

fact file **The 20 worst foods in America**

The U.S. food industry has declared war on your waistline. Here's how to disarm its weapons of mass inflation

Eat at your own risk

By: **Matt Goulding**, [Men's Health magazine](#)

Sure, a turkey burger sounds healthy. But is it, really? Not if you order the Bella from Ruby Tuesday, which packs a whopping 1,145 calories. (And yes, that's before a side of fries.)

To further enlighten you on the prevalence of preposterous portions, we spent months analyzing menus, nutrition labels, and ingredient lists to identify the food industry's worst offenders. Our primary criterion? Sheer caloric impact. After all, it's the top cause of weight gain and the health problems that accompany it. (As you read, keep in mind that 2,500 calories a day is a reasonable intake for the average guy.) We also factored in other key nutritional data, such as excessive carbohydrates and fat, added sugars, trans fats, and sodium. The result is our first annual list of the worst foods in America.



Eat at your own risk.

20: Worst fast-food chicken meal

Chicken Selects Premium Breast Strips from McDonald's (5 pieces) with creamy ranch sauce

- 830 calories
- 55 grams (g) fat (4.5 g trans fat)
- 48 g carbohydrates

The only thing "premium" about these strips is the caloric price you pay. Add a large fries and regular soda and this seemingly innocuous chicken meal tops out at 1,710 calories.

Change Your Chicken: 20 McNuggets have the same impact. Instead, choose Mickey D's six-piece offering with BBQ sauce and save yourself 530 calories.

19: Worst drink

Jamba Juice Chocolate Moo'd Power Smoothie (30 fl oz)

- 900 calories 10 g fat
- 183 g carbs (166 g sugar)

Jamba Juice calls it a smoothie; we call it a milk shake. In fact, this beverage contains as much sugar as 8 pints of Ben & Jerry's butter pecan ice cream.

Turn Down the Power: Seventy-five percent of this chain's "power smoothies" contain in excess of 100 grams of sugar. Stick to Jamba's lower-calorie All Fruit Smoothies, which are the only menu items that contain no added sugar. And always opt for the 16-ounce "small."

18: Worst supermarket meal

Pepperidge Farm Roasted Chicken Pot Pie (whole pie)

- 1,020 calories 64 g fat
- 86 g carbs

The label may say this pie serves two, but who ever divided a small pot pie in half? The sad truth is, once you crack the crust, there will be no stopping -- which makes this 300 calories worse than anything else you'll find in the freezer case.

Pick a Better Pie: Swanson's chicken pot pie has just 400 calories.

17: Worst 'healthy' burger

Ruby Tuesday Bella Turkey Burger

- 1,145 calories 71 g fat
- 56 g carbs

We chose this burger for more than its calorie payload: Its name implies that it's healthy.

The Truly Healthy Choice: Skip burgers entirely (few at Ruby Tuesday come in under 1,000 calories). Instead, order a 9-ounce sirloin (just 256 calories) with a side of steamed vegetables.

16: Worst Mexican entree

Chipotle Mexican Grill Chicken Burrito

- 1,179 calories 47 g fat
- 125 g carbs
- 2,656 milligrams (mg) sodium

Despite a reputation for using healthy, fresh ingredients, Chipotle's menu is limited to king-size burritos, overstuffed tacos, and gigantic salads -- all of which lead to a humongous waistline.

Make Over the Menu: There are two ways to Men's Healthify a burrito at Chipotle: (1) 86 the rice and tortilla and request your meat, vegetables, and beans served in a bowl or (2) bring a friend and saw the burrito in half.

15: Worst kids' meal

Macaroni Grill Double Macaroni 'n' Cheese

- 1,210 calories 62 g fat
- 3,450 mg sodium

It's like feeding your kid 1 1/2 boxes of Kraft mac 'n' cheese.

Your Best Option: The 390-calorie Grilled Chicken and Broccoli.

14: Worst sandwich

Quiznos Classic Italian (large)

- 1,528 calories 92 g fat
- 4,604 mg sodium 110 g carbs

A large homemade sandwich would more likely provide about 500 calories.

Cut the Calories: Isn't it obvious? Order a small -- or save half for later.

13: Worst salad

On the Border Grande Taco Salad with Taco Beef

- 1,450 calories 102 g fat
- 78 g carbs 2,410 mg sodium

This isn't an anomaly: Five different On the Border salads on the menu contain more than 1,100 calories each.

The Salad for You: The Sizzling Chicken Fajita Salad supplies an acceptable 760 calories. But remember to choose a noncaloric beverage, such as water or unsweetened iced tea.

12: Worst burger

Carl's Jr. Double Six Dollar Burger

- 1,520 calories
- 111 g fat

Carl's Jr. brags that it's home to this enormous sandwich, but the restaurant chain also provides convenient nutrition info on its Web site -- so ignorance is no excuse for eating it.

A Simple Solution: The Low Carb Six Dollar Burger has just 490 calories.

11: Worst steak

Lonestar 20 oz T-bone

- 1,540 calories
- 124 g fat

Add a baked potato and Lonestar's Signature Lettuce Wedge, and this is a 2,700-calorie blowout.

Choose with Your Head: The golden rule of steak restaurants is this: Limit yourself to a 9-ouncer or smaller. After all, that's more than half a pound of meat. You won't walk away hungry.

10: Worst breakfast

Bob Evans Caramel Banana Pecan Cream Stacked and Stuffed Hotcakes

- 1,540 calories
- 77 g fat (9 g trans fat)
- 198 g carbs (109 g sugar)

Five Egg McMuffins yield the same caloric cost as this stack of sugar-stuffed flapjacks, which is truly a heavy breakfast, weighing in at a hefty pound and a half.

Order This Instead: A Bob Evans Western Omelet starts your day with a reasonable 654 calories and 44 grams of muscle-building protein.

9: Worst dessert

Chili's Chocolate Chip Paradise Pie with Vanilla Ice Cream

- 1,600 calories
- 78 g fat
- 215 g carbs

Would you eat a Big Mac for dessert? How about three? That's the calorie equivalent of this decadent dish. Clearly, Chili's customers get their money's worth.

Don't Overdo It: If you want dessert at Chili's, order one single-serving Sweet Shot; you'll cap your after-dinner intake at 310 calories.

8: Worst Chinese entree

P.F. Chang's Pork Lo Mein

- 1,820 calories
- 127 g fat
- 95 g carbs

The fat content in this dish alone provides more than 1,100 calories. And you'd have to eat almost five servings of pasta to match the number of carbohydrates it contains. Now, do you really need five servings of pasta?

Pick Another Noodle: P.F. Chang's Singapore Street Noodles will satisfy your craving with only 570 calories. Or try the Moo Goo Gai Pan or the Ginger Chicken & Broccoli, which have 660 calories each.

7: Worst chicken entree

Chili's Honey Chipotle Crispers with Chipotle Sauce

- 2,040 calories
- 99 g fat
- 240 g carbs

"Crispers" refers to an extra-thick layer of bread crumbs that soaks up oil and adds unnecessary calories and carbs to these glorified chicken strips.

Switch Your Selection: Order the Chicken Fajita Pita: At 450 calories and 43 grams of protein, it's one of the healthiest entrées you'll find in a chain restaurant.

6: Worst fish entree

On the Border Dos XX Fish Tacos with Rice and Beans

- 2,100 calories
- 130 g fat
- 169 g carbs 4,750 mg sodium

Perhaps the most misleadingly named dish in America: A dozen crunchy tacos from Taco Bell will saddle you with fewer calories.

Lighten the Load: Ask for grilled fish, choose the corn tortillas instead of flour (they're lower in calories and higher in fiber), and swap out the carbohydrate-loaded rice for grilled vegetables.

5: Worst pizza

Uno Chicago Grill Chicago Classic Deep Dish Pizza

- 2,310 calories
- 162 g fat
- 123 g carbs
- 4,470 mg sodium

Downing this "personal" pizza is equivalent to eating 18 slices of Domino's Crunchy Thin Crust cheese pizza.

Swap Your Slices: Switch to the Sausage Flatbread Pie and avert deep-dish disaster by nearly 1,500 calories.

4: Worst pasta

Macaroni Grill Spaghetti and Meatballs with Meat Sauce

- 2,430 calories
- 128 g fat
- 207 g carbs
- 5,290 mg sodium

This meal satisfies your calorie requirements for an entire day.

Downsize the Devastation: Ask for a lunch portion of this dinner dish (or any pasta on the menu, for that matter), and request regular tomato sauce instead of meat sauce. You'll cut the calories in half.

3: Worst nachos

On the Border Stacked Border Nachos

- 2,740 calories
- 166 g fat
- 191 g carbs
- 5,280 mg sodium

2: Worst starter

Chili's Awesome Blossom

- 2,710 calories
- 203 g fat
- 194 g carbs
- 6,360 mg sodium

1: The worst food in America

Outback Steakhouse Aussie Cheese Fries with Ranch Dressing

- 2,900 calories
- 182 g fat
- 240 g carbs

Even if you split these "starters" with three friends, you'll have downed a dinner's worth of calories before your entrée arrives.

Super Substitutions Front-load your meal with a protein-based dish that's not deep-fried. A high-protein starter helps diminish hunger without putting you into calorie overload. And remember: Appetizers are meant to be shared.

- **At On the Border:** Chicken Soft Tacos (250 calories each). This entrée is as close as you'll come to a healthy starter.
- **At Chili's:** Garlic & Lime Grilled Shrimp. Look for this item in the "sides."
- **At Outback:** Seared Ahi or Shrimp on the Barbie.

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