Are You Getting Creamed?

BY JAYNE HURLEY & BONNIE LIEBMAN

Maybe you only use plain coffee creamer at the office, pouring in just enough to make your java look and taste creamy. Or perhaps you indulge in hazelnut, French vanilla, toffee nut, amaretto, Irish crème, crème brûlée, or some other flavored creamer.

Either way, you may not realize how much saturated fat, trans fat, sugar, or calories you're pouring into your mug. And the labels intend to keep it that way.

What's more, the serving sizes listed on creamer containers are designed to whiten a 6-ounce cup of coffee. That's a teacup. Most mugs hold 8 to 12 ounces. At Starbucks, you can only get a "short" (8 oz.) if you know to ask for it. The menu board starts with a "tall" (12 oz.) and ends with a "venti" (20 oz.).

By the time you consider large mugs, imprecise pouring, and seconds or thirds, you may be getting much more from that creamer than you think.

Information compiled by Danielle Hazard.

Calories from ra

Calories/Calorías 10

Total Fat/Grasa Total 0.5g

Trans Fat/Grasa Trans 00

runsaturated Fat/G

Saturated Fat/Grasa Saturada 0.5 g

Original Sin

With just 10 calories and 0.5 grams of saturated fat per serving, Nestlé Original Coffee-mate powder doesn't look bad.

That's partly because of rounding. According to Nestlé, each teaspoon has 14.83 calories (the label rounds it down to 10) and 0.99 grams of saturated fat (rounded down to

0.5 grams, but the company won't say why). A small serving size—one level unt Per Serving/Cantidau

teaspoon—also makes Coffeemate look good. That's less than % Daily Value* the serving for flavored creamer

> powders—at least one tablespoon. Use a tablespoon (three teaspoons) of Original

Coffee-mate powder and you're up to 45 calories and 3 grams of sat fat. That's more than the 40 calories and

2.1 grams of sat fat in two tablespoons of half & half. You'd never know it from Coffee-mate's label.

The label shows just ½ gram of sat fat, but it's worse than half & half.

Trans Break?

Coffee-mate powders have little or no trans fat because they're made with partially hydrogenated coconut and palm kernel oils. (Those oils are so saturated that even though they're partially hydrogenated, the trans is negligible.)

But many office-supply company brands are made with partially hydrogenated soybean or canola oil. And that means trans fat—probably a gram or so in every tablespoon, even though the label may list 0 grams per teaspoon.



Avoid creamers with partially hydrogenated soy or canola oil.

No Freebie

Fat Free Original Coffee-mate powder looks like a freebie.

According to the Nutrition Facts panel, it has just 10 calories and no saturated or trans fat. No wonder many people just pour it into their coffee. Why hold back?

Here's why. If a food has less than

Mit Per Serving/Cantidad por

Saturated Fat/Grasa Saturada 0 g

Total Fat /Grasa Total 00

Trans Fat/Grasa Trans Oo

caturated Fall

0.5 grams of fat (trans, sat, or total)

per serving, labels can round the number to zero. Calories/Calorias 10 Calories from Fa But if that % Daily Value

serving is small, you could end up with enough fat to

The best powder, but

the sat fat adds up.

matter.

The serving size for Original Coffee-mate powder—one level teaspoon—is puny. It's less than the serving sizes for powdered creamers with flavors like French vanilla or hazelnut (about one tablespoon).

What if you use more than a teaspoon of Fat Free Original Coffeemate? You can't just multiply the fat numbers on the label, because any number times zero equals zero.

According to unrounded numbers that Nestlé gave us, a flat teaspoon has 0.27 grams of saturated fat. Now you can do the math.

If you pour, say, two tablespoons into your 12 oz. mug of coffee, you're drinking 1.6 grams of sat fat. And if you drink three mugs a day, you're downing almost 5 grams of sat fat—a quarter of a day's worth.

If you use a powdered creamer, Fat Free Original Coffee-mate is your best bet. But a freebie, it isn't.



Liquid trans, despite zeros on the label.

0 + 0 = 4.62

Powdered Coffee-mate is made with coconut and palm kernel oils, so it has saturated fat but little or no trans fat.

But *liquid* Coffee-mate—Original or flavored—is worse. It's made with partially hydrogenated soybean and/or cottonseed oil. And that means trans. So how can the label say 0 grams of trans fat (and 0 grams of sat fat) in a one-tablespoon serving?

It's rounding. According to Nestlé, a tablespoon of the Irish Crème, Toffee Nut, or other flavors (except Fat Free and Sugar Free) has 0.46 grams of trans plus 0.31 grams of sat fat. Both round down to zero on the label.

But what if you use the same two-tablespoon serving that's on half & half labels? And what if you have three 12 oz. mugs during the day? Here's what: 1.86 grams of sat fat plus 2.76 grams of trans—close to a quarter of your day's quota for bad fat and more than a day's worth of trans. Experts recommend as little trans as possible, and no more than 2 grams a day.

And you thought French Vanilla Coffee-mate was good news for your heart.

Not Calorie-Free

Unlike liquid Coffee-mate, International Delight has no trans fat because it's made with non-hydrogenated palm oil. But it does have saturated fat—around 2 grams in two tablespoons. That's about as much as ordinary half & half.

But the half & half has just 40 calories, while the International Delight has about twice that much. (Like Coffee-mate, International Delight's label uses

International Delight has no trans fat.

one tablespoon, but there's no reason to think you'd use less creamer than cream.)

It's the added sugar that boosts the calories. You can cut them to 40 by switching to Sugar Free International Delight. But both flavors (Hazelnut and French Vanilla) are made with the poorly tested artificial sweetener acesulfame potassium. (So is Sugar Free Coffee-mate.)

Your best bet: If you want flavor in your coffee, try the only fat-free International Delight (French Vanilla). It's got no trans, little or no sat fat, and 60 calories in two tablespoons.

Just think twice about going back for a second—or third—cup.



Gream, Please Gase

Best Bites (***/***) have no partially hydrogenated oil (which means no trans fat) and no more than 0.6 grams of saturated fat per serving. Our numbers may not match the labels because we increased some serving sizes. Creamers are ranked from least to most bad fat (sat plus trans), then calories. Milk numbers (*in italics*) are for comparison.

| | Tbs.) | Sat Fat | Trans F | Sat Tan |
|--|-------|---------|---------|---------|
| Liquid Creamers and Half & Half (2 | Tbs.) | Sat | Trans | te de |
| International Delight Fat Free | 60 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Land O'Lakes Half & Half, Fat Free | 20 | 0.3* | 0.0 | 0.3* |
| Coffee-mate The Original, Fat Free | 15 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 0.4 |
| Coffee Rich | 25 | 0.3 | 0.1 | 0.4 |
| Coffee-mate The Original, Low Fat | 20 | 0.2 | 0.3 | 0.5 |
| ✓✓ Silk Creamer ¹ | 30 | 0.5* | 0.0 | 0.5* |
| Coffee-mate flavored, Fat Free ¹ | 50 | 0.2 | 0.3 | 0.5 |
| ✓✓ Milk—fat-free, 1%, 2%, or whole | 10-20 | 0-0.6 | 0.0 | 0-0.6 |
| Land O'Lakes Half & Half, Low Fat | 25 | 1.0 | 0.0 | 1.0 |
| Coffee-mate flavored, Sugar Free ^{1#} | 30 | 0.5 | 0.6 | 1.1 |
| Coffee-mate The Original | 35 | 0.4 | 0.7 | 1.1 |
| Coffee-mate flavored ¹ | 65 | 0.6 | 0.9 | 1.5 |
| International Delight Sugar Free ^{1#} | 40 | 1.6* | 0.0 | 1.6* |
| Land O'Lakes Half & Half, Traditional | 40 | 2.1* | 0.0 | 2.1* |
| International Delight ¹ | 85 | 2.2* | 0.0 | 2.2* |
| Powdered Creamers (1 Tbs. unless no | oted) | | | |
| Coffee-mate flavored, Fat Free (4 tsp.)1 | 50 | 0.5 | 0.0 | 0.5 |
| Coffee-mate The Original, Fat Free | 25 | 0.8 | 0.0 | 0.8 |
| Coffee-mate The Original, Lite | 25 | 0.9 | 0.0 | 0.9 |
| Coffee-mate flavored (4 tsp.) ¹ | 60 | 2.5 | 0.0 | 2.5 |
| Coffee-mate flavored, Sugar Free ^{1#} | 30 | 2.5 | 0.1 | 2.6 |
| Coffee-mate The Original | 45 | 3.0 | 0.1 | 3.1 |

✓✓ Best Bite. ¹Average. [#]Contains acesulfame potassium.
*CSPI estimate.

Daily Limits (for a 2,000-calorie diet): Saturated + Trans Fat: 20 grams.

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Guilt-Free

How can you have fat-free half & half?

Land O'Lakes (and some store brands) have figured it out. Fat Free Half & Half is not exactly a dead ringer for the real thing, but it sure beats fat-free milk in your coffee. And it'll cost you only 20 calories in two tablespoons.

If your taste buds are still hankering for cream, try Land O'Lakes Low Fat Half & Half. It has more sat fat (1 gram in two tablespoons) than fat-free half & half (0.3 grams), but less than regular (2.1 grams).

Bonus: Fat Free Half & Half works in some recipes that call for regular half & half.



Close to a free lunch (or a free cup of coffee).