg of sodium. Reach for an Angus Burger with Bacon & Cheddar and you waddle out of the Golden Arches with 740 calories, a full day’s quota of harmful fat (18 grams of sat plus 1½ grams of trans), and two-thirds of a day’s sodium (1,130 mg).

Think of the Angus as a Third Pounder. (That’s what we estimate the meat patty weighs before it’s fried.) What’s next? Half Pounders? Full Pounders? After all, adding pounds seems to be the national pastime.

It’s not just McDonald’s. Burger King’s Steakhouse Burger piles on 830 calories, 20 grams of sat fat, and 920 mg of sodium. Reach for an Angus Burger with Bacon & Cheddar and you waddle out of the Golden Arches with 740 calories, a full day’s quota of harmful fat (18 grams of sat plus 1½ grams of trans), and two-thirds of a day’s sodium (1,130 mg).

Think of the Angus as a Third Pounder. (That’s what we estimate the meat patty weighs before it’s fried.) What’s next? Half Pounders? Full Pounders? After all, adding pounds seems to be the national pastime.

It’s not just McDonald’s. Burger King’s Steakhouse Burger piles on 830 calories, 20 grams of sat fat, 2 grams of trans fat, and 1,790 mg of sodium. Want fries with that?

McDonald’s: (416) 446-3932
Burger King: (877) 271-0493

**Harvey’s Whole-in-One**

The first Harvey’s opened in 1959. It took half a century, but the chain has finally introduced a 100% whole wheat bun...the first at any fast-food chain. (Subway’s and A&W’s versions have far more refined white flour than whole wheat.) Harvey’s whole wheat bun comes on the Grilled Chicken or Grilled Chicken BLT Sandwich and the Veggie Burger. But you can request it with any burger. And why not? The bun has 3 grams of fibre and most of the vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals that are stripped away when whole wheat flour is refined. (It’s not whole-grain whole wheat, so it’s missing some wheat germ.) And it tastes as light and fluffy as any fast-food bun, but with more flavour than plain old white.

While you’re at it, give Harvey’s Veggie Burger a whirl. It—and the Grilled Chicken Sandwich—have fewer calories (290) and less saturated fat (1½ grams) than any other Harvey’s sandwich. The Veggie also has the least sodium, though 580 milligrams is only low compared to the Grilled Chicken (810 mg) and all the chain’s other burgers. And the Veggie Burger has 18 grams of protein and 6 grams of fibre. As for taste: Magnifique! Load it up with lettuce, tomato, and onion. (Go easy on the other condiments or the sodium will creep up.)

To their credit, A&W and Burger King also sell veggie burgers. (Hello, McDonald’s? Wendy’s?) But only Harvey’s does the whole veggie-burger-on-whole-wheat-bun package. Memo to CEO’s of the other chains: What’s keeping you guys? Too busy making your burgers (and customers) bigger?

Harvey’s: (877) 439-1122

**Sauté 454 g of chicken breast cutlets in 1 Tbs. of extra-virgin olive oil until golden, about 1½ minutes per side. Add a drained 170 mL jar of marinated artichoke hearts. Season with freshly ground black pepper and sprinkle with Parmesan cheese.**

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**About CSPI, publisher of Nutrition Action Healthletter**

The Centre for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), founded in 1971, is an independent nonprofit consumer health group. CSPI advocates honest food labelling and advertising, safer and more nutritious foods, and pro-health alcohol policies. CSPI’s work is supported by Nutrition Action Healthletter subscribers and foundation grants. CSPI accepts no government or industry funding. Nutrition Action Healthletter, which has been published in the U.S. since 1974 and in Canada since 1996, accepts no advertising.

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