

# Nutrition Action

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SWEET 'N LOWER.?

What to know as companies  
cut added sugars

Can cranberry  
juice fend off a  
UTI?

How the  
**food industry**  
shapes what we eat

**BOWLS**  
the best  
frozen entrées

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# SWEET 'N LOWER?

## What to know as companies cut added sugars

BY BONNIE LIEBMAN

In July, experts recommended that we shrink added sugars to less than 6 percent of our calories. Companies were already scrambling to trim sugars because, by 2021, food labels will have to reveal how much each serving contains. Here's what you need to know.

### 1 Aim lower.

Less than 6 percent of our calories should come from added sugars, said an expert panel in July after examining the scientific evidence on diet and health for the 2020 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.<sup>1</sup> Why 6 percent?

"We looked at how many calories it would take to choose a healthy diet that covers nutritional requirements," explains panel member Elizabeth Mayer-Davis, who chairs the nutrition department at the University of North Carolina.

"And then we asked, 'Once you consume those calories, how many calories remain?'" In other words, after you get the nutrients you need from fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy, poultry, fish, whole grains, and other foods, how many calories are left over for everything else?

When the panel allotted roughly half of the remainder to solid fats (found largely in higher-fat dairy, meat, and many desserts) and half to added sugars—and left no room for the calories in alcoholic beverages—the results were clear.

"You just don't have that many calories left over for added sugars and solid fats," says Mayer-Davis.

For someone who eats a typical 2,000 calories a day, staying under 6 percent leaves less than 120 calories—about 7 teaspoons—of added sugar.

That's less than you'd get in a ⅓-cup

serving of Ben & Jerry's Half Baked ice cream (see p. 6).

On average, adults get 13 percent of their calories from added sugars, twice the panel's limit. And that's a waste.

"Added sugars don't provide any nutritional value other than calories," says Mayer-Davis.

What's more, sugary drinks—the best-studied form of added sugars—

seen the sugar handwriting on the wall.

"77% of consumers now try to limit or avoid sugar," says [Cargill's website](#). Like ADM (Archer Daniels Midland), DuPont, Tate & Lyle, and other food company suppliers, the agricultural giant has been busy hawking its sugar-cutting solutions.

"Formulators looking to develop great-tasting products with less sugar and satisfying mouthfeel turn to Cargill's broad sweetness and texturizing ingredient portfolio," boasts the [website](#).

Mouthfeel? Texturizing? Companies can't just swap sugar for a low-calorie sweetener because in most baked goods, ice creams, beverages, and other foods, sugar adds more than sweetness.

In dairy products, for example, sugar is "also responsible for texture as a whole, holding water and delaying ice crystal formation, as well as mouthfeel and viscosity," Trevor Nichols, a food scientist at ingredient supplier Brenntag North America, told [Dairy Foods](#) magazine in April.

Sugar also contributes to the "slow-melt experience" of ice cream, ADM's Dirk

**30% Reduced Sugar Cupcake with Filling & Icing**

Have your (cup)cake and eat it too! One frosted cupcake has only 17g total/added sugars.

SweetRight

Decrease Sugars

Reduce Calories

"Have your (cup)cake and eat it too!" [ADM](#) tells food companies. But lower-sugar sweets aren't the key to a healthy diet.

cause other damage.

"We need more research on sugars in solid foods, but we have strong evidence that sugary drinks increase the risk of weight gain, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease," says Frank Hu, chair of the nutrition department at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.<sup>2</sup>

### 2 Slashing sugar isn't always easy.

*Dietary Guidelines* and Nutrition Facts labels aside, the food industry has

Reif told [Dairy Foods](#).

Then there's sugar's hit-and-run impact on our taste buds.

"Sucrose has that quick, 1½ second upfront sweetness, and then it starts dissipating, 1½ seconds and it's gone," Cargill technical services manager Alan Skradis explains on the company's [website](#). In contrast, high-intensity low- or no-cal sweeteners like stevia have "a slow onset, and then it will want to linger on."

So companies are searching for "sweet solutions"—usually a mix of two or three. For example, erythritol, a safe sugar alco-

hol, “helps improve the taste profile of stevia,” says Skradis, because it can boost “that upfront sweetness” and “cut off some of that tailing.”

But some solutions beat others.

### 3 Not all low-calorie sweeteners are safe.

Stevia leaf extract and erythritol are the safest low-calorie sweeteners (see our website [chemicalcuisine.org](http://chemicalcuisine.org)). Allulose and tagatose aren’t toxic, but large amounts may cause GI distress, so they’re in our “cut back” category.

Monk fruit extract—from a fruit that’s been consumed in China for several hundred years—may well be safe, but it’s in our “caution” category because it hasn’t been well tested in animal studies.

In contrast, three low-calorie sweeteners—aspartame, sucralose, and saccharin—have caused cancer in animal studies. Ditto for acesulfame potassium, though the studies were poor quality.

Here’s the catch: Unsafe sweeteners don’t show up only in foods or drinks labeled “sugar-free,” “light,” or “diet.” You have to check each ingredient list. For example, we found sucralose (and

International Delight Cold Stone Sweet Cream Coffee Creamer.

■ **Drinks & mixes.** Brisk Iced Tea, Fuze Tea, most MiO Liquid Water Enhancers.

■ **Snack foods.** Pop Secret Kettle Corn, Quaker Apple Cinnamon or Caramel Rice Crisps.

Bottom line: Get out your reading glasses.

### 4 Some sweeteners can cause GI problems.

What gives a sweetener few or no calories? Extracts from stevia leaves pull off that trick because they’re 200 to 400 times sweeter than sugar, so a tiny amount is all it takes.

The key to many other sweeteners: they’re poorly absorbed. So eat too much of some of them and your GI tract could rebel.

■ **Sugar alcohols.** Sugar alcohols (or polyols) like erythritol, maltitol, sorbitol, and xylitol—they contain neither sugar nor alcohol—have been around for years.

“Sugar alcohols can have a laxative effect,” says Emily Haller, a dietitian at the University of Michigan’s Taubman GI Clinic.

“They draw water into the large intestine, and that can lead to increased bowel movements or diarrhea.”

At greatest risk are children and people with irritable bowel syndrome, or IBS, which may affect some one out of ten adults.<sup>3</sup>

“Someone with IBS can have a heightened response to sugar alcohols,” says Haller. “They can trigger symptoms like abdominal pain, gas, and altered bowel habits.”

## Low-Calorie Sweeteners

### SAFE

erythritol, stevia leaf extract

### CUT BACK

(large amounts cause GI distress)

allulose, hydrogenated starch hydrolysate, isomalt, lactitol, maltitol, mannitol, sorbitol, tagatose, xylitol

### CAUTION (barely tested)

monk fruit extract

### AVOID

(causes cancer in animals)

acesulfame potassium, aspartame, saccharin, sucralose

Source: [chemicalcuisine.org](http://chemicalcuisine.org).

The exception: erythritol, which is much less likely to cause diarrhea and other GI symptoms because it’s largely absorbed into the bloodstream and excreted unchanged in the urine.

A single dose of 50 grams of erythritol did cause nausea in one industry-funded study of 64 people.<sup>4</sup> But

that’s a large dose. Breyers Delights Vanilla Bean ice cream has 6 grams in a 2/3-cup serving and 19 grams in an entire 260-calorie pint.

“Erythritol has the highest digestive tolerance, as compared to other polyol sweetener options,” says Ravi Nana, another Cargill technical services manager, on the company’s [website](http://www.cargill.com).

Erythritol is also the darling of sugar alcohols because it has virtually no calories. (Most sugar alcohols have roughly half the calories of sugar.)

■ **Allulose and tagatose.** These two sweeteners have chemical structures that are similar to fructose. (Like sugar alcohols, both occur naturally in tiny quantities in fruits and other foods.)

So far, tagatose is scarce. But allulose is in a growing number of foods like Fairlife Light Ice Cream, Duncan Hines Keto Friendly Walnut Fudge Brownie Mix, and Magic Spoon cereal.

Allulose is largely absorbed into the bloodstream and excreted intact in the urine.<sup>5</sup> So far, only two small studies have tested its impact on GI symptoms, and both were in healthy adults, not children or people with IBS. A single high dose—about 35 grams for a 150-pound person—led to bloating, diarrhea, and abdominal pain.<sup>6</sup>

“No one knows what amount is going to be well-tolerated in people with digestive disorders like IBS,” says Haller. “We need good studies so we can predict how people with IBS might react to any new sugar alternative, given that they have a more sensitive GI tract.”



“All the taste, all the functionality, all the enjoyment of sugar, without all the calories,” says Tate & Lyle’s [video](https://www.tateandlyle.com) about allulose.

sometimes acesulfame potassium) in:

■ **Breads & cereals.** Fiber One Original cereal, Thomas’ 100% Whole Wheat English Muffins.

■ **Coffees & creamers.** Starbucks DoubleShot Energy Coffee, Coffee-Mate Italian Sweet Crème Coffee Creamer,



In 2019, *Nutrition Action's* publisher, the Center for Science in the Public Interest, [urged](#) the Food and Drug Administration to require food labels to warn consumers that "excess consumption of allulose may cause diarrhea or other adverse gastrointestinal effects."

## 5 Some "fiber" is sweet.

As companies try to trim their added sugar, they're reaching for any non-sugar ingredient that replaces sugar's bulk, mouthfeel, and maybe even its sweetness. A go-to candidate: chicory root extract, aka inulin, which can add sweetness but counts as fiber, not sugar, on food labels.

"Consumers perceive chicory root fiber more positively compared to other commercially available soluble fibers," explains Cargill's Ravi Nana on the company's [website](#). In liquid forms, it "can impart sweetness as well."

The FDA only allows processed ingredients like inulin to count as fiber if they have a health benefit. Inulin's: it boosts calcium absorption. The agency wasn't persuaded that inulin could lower blood sugar or LDL ("bad") cholesterol or improve regularity (see Jun. 2018, p. 3). The downside: inulin can make you gassy.<sup>2</sup>

"Inulin is a short-chain carbohydrate, and it's highly fermentable," says Haller.

"If a short-chain carbohydrate makes its way down to the large intestine, the bacteria that live there eat it up really

more sensitive GI tract, may experience severe symptoms such as bloating, distension, cramping, and discomfort or pain."

"I've had patients who were eating inulin for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and they were so uncomfortable."

Inulin comes in different chain lengths, and shorter chains are worse, notes Haller. "But you can't tell which kind you're getting by looking at the label."

Inulin shows up in thousands of foods, from yogurts (Chobani Complete, Fage TruBlend, Oikos Triple Zero) to bars (Fiber One, Luna, many KIND flavors) to lower-sugar ice creams (Halo Top Keto Series, Nick's, Rebel).

Feeling bloated? Check your labels for chicory root or inulin.

## 6 Syrups aren't silver bullets.

Cargill calls tapioca syrup "a label-friendly swap for corn syrup," because it's non-GMO (most corn syrup is GMO). Using tapioca also allows labels to say "no high-fructose corn syrup."

But they're basically the same. "The carbohydrate composition of our tapioca syrup is very similar to our corn-based syrup," [says](#) Cargill's Nana.

That's because both cassava (tapioca's



## Cut the Sugar, Not the Satisfaction

[Cargill](#) promises "reduced-sugar frozen dairy treats that keep consumers coming back for more."

Cargill and [others](#) also sell tapioca syrups with less sugar than standard syrups. Just don't think of them as lower in refined carbs (or calories).

They're lower in what the FDA defines as "sugars": monosaccharides (single-unit sugars like glucose or fructose) and disaccharides (two-unit sugars like sucrose). They're just syrups with longer chains of sugar units.

## 7 Less sugar isn't the whole ballgame.

If you're looking for lower-sugar versions of nutrient-rich foods like yogurt or whole-grain cereals, you're on the right track. But if you're simply switching to lower-sugar versions of ice cream, cookies, brownies, or chocolate, you're missing the big picture.

"The emphasis should be on choosing a healthy dietary pattern," says UNC's Mayer-Davis. Among them: a Mediterranean or a [DASH diet](#) (see June 2020, p. 3).

"What they have in common are fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, healthy dietary fats, beans, seafood, low-fat dairy...and less red meat, added sugars, refined grains, and processed foods."

That's the real target. 🍌



[ADM](#) says that its stevia offers less sugar, great taste, and a "clean label."

fast, and that rapid fermentation produces gases like hydrogen, methane, and carbon dioxide."

"The average person might have a little extra gas and bloating, because everybody is going to ferment inulin," explains Haller. "But somebody with irritable bowel syndrome, who has a

source) and corn are largely starch, which is "nothing but a really long sugar molecule," explains Cargill's John Thompson on the company's [website](#). To make tapioca syrup, "you basically liquefy the starch, and then run it through a jet cooker that heats it up very quickly and adds enzyme to it, and then it starts breaking down."

<sup>1</sup> [dietaryguidelines.gov/2020-advisory-committee-report](#).

<sup>2</sup> *Nutrients* 2019. doi:10.3390/nu11081840.

<sup>3</sup> *Am. J. Gastroenterol.* 113: 1, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> *Eur. J. Clin. Nutr.* 61: 349, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> [fda.gov/media/123342/download](#).

<sup>6</sup> *Nutrients* 2018. doi:10.3390/nu10122010.

<sup>7</sup> *Nutrients* 2020. doi:10.3390/nu12030627.

# Sweet Talkin'

## How added sugars stack up

BY LINDSAY MOYER & KAAMILAH MITCHELL

**H**ow much sugar has been added to your yogurt, cereal, smoothie, or gelato? Check the Nutrition Facts labels. Nearly all now list “added sugars.”

At restaurants, on the other hand, added sugars are still a guessing game. Chains have to disclose only *total* sugars, which include the naturally occurring sugars in fruit and milk.

To their credit, Smoothie King and Dunkin’ also give numbers for added sugars. Starbucks? Jamba Juice? The Cheesecake Factory? Most others? Radio silence.

Nutrition Facts labels list sugar in grams. Our chart uses *teaspoons*. A teaspoon has roughly 4 grams of sugar, so the Daily Value (50 grams) translates into 12 teaspoons of added sugars per day.

A new [expert panel](#) now recommends just 7 teaspoons (30 grams) a day (see p. 3). Unsweetened iced tea, anyone?

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
<b>Serving size</b> 2/3 cup (55g)	
Amount per serving	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>230</b>
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 8g	<b>10%</b>
Saturated Fat 1g	<b>5%</b>
Trans Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 160mg	<b>7%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 37g	<b>13%</b>
Dietary Fiber 4g	<b>14%</b>
<b>Total Sugars</b> 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	<b>20%</b>
<b>Protein</b> 3g	

This food’s 10 grams of added sugars is 20% of the Daily Value (50 grams). A 30-gram limit would be even better.

Juice sugars (Naked has 11½ tsp.) don’t count as “added.” But they may still lead to weight gain.

Don’t assume that all sparkling waters are sugar-free.

Our Starbucks numbers are for bottles and cans. At a Starbucks, an unflavored coffee, latte, or cappuccino has no added sugars.

Caution: Companies make up their own definitions of claims like “not too sweet” (STÖK) and “just a tad sweet” (Honest T).

Many sports drinks, teas, lemonades, juice drinks, and tonic waters have a health halo they don’t deserve.

This smoothie racks up added sugars from its sweetened strawberries and turbinado sugar.

A cup of dairy milk has 12 grams of naturally occurring lactose sugars. Just about all of the sugars in non-dairy milks are added.

“Original” plant milks typically have less added sugars than vanilla-flavored ones. Chocolate has more.

Oatly uses enzymes to break down some oat starch into sugar. That counts as “added.”

Two Good adds stevia extract instead of sugar. Chobani Less Sugar uses no low-cal sweeteners.

Halo Top replaces most of its sugar with erythritol and stevia extract. Fairlife uses allulose and monk fruit extract.

### Drinks, Coffees, Smoothies, & Shakes

	Calories	Added Sugars (tsp.)
Naked Berry Blast Juice (15.2 oz.)	220	0
La Colombe Double Shot Draft Latte (9 oz.)	90	0.5
Simply Light Lemonade* (8 oz.)	25	1
Sanpellegrino Momenti Lemon & Raspberry (11.2 oz.)	35	1.5
Starbucks Black Sweet Cold Brew (11 oz. bottle)	50	2.5
Starbucks DoubleShot Espresso & Cream (6.5 oz. can)	140	2.5
STÖK Not Too Sweet Cold Brew Coffee (12 oz.)	60	3
Silk Espresso Almond & Oat Latte* (12 oz.)	200	3
KeVita Ginger Kombucha* (15.2 oz.)	60	3.5
Honest T Honey Green Tea (16.9 oz.)	70	4.5
Sorta Sweet Straight Up Tea (18.5 oz.)	90	5
Boost Original, any flavor* (8 oz.)	240	5
Sanpellegrino Sparkling Blood Orange (11.2 oz.)	130	5.5
Swiss Miss Milk Chocolate Hot Cocoa (1 packet)	160	5.5
Honest T Half Tea & Half Lemonade (16.9 oz.)	100	6
Vitaminwater Power-C (20 oz.)	100	6.5
Schweppes Tonic Water (10 oz.)	110	6.5
Simply Lemonade (8 oz.)	120	6.5
Simply Cranberry Cocktail (8 oz.)	130	7
Gatorade Lemon-Lime (20 oz.)	140	8
Starbucks Coffee Frappuccino (13.7 oz. bottle)	300	8
Canada Dry Ginger Ale (12 oz.)	140	8.5
Snapple Lemon Tea (16 oz.)	150	8.5
Dunkin’ Caramel Skim Latte (medium, 14 oz.)	260	8.5
Pure Leaf Lemon Tea (18.5 oz.)	150	9
Bolthouse Chocolate Protein Plus Shake (15.2 oz.)	390	9
Coca-Cola (12 oz.)	140	9.5
Smoothie King Angel Food Smoothie (20 oz.)	350	12
Coca-Cola (20 oz.)	240	15.5

### Milk (8 oz.)

Silk Less Sugar Original Almond	30	0.5
Silk Original Protein Almond & Cashew	130	0.5
Silk Original Almond	60	1.5
Oatly Oatmilk	120	1.5
Silk Vanilla Almond	80	3
Silk Chocolate Soy	150	3.5
Horizon Chocolate Lowfat Milk	170	3.5

### Yogurt (5.3 oz. tub, unless noted)

Two Good Greek Yogurt, any flavor*	80	0
Chobani Less Sugar Greek Yogurt, most flavors	120	1
Chobani Strawberry Greek Yogurt	110	2
Yoplait Original Strawberry Yogurt (6 oz.)	150	3
Chobani Flip Almond Coco Loco	230	3.5
Kite Hill Peach Almond Milk Yogurt	170	4

### Frozen Desserts (¾ cup, unless noted)

Halo Top Cookies & Cream Light Ice Cream*	110	1
Yasso Chocolate Chip Greek Yogurt Bar (2.3 oz.)	100	2
Outshine Strawberry Fruit Bar (2.5 oz.)	60	3
Fairlife Mint Chip Light Ice Cream*	170	3
Edy’s Slow Churned Coffee Light Ice Cream	140	3.5
Breyers Natural Vanilla Ice Cream	170	3.5





Photos (from top left): Silk, Chobani, Kind, Kashi, Starbucks, Breyers, Tate's Bake Shop, Kellogg's, Talenti, Sanpellegrino.

	Calories	Added Sugars (tsp.)
Stonyfield Whole Milk Vanilla Frozen Yogurt	170	4.5
So Delicious S'mores Oatmilk Frozen Dessert	230	4.5
Häagen-Dazs Chocolate Ice Cream	330	4.5
Talenti Sea Salt Caramel Gelato	320	5
Talenti Roman Raspberry Sorbetto	150	7
Ben & Jerry's Half Baked Ice Cream	370	7.5
<b>Cookies</b> (No. of cookies closest to 1 oz.)		
Tate's Bake Shop Oatmeal Raisin (2)	130	2
Trader Joe's Mini Almond Biscotti (3)	150	2.5
Pepperidge Farm Dark Chocolate Milano (3)	180	2.5
Tate's Bake Shop Chocolate Chip (2)	140	3
Oreos (3)	160	3.5
<b>Other Sweets</b>		
365 Dark Chocolate Pretzels (7 pretzels, 1.1 oz.)	130	2
BelVita Blueberry Breakfast Biscuits (1.8 oz. pack)	230	2.5
Dunkin' Glazed Donut (1)	240	3
Dove Dark Chocolate (4 pieces, 1.1 oz.)	170	3.5
Sara Lee All Butter Pound Cake (1 slice, 2.7 oz.)	340	4.5
Annie's Cinnamon Rolls with Icing (1 roll, 3.5 oz.)	330	5
Marie Callender's Dutch Apple Pie (1 slice, 4.2 oz.)	340	5
Dunkin' Blueberry Muffin (1)	460	10
<b>Snack Bars</b> (Weight of 1 bar)		
LÄRABAR Cherry Pie (1.7 oz.)	200	0
KIND Healthy Grains Cinnamon Oat (1.2 oz.)	140	1
KIND Dark Chocolate Nuts & Sea Salt (1.4 oz.)	180	1
Kashi Trail Mix (1.2 oz.)	130	1.5
Luna Blueberry Bliss (1.7 oz.)	190	2
Clif Bar Crunchy Peanut Butter (2.4 oz.)	260	4.5
<b>Cereal</b>		
Bob's Red Mill Old Country Style Muesli (½ cup)	280	0
Cheerios (1½ cups)	140	0.5
Kellogg's Raisin Bran (1 cup)	190	2
Kellogg's Special K Red Berries (1¼ cups)	140	2.5
Kashi GO Crunch (¾ cup)	190	2.5
Honey Nut Cheerios (1 cup)	140	3
Bear Naked Peanut Butter Granola (¾ cup)	290	3
<b>Sauces &amp; Condiments</b>		
Bertolli Traditional Marinara (½ cup)	70	0.5
Jif or Skippy Creamy Peanut Butter (2 Tbs.)	190	0.5
Heinz Tomato Ketchup (1 Tbs.)	20	1
Newman's Own Raspberry Walnut Vinaigrette (2 Tbs.)	70	1.5
Smuckers Strawberry Preserves (1 Tbs.)	50	2
Sweet Baby Ray's Barbecue Sauce (2 Tbs.)	70	4
Betty Crocker Chocolate Frosting (2 Tbs.)	130	4
Nutella (2 Tbs.)	200	4.5

It's a myth that lower-fat ice creams add more sugars than their higher-fat cousins.

Sorbets may be made with real fruit, but most of their sugars are added.

Dove Milk Chocolate has slightly more added sugars (4 tsp.), but that doesn't mean the Dark Chocolate is low.

The tapioca, brown rice, cane, or glucose syrups that hold bars together contain added sugars, but even lower-sugar syrups add refined carbs.

Its 5 tsp. of total sugars come from dates and cherries.

Its 2½ tsp. of total sugars come from dates and raisins.

Cereals have little or no naturally occurring sugars unless they contain dried fruit. Raisin brans get about half their total sugars from fruit. The rest is added.

"Less sugar" or "no sugar added" on peanut butter or spaghetti sauce labels doesn't mean much because both start out with little or none.

Preserves, jams, jellies: they all have about the same amount of added sugars.

The "hazelnut spread" has more palm oil and more added sugars than nuts.

\*Contains one or more low-calorie sweeteners (allulose, erythritol, monk fruit extract, stevia extract). None have aspartame, sucralose, or acesulfame potassium. Note: One teaspoon has 4.2 grams of sugar. Added sugars are rounded to the nearest half teaspoon. Source: company information. The use of information from this article for commercial purposes is strictly prohibited without written permission from CSPI.

# Quick Studies

A snapshot of the latest research on diet, exercise, and more.

## Feeling Full on Fruit



Is apple juice or purée equal to an apple? Scientists had 18 adults consume, on three different days, 178 calories' worth of apple slices, apple purée, or apple juice. The purée included the peel, so it had about as much fiber as the slices (7 grams). The juice had less (2 grams).

The participants' stomachs took longer to become half empty after they ate the apple slices (65 minutes) than after the purée or apple juice (about 40 minutes). They also felt the most full after eating the apple slices and the least full after drinking the juice.

**What to do:** Build your diet around unprocessed whole foods. Don't assume that high-fiber processed bars or shakes will keep you feeling full.

[J. Nutr. 2020. doi:10.1093/jn/nxaa191.](#)

## Have a "Snack"

We're talking exercise, not food. When 11 adults with overweight or obesity spent 9 hours taking an hourly stair-climbing "snack"—which meant briskly climbing 55 steps—their blood insulin levels were 17 percent lower than when they spent 9 hours sitting. Each "snack" took 20 to 60 seconds.



**What to do:** Try taking exercise "snacks." High insulin levels are a risk factor for type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

[Med. Sci. Sports Exerc. 2020. doi:10.1249/MSS.0000000000002431.](#)

## Vitamin D & Covid-19

Could low blood levels of vitamin D raise the risk of Covid-19? Researchers studied 489 people who had had their vitamin D levels tested within a year (on average, five months) before being tested for Covid-19.

Roughly 12 percent of those with "adequate" vitamin D levels (at least 20 ng/mL)—versus 22 percent of

those with lower levels—tested positive for Covid-19.

**What to do:** It's impossible to know if vitamin D can prevent—or curb—a Covid infection without a clinical trial that randomly assigns people to take either vitamin D or a placebo. (Fortunately, at least 30 trials are underway.) Covid or not, it's worth taking the RDA for vitamin D (600 IU a day up to age 70 and 800 IU a day if you're older) to avoid insufficient levels. 🍌

[JAMA Netw. Open 2020. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.19722.](#)

## Clues to Pancreatic Cancer

Unplanned weight loss and diabetes may be signs of pancreatic cancer.

Scientists tracked some 160,000 adults for roughly 30 years. Compared to those without diabetes, those who had been diagnosed with the disease more than four years earlier had double the risk of pancreatic cancer, while those with a recent diagnosis had triple the risk. (That said, their risk over four years was still low—only about 3 cancers per 1,000 people.)

People who had recently lost more than 8 pounds had a 69 percent higher risk of pancreatic cancer than those with no weight loss. And people who had lost at least 8 pounds and had a recent diabetes diagnosis had six times the risk of those with neither. (Their four-year risk was 7 cancers per 1,000 people.)

**What to do:** Though more research is needed, check with your doctor if you've lost weight without trying.

[JAMA Oncol. 2020. doi:10.1001/jamaoncol.2020.2948.](#)





# A cranberry a day... to keep a UTI away?

BY CAITLIN DOW

## “Qualified” Claims

In 2017, Ocean Spray asked the Food and Drug Administration to approve a health claim that cranberry drinks, foods, and supplements can help prevent recurrent urinary tract infections in healthy women.

The FDA concluded that the science wasn't strong enough. But the agency has since said that it will allow cranberry products to make a “qualified” health claim, which requires weaker evidence.

As a result, cranberry drinks and supplements can now bear a claim like this one on Ocean Spray's website: “Consuming one serving (8 oz) each day of Cranberry Juice Cocktail may help reduce the risk of recurrent urinary tract infection (UTI) in healthy women\*.”

Below it, in tiny print, is the “qualification”: “\*FDA has concluded that the scientific evidence supporting this claim is limited and inconsistent.”<sup>1</sup>

Huh?

The Center for Science in the Public Interest, *Nutrition Action's* publisher, has argued that qualified health claims [mislead](#) consumers. Cranberry claims are a perfect example.

## Why Cranberries?

UTIs typically occur when bacteria make their way up the urethra and colonize the bladder. (It's less likely that bacteria reach the kidneys, but if they do, it's a more serious infection.)

In test tubes, cranberry extract can

prevent some bacteria from binding to the cells that line the urinary tract.<sup>2</sup> One out of every two American women will experience the pain, burning, and urgency of a urinary tract infection at least once in her lifetime. The cranberry industry wants you to believe that cranberry drinks or supplements can prevent UTIs. Here's the real story.

prevent some bacteria from binding to the cells that line the urinary tract.<sup>2</sup>

But if you've heard that drinking cranberry juice cocktail by the quart at the first sign of a UTI can nip the infection in the bud, forget it.

Even Ocean Spray doesn't claim that cranberries can *treat* a UTI. Instead, says the company, drinking cranberry beverages every day can *prevent* one.

randomly assigned to drink cranberry juice cocktail every day for six months had a lower risk of UTI symptoms than women who drank a placebo.<sup>4</sup>

But in another clinical trial—it had no industry funding and used lab tests to *confirm* UTIs—cranberry juice cocktail came up empty.<sup>5</sup>

As the teeny-weeny print says, the evidence is “limited and inconsistent.”

## Cup o' Sugar?

It's bad enough that people are misled by qualified cranberry health claims (or by claims like “Urinary Tract Health” on cranberry supplements, which aren't evaluated by the FDA because the claims don't mention an illness).

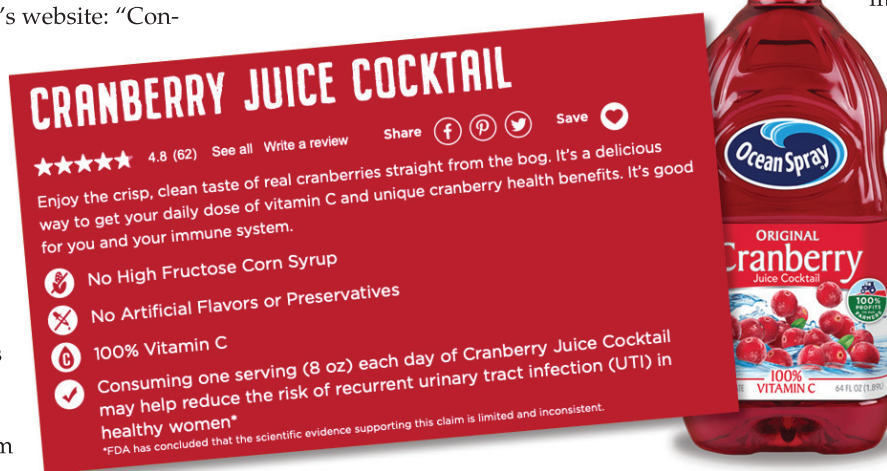
As it turns out, an 8 oz. glass of cranberry juice cocktail—which is typically 73 percent sugar water and just 27 percent cranberry juice—dumps roughly

5½ teaspoons (23 grams) of added sugars into your body.

That's nearly half of the Daily Value (see p. 6).

Just what we need: a nudge to drink sugary beverages, which lead to weight gain, in the midst of an obesity epidemic.

Want to curb your risk of a UTI? Try drinking more water or other calorie-free beverages (see Dec. 2018, p. 7). 🍓



Didn't notice the fine print? That's okay with Ocean Spray.

“The evidence for that is mixed and weak at best,” says Ruth Jepson, a professor of public health in social science at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland.

In 2012, after reviewing 24 clinical trials on nearly 4,500 volunteers, Jepson and her colleagues concluded that “cranberry juice does not appear to have a significant benefit in preventing UTIs.”<sup>3</sup> Ditto for cranberry supplements.

Since then, a study funded by Ocean Spray and co-authored by two of its employees reported that women who were

<sup>1</sup> [fda.gov/media/140304/download](https://www.fda.gov/media/140304/download).

<sup>2</sup> *J. Urol.* 177: 2357, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> *Cochrane Database Syst. Rev.* 10: CD001321, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> *Am. J. Clin. Nutr.* 103: 1434, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> *Mayo Clin. Proc.* 87: 143, 2012.

# Against the Odds



Why our food system makes it tough to eat healthy



**Marion Nestle** is the Paulette Goddard Professor Emerita of Nutrition, Food Studies, and Public Health at New York University. She is the author of 10 books.

Her latest, *Let's Ask Marion: What You Need to Know about the Politics of Food, Nutrition, and Health*, was published in September. Nestle, who is a former member of the board of directors of the Center for Science in the Public Interest (*Nutrition Action's* publisher), was interviewed by *Nutrition Action's* Caitlin Dow.

## WHY EATING HEALTHY IS HARD

### Q: What's your advice for how to eat a healthy diet?

**A:** Eating healthfully is so simple that the journalist Michael Pollan summarized the principles in seven words: Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants.

That's not all that different from decades-old advice to balance calories, eat a variety of foods, and keep those foods mostly unprocessed. Today's tweak is to avoid ultraprocessed foods—translation: heavily processed junk foods.

### Q: Why is that advice hard to follow?

**A:** Are you kidding? It's impossible for anyone without a willpower of steel. Ultraprocessed junk foods are among the most profitable for the companies that make them, and the companies' first priority is profits for stockholders.

To sell those foods, companies bombard us with billions of dollars in ads, normalize eating junk food, and make it available 24/7, everywhere, and in large amounts at remarkably low cost.

Wondering why it's so hard to eat a diet that's good for you and for the planet? Because we have a food system designed to boost profits at our—and the environment's—expense.

It's the normalization I worry most about. Why isn't it normal to eat a largely plant-based diet that's loaded with fruits and vegetables?

### Q: Why does the food industry have so much power?

**A:** Everybody eats. Everybody buys food. So this industry includes Big Agriculture, Big Meat, and Big Food, companies with billions in annual revenues. And money buys power. These corporations know how to use the political system to get government handouts and keep regulators off their backs.

### Q: What led to the obesity epidemic?

**A:** As a result of 1970s agricultural policies, we have been overproducing food. Since the '70s, the calories in the food supply have gone from 3,200 per person per day to 4,000. That's twice the amount needed by the average person.

The food industry, including restaurants, had to convince people to buy their products rather than someone else's or to eat more in general. They did a great job of putting food everywhere and increasing the size of portions.

If I had one concept I could get across to everyone, it would be that larger portions have more calories. That alone is a sufficient explanation for the rise in obesity.

### Q: What else has changed since the 1970s?

**A:** The shareholder value movement kicked in during the early 1980s. That made returns to stockholders and consistent growth in profits every publicly traded company's number one priority—to hell with taking care of workers and protecting the environment.

Food companies had to work hard to sell enough to boost profits, and they devised all kinds of clever ways to do that. The result: people ate more and gained weight.

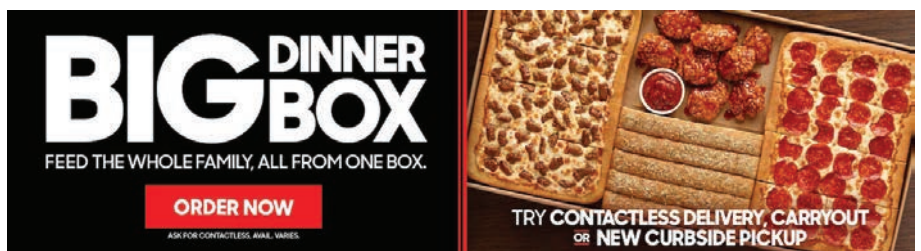
### Q: Why is marketing so effective?

**A:** As an advertising executive once explained to me, when marketing is done well, it slips below the radar of critical thinking. You're not supposed to realize you're being marketed to.

You enjoy the entertainment by celebrities, musicians, and athletes and never think about what the advertised product might be doing to your health.

### Q: So we have less control over our food choices than we realize?

**A:** Right. Exercising personal responsibility when confronted with mountains of tasty, cheap food is pretty tough. That's why we need policies to make the healthy choice the easy, less expensive, and preferred choice.



Pizza Hut sells a heap of calories—mostly white flour and saturated fat—for cheap.





Celebrities like Steve Carell make Pepsi ads entertaining.

**Q: What would make the healthier choice the easier choice?**

**A:** I have a long list. I'd get companies to stop marketing to kids, stay out of public policy, stop fighting public health measures, pay for the health and environmental damage caused by their products, and stop taking subsidies.

Also, companies get to deduct the costs of marketing as business expenses. So taxpayers are effectively subsidizing the cost of marketing sugary cereals, cookies, salty snacks, and other junk food to kids. That needs to stop.

**WHY WE'RE CONFUSED**

**Q: How does the food industry confuse people about what's healthy?**

**A:** Three ways: advertising, claims on food packages without much scientific substantiation, and funding research to produce results that can be used in marketing. I wrote a whole book about this last one, *Unsavory Truth: How Food Companies Skew the Science of What We Eat*.

Industry-funded research almost always comes out in favor of whoever paid for it, and it's often used immediately in marketing.

**Q: What about supplements?**

**A:** I discussed that in detail in my book *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health*. The supplement industry is notorious for funding studies that show benefits. But rigorously designed studies with no industry funding are less likely to show any effect.

The great anomaly is that half of American adults take supplements, but hardly any research shows that they make healthy people healthier.

**Q: Why aren't supplements more tightly regulated?**

**A:** A 1994 law called the Dietary Sup-

plement Health and Education Act paved the way for companies to market supplements more successfully. The law requires the FDA to prove that a product is unsafe before the agency can take it

off the market. And consumers have no way of knowing if the product is effective or even if it contains what its label says. Caveat emptor, indeed.

**SAFE, SUSTAINABLE FOOD**

**Q: Why can't we keep food free of Salmonella, E. coli, and other germs?**

**A:** We know how to produce food safely, but it requires deep diligence and commitment. Right now, the big concern is vegetables. If they are grown near where animals are being raised, that increases the risk of contamination with pathogens. We see examples of that over and over.

**Q: How does industrial agriculture harm the planet?**

**A:** In many ways. For example, industrial animal production dumps fecal waste into the environment in enormous amounts. I just saw a figure that 2,500 dairy cows produce as much waste as a city of 400,000 people.

A city treats its waste before sending it back into water supplies. Concentrated animal feeding operations don't have to treat their waste, which may eventually end up in our waterways. They should.

**Q: What about growing food crops?**

**A:** We're talking monoculture—that is, using huge swaths of land to grow a single crop, like corn or soybeans. These crops are treated with massive amounts of fertilizer and pesticides. Nitrogen and

phosphorus from fertilizers and manure get into water supplies, where algae love them and take over. Hence the Gulf of Mexico's dead zone. We badly need the political will to fix these problems.

**Q: What would make our food supply more safe, sustainable, and equitable?**

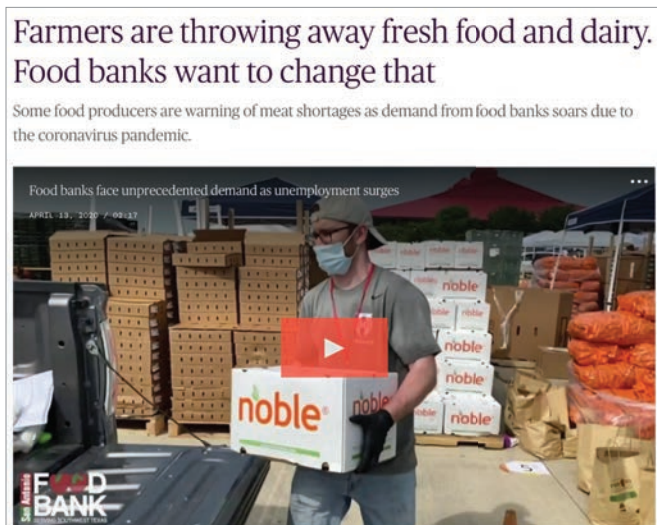
**A:** We need a systems change. We need to get money out of politics, to publicly support elections, and to create a Wall Street culture that insists on corporate social values like protecting workers and the environment. And we need to insist that everyone in the food system be paid decently and have access to decent food, education, and health care.

If we don't advocate for these things, we won't ever get them.

**Q: What has the coronavirus revealed about our food system?**

**A:** The pandemic has made it obvious that the system is flawed. Farmers have destroyed food that they couldn't sell while people line up at food pantries.

The system is inequitable. "Essential" meatpacking workers are expected to work in crowded and dangerous con-



The pandemic has highlighted the failings of our food system.

ditions, with low pay and often with no paid sick leave.

On the hopeful side, the pandemic has led people to do more gardening and cooking and has created a clear agenda for advocacy. We know we need a fairer, more equitable, healthier, and more sustainable food system. Let's get to work on it! 🍌


# The Healthy Cook

## Salad-in-Waiting



Planning a holiday meal? This bright, crunchy salad can hang out in the fridge while you're putting the finishing touches on the other dishes. 🍊

### Citrus & Winter Greens Salad

 SERVES 8

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>2 clementines or 1 orange</li><li>1 lemon</li><li>1 small shallot, minced</li><li>1 tsp. dijon mustard</li><li>2 Tbs. mayonnaise</li><li>2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil</li><li>¼ tsp. kosher salt</li><li>freshly ground black pepper, to taste</li><li>10 cups winter greens (a mix of chopped kales and shredded cabbages)</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Into a large bowl, grate enough clementine or orange rind to get 1 Tbs. zest. Peel the fruit, then cut into slices.</li><li>2. Into the same bowl, grate enough lemon rind to get 1 tsp. zest. Juice enough lemon to get 1½ Tbs. juice. Add the juice to the bowl along with the shallot, mustard, mayo, oil, salt, and pepper. Whisk until smooth and creamy.</li><li>3. Toss the greens in the dressing until coated.</li><li>4. Transfer the greens to a serving bowl and add the clementine or orange slices. Refrigerate until ready to serve.</li></ul> |
|--|--|

PER SERVING (1 cup): calories 80 | total fat 6 g | sat fat 1 g | carbs 7 g | fiber 2 g | total sugar 4 g | added sugar 0 g | protein 1 g | sodium 110 mg

Photo: Kate Sherwood & Jennifer Urban/CSPI

For more holiday recipes

Go to [nutritionaction.com/dressing](https://nutritionaction.com/dressing) for Mushroom Lentil Dressing, Make-Ahead Turkey Gravy, & more

Cooking questions?

Write to Chef Kate at [healthycook@cspinet.org](mailto:healthycook@cspinet.org)



# Super Bowls

## The best entrées in the freezer case

BY LINDSAY MOYER & KAAMILAH MITCHELL

When pandemic lockdowns hit last spring, frozen food sales skyrocketed. Need to replenish your stockpile for the winter? Think bowls.

Why? They're full of the healthiest stuff in the freezer case. "Bowl" is often code for jazzed-up whole grains and vegetables plus beans, lentils, or chicken. Here are the best of the best.

### THE BEST BOWLS

Our Best Bites and Honorable Mentions have:

- **Whole grains.** Their grains are all or mostly whole. As for potatoes, only meals with nutrient-rich sweets made the cut. "Grains" made of riced vegetables? Of course!
- **Sodium.** Best Bites have 450 milligrams or less. Honorable Mentions can go up to 600 mg. That's high, but it sure beats healthy-looking bowls that pile on the salt.
- **Saturated fat.** Our limit (3 grams) leaves little room for cheese, fatty red meat, or coconut, but plenty for nuts, seeds, and unsaturated plant oils.
- **Added sugars.** For most bowls, it's a non-issue. But some have enough honey, sugar, or apple juice concentrate to supply more than 5 grams (about 1 teaspoon). That's 10 percent of the Daily Value. In a savory meal, who needs it? So they missed a Best Bite or Honorable Mention.

### Rabbit Food Redux

"Some people call veggies rabbit food," says **Fat Rabbit**. "Not me. My veggies are smashed, slashed, roasted, toasted, sauced, and tossed until they're blasting with color and bursting with flavor."

And rabbits don't lie.

The vegetarian brand is breaking new ground. Take Honorable Mention **Green Riot Verde** (cauliflower, roasted peppers, roasted corn, beans, spinach, quinoa, pumpkin seeds). Or Best Bite **Lemon Feta Frenzy** (roasted zucchini, roasted sweet potatoes, broccoli, chickpeas, quinoa, yellow lentils). Delish.

The other varieties, which didn't miss an Honorable Mention by much, are also worth checking out. So hop to it!

### The Power of Choice



Take your pick. That's the selling point for **Healthy Choice Power Bowls**. Aside from a handful with too much sugar, the line is a solid source of yummy Honorable Mentions (more than a dozen!), plus one Best Bite.

Why so good? Most are jam-packed with vegetables, legumes, or chicken, plus whole grains like brown rice, red rice, red quinoa, and black barley. Some Power newbies:

- **Grain-free.** Three Honorable Mentions swap starch for riced (finely chopped) cauliflower. Nice! Try the **Chicken Marinara** or **Spicy Black Bean & Chicken**.
- **Plant-based.** Say hello to nutrient-packed staples like broccoli, kale, chard, and spinach, with protein from lentils, chickpeas, edamame, and pumpkin seeds. Our taste buds preferred those "Vegan" and "Vegetarian" bowls over the two new "Meatless" bowls made with Gardein Chick'n or Be'f.

### Go Lean?

Competitor **Healthy Choice** won plenty of Best Bites and Honorable Mentions. Why didn't **Lean Cuisine**, or spinoff **Life Cuisine**?

Salt, mostly. Meals labeled "healthy" can have no more than 600 milligrams of sodium. There's no "lean" limit. Many Cuisines hit 800 to 900 mg. Ouch.

Some varieties do better. **Korean Style Rice & Vegetables**, Lean Cuisine's sole Best Bite, turns up the flavor with shiitakes, miso, garlic, ginger, and gochujang. (Memo to headquarters: Why only one "plant powered" bowl?)

The **Spice Market Chicken & Cauliflower** (lentils, chicken, riced cauliflower), with 650 mg of sodium, just misses an Honorable Mention. But its 1½ cups of vegetables make it a standout. Many frozen entrées have no more than ½ cup.



## A Protein Pair

Whether they need more or not, shoppers are clamoring for protein. And whether it comes from meat or plants, plenty of brands deliver. Two of the best:

### ■ Green Giant Protein Bowls.

These meat-free meals lean on lentils, edamame, or black, cannellini, or kidney beans to tally up 12 to 14 grams of protein. But their hearty whole grains—like spelt or wheat berries—steal the show. Instead of taking about 30 minutes to cook from scratch, they emerge from your microwave in just six. Ta-da!



■ **CedarLane Protein Bowls.** It's not just that each CedarLane bowl has enough chicken to pump up the protein (to 19 to 22 grams). The chicken is also a crowd pleaser. It's got a fresh-cooked texture that could fool anyone who didn't see it come out of a box. And it's

raised with no antibiotics. Bravo!

Tahini, yogurt, and lemon or olives brighten up the **Chicken Shawarma** (an Honorable Mention) and the **Chicken Souvlaki** (a near miss). Mmm.

## A Top Performer

How does the **Luvo** "Performance Kitchen" whip up more Best Bites than any other brand?

First, every bowl has no more than 500 milligrams of sodium. That's almost unheard of. Luvo cuts some salt with potassium chloride, but also gets a lift from real ingredients like the shiitakes, pineapple, mango, ginger, and garlic in the **Hawaiian Un-Fried Rice**.

Second, the whole-grain-rich lineup looks to legumes, nuts, or chicken—raised without antibiotics—for its protein.

Health-wise and taste-wise, even the near misses impress. The **Creamy Cauliflower Mac & Cheese** (with cheesy butternut sauce) and the **Thai-style Green Curry Chicken** (with brown rice noodles) trounce the cheesy pastas and coconut curries you'll find in competing brands. Gotta Luvo it!



## More without Meat

Going vegetarian or flexitarian? Meat-free standbys Kashi and Amy's are a good place to start.

■ **Kashi Plant-Powered Bowls.** Three of the five (vegan) bowls get Best Bites. **Creamy Cashew Noodle** or **Black Bean Mango**, anyone?



■ **Amy's.** Alas, most of Amy's bowls are too salty or cheesy to get high marks. But don't overlook her best stuff: the **Brown Rice & Vegetables** (which you can also get "Light in Sodium"), the **Black-Eyed Peas and Veggies**, the **Light & Lean Quinoa & Black Beans**, and the new **Mexican Inspired Veggies & Black Beans**, which comes covered with a creamy chipotle cashew sauce.

## Keep it Simple

**Power Bowls** aren't the whole ballgame from **Healthy Choice**. The company's **Simply** line also brings winners to the table.

Simply upgrades the classics. That includes everything from lightened-up

**Meatball Marinara** (with mostly whole-grain penne) and **Grilled Chicken & Broccoli Alfredo** (sans spaghetti) to **Chicken Tikka Masala** (with riced cauliflower).



## Bowl Basics

■ **Veg out.** The healthiest diets have about 10 (half-cup) servings of fruits and vegetables a day. So slice up a veggie or toss a salad while the microwave is doing its thing.

■ **Don't overcook.** Start with the low end of the cook time. Once broccoli gets mushy, there's no going back.

■ **Be patient.** If the instructions say to let your microwaved bowl sit for a minute before digging in, do it. It helps hot spots dissipate and your food finish cooking.

■ **Mix it up.** Don't see the sauce? Check the bottom.

■ **Make it yours.** If your bowl needs a little something, try ground black pepper, a few drops of hot sauce, a squeeze of fresh lemon, or a dollop of plain Greek yogurt. 🍋



# Going Bowling

**Best Bites** (✓✓) and **Honorable Mentions** (✓) have no white potatoes, and any grains are 100% or mostly whole. We disqualified bowls with more than 5 grams of added sugars (marked with an \*) or more than 3 grams of saturated fat. Best Bites contain no more than 450 milligrams of sodium. Honorable Mentions can have up to 600 mg. Bowls are ranked from least to most sodium, then least to most sat fat, then most to least protein, then least to most calories.

	Calories	Saturated Fat (g)	Protein (g)	Sodium (mg)
<b>Bowls with whole grains or no grains</b>				
✓✓ Amy's Light in Sodium Brown Rice & Vegetables	320	2	10	220
✓✓ Kashi Black Bean Mango	310	1	9	250
✓✓ Kashi Sweet Potato Quinoa	270	1	9	280
Luvo Thai-style Green Curry Chicken	280	4.5	15	290
Luvo Tomato Basil Pasta with Chicken Meatballs	340	4	17	300
Kashi Mayan Harvest Bake*	330	1.5	10	320
✓✓ Luvo Hawaiian Un-fried Rice	280	1.5	8	320
✓✓ Amy's Light & Lean Quinoa & Black Beans	240	0	10	330
✓✓ Luvo Orange Mango Chicken	250	1	13	350
✓✓ Healthy Choice Simply Unwrapped Burrito	270	1	9	350
✓✓ Luvo Quinoa & Veggie Enchilada Verde	330	1.5	10	350
✓✓ Luvo So Cal Kale & Bean	300	0.5	10	360
✓✓ Evol Balance	460	3	13	390
✓✓ Healthy Choice Power Cauliflower Curry	290	0.5	14	400
✓✓ Kashi Creamy Cashew Noodle	360	2.5	15	400
Luvo Creamy Cauliflower Mac & Cheese	350	4	11	400
✓✓ Red's Riced Cauliflower Chicken Cilantro & Lime	180	1	15	410
Healthy Choice Power Mango Edamame*	370	1.5	10	430
✓✓ Lean Cuisine Korean Style Rice & Vegetables	370	1	12	450
✓✓ Fat Rabbit Lemon Feta Frenzy	230	1	10	450
Amy's Greek Inspired Red Rice & Veggies	500	5	9	450
Healthy Choice Power Be'f & Vegetable Stir Fry*	290	1	16	460
✓ Luvo Mie Goreng	270	0	12	480
✓ Fat Rabbit Green Riot Verde	240	1	12	480
✓ Healthy Choice Simply Grilled Basil Chicken	230	1	19	490
✓ Luvo Ginger Miso	310	1	13	490
✓ Healthy Choice Simply Meatball Marinara	280	2.5	18	490
Fat Rabbit Smoky Molé Madness	270	3.5	11	490
✓ Green Giant Protein Southwest Style	260	0	12	500
✓ CedarLane Paleo Lemon Thyme Chicken	200	0.5	18	500
✓ Healthy Choice Power Chipotle Chick'n	280	1	19	510
✓ Healthy Choice Café Steamers Mexican-Style Street Corn	240	2	18	510
✓ Healthy Choice Power Green Goddess	330	2	18	510
✓ Healthy Choice Café Steamers Tortellini Primavera Parmesan	260	2.5	10	510
Fat Rabbit Orange Cauliflower Renegade*	260	1	11	530
Fat Rabbit Harvest Hooligan*	270	1	10	530
Healthy Choice Power White Bean & Feta*	470	2.5	16	530
✓ Green Giant Protein California Style	290	1.5	14	540
✓ Sweet Earth Kyoto Stir Fry	300	1.5	12	550
✓ Sweet Earth Butter Chik'n	240	2	16	550

	Calories	Saturated Fat (g)	Protein (g)	Sodium (mg)
✓ CedarLane Paleo Adobo Chicken	190	2.5	20	550
✓ Healthy Choice Simply Beef & Red Chili Sauce	270	2.5	17	550
✓ Healthy Choice Simply Chicken Tikka Masala	190	1	17	560
Healthy Choice Grain Free Power Spicy Beef Teriyaki*	180	1.5	18	560
✓ Healthy Choice Power Buddha Bowl	320	2	13	570
Green Giant Protein Asian Style*	280	1	14	580
Healthy Choice Simply Chicken Fried Rice*	320	1.5	23	580
✓ Amy's Mexican Inspired Veggies & Black Beans	270	1.5	9	580
✓ Green Giant Protein Italian Style	240	2	13	580
✓ Sweet Earth Filipino Adobo Chik'n	170	0.5	12	590
✓ CedarLane Protein Chicken Fajita	300	1	19	590
✓ Red's Riced Cauliflower Chickpea Paella	230	1	5	590
✓ Amy's Brown Rice & Vegetables	320	1.5	10	590
✓ Amy's Black-Eyed Peas and Veggies	290	1.5	9	590
✓ CedarLane Protein Chicken Shawarma	310	2	22	590
✓ Healthy Choice Simply Mediterranean-Style Lentil	250	0.5	13	600
✓ CedarLane Vegetarian Falafel	280	1	11	600
✓ Healthy Choice Simply Chana Masala	250	1	9	600
✓ Healthy Choice Power Falafel & Tahini	360	1.5	11	600
✓ Healthy Choice Power—with beef, chicken, or pork <sup>1</sup>	320	2	21	600
✓ Healthy Choice Grain Free Power—except Spicy Beef Teriyaki <sup>1</sup>	220	2	20	600
✓ Healthy Choice Simply Grilled Chicken & Broccoli Alfredo	190	2.5	28	600
✓ Healthy Choice Simply Grilled Chicken Pesto & Vegetables	200	2.5	28	600
CedarLane Protein Chicken Souvlaki	300	3	22	620
Lean Cuisine Unwrapped Chicken Burrito	340	3.5	24	620
Lean Cuisine Spice Market Chicken & Cauliflower	220	1	20	650
Birds Eye Fiesta Chicken	210	1	17	660
Amy's Harvest Casserole	360	1.5	17	660
Birds Eye Garlic Chicken	290	2.5	21	720
Lean Cuisine Balsamic Glazed Chicken*	370	2	25	890
<b>Bowls with refined grains or white potatoes</b>				
Kashi Chimichurri Quinoa	240	1	10	330
Gardein Chick'n Fajita	250	0	15	360
SmartMade Lemon Garlic Chicken Fettuccine	200	1	20	600
CedarLane Protein 3 Layer Chicken Enchilada	300	4.5	19	650
Life Cuisine Ricotta & Spinach Meatless Meatballs Pasta	280	4	14	730
Life Cuisine Vermont White Cheddar Mac & Broccoli	420	9	20	790
Lean Cuisine Mango Chicken with Coconut Rice*	360	4	21	800

✓✓ Best Bite. ✓ Honorable Mention. \* Contains more than 5 grams of added sugars. <sup>1</sup>Average of the entire line or the varieties listed.

**Daily protein target:** 85 grams. **Daily Values** (for a 2,000-calorie diet): **Saturated fat:** 20 grams. **Sodium:** 2,300 milligrams. **Added sugars:** 50 grams.

Sources: company information and Label Insight. The use of information from this article for commercial purposes is strictly prohibited without written permission from CSPI.



## FOOD FIND

### Coolrabi



Kale, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts. It seems like just about every cruciferous vegetable has had its moment.

Not quite.

Next in line: **kohlrabi**, the oddball green (or purple) vegetable that's full of surprises.

**It's mild and crunchy.** Sweet-yet-peppery kohlrabi tastes like a grab bag of its cruciferous cousins; think broccoli stalks, radishes, turnips.

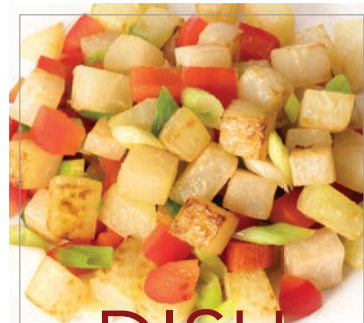
**It tastes great raw.** The fibrous skin that surrounds kohlrabi's insides is tough. Simply remove it with a paring knife or serrated peeler to reveal the edible bulb inside. Then grate some into your favorite slaw. (If you haven't tried carrot and apple with a Greek yogurt dressing, you're in for a treat.) Or cut the bulb into large matchsticks for your hummus plate.

**It's delicious cooked.** Try our Dish of the Month. Or cut a bulb into wedges, toss with olive oil, roast at 425°F for 30 minutes, then sprinkle with grated parmesan.

**It may be a twofer.** If you score a fresh bulb with its leaves intact from a farmers market, cut off the leaves and store them separately in the fridge (they should last for a few days). Eat them cooked or raw and thinly shredded in salads, just like kale or any other green leafy.

Each cup of the raw bulb—just 35 calories—delivers a nice dose of potassium and fiber, plus nearly a day's vitamin C.

Is kohlrabi cool enough for you yet?



## DISH of the month

### Kohlrabi Home Fries

Sauté 3 cups chopped kohlrabi in 1 Tbs. olive oil until lightly browned, 5–7 min. Add 1 chopped red bell pepper and 1 bunch chopped scallions. Sauté for 1 min. Season with ¼ tsp. salt. Serves 2.

Photos: p1ppphoto/stock.adobe.com (left), Frito-Lay (right), Kate Sherwood/CSPI (bottom).

## FOOD FAIL



### No Cheating

"We've seen incredible culinary creativity from our **Cheetos** fans through the years, taking our product and using [it] as an actual ingredient in recipes," said the **Frito-Lay** [press release](#).

If you haven't had the incredible creativity to add Cheetos to your lasagna, tuna casserole, or meatloaf, no worries! **Cheetos Mac 'n Cheese** brings you pasta with, well, *essence* of Cheetos.

Take the **Flamin' Hot**.

Nothing like a bowl of white flour, palm oil, whey, salt, cheese, corn syrup solids, sugar, MSG, red & yellow dyes, disodium guanylate, disodium inosinate, sodium diacetate, and more.

All those sodiums mean 730 milligrams in a 320-calorie serving (about a cup of pasta plus sauce). The **Bold & Cheesy** and **Cheesy Jalapeño** flavors will do roughly the same damage to your blood pressure.

"Shoppers have been stocking up on salty snacks and macaroni and cheese during the coronavirus pandemic, and now there's a single product line to satisfy both cravings," [Ad Age magazine](#) helpfully noted.

The pandemic also gave **Kraft** an excuse to push its **Macaroni & Cheese** for breakfast.

"It's the same Mac they love, but 100% more breakfastier. Because you 100% need a break," says the [ad](#). "For the win win."

Whose win, exactly?

[cheetos.com](http://cheetos.com)—(800) 352-4477

[kraftmacandcheese.com](http://kraftmacandcheese.com)—(800) 847-1997



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