

Nutrition Action

APRIL 2017 \$2.50

HEALTHY BETTER®
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION
IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST



what makes us
EAT
too much

The best
**FROZEN
PIZZAS**

The latest buzz
on **exercise**

April Fools
Tricky food
labels

MEMO FROM MFJ

Evidence Matters



My career as a food watchdog began in 1970, when I started researching *Eater's Digest*, a book on food additives that was published in 1972.

When I started the project, I knew almost nothing about additives. But I suspected that something wasn't right when I saw books with names like *Poisons in Our Food* that managed to find something wrong with just about every additive in the food supply.

That might have sold books, but I had been trained as a scientist.

So I reviewed the scientific studies on additives, and I rated each one as "safe," "caution," or "avoid." To the surprise of many, the great majority of additives turned out to be safe.

As president of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, publisher of this newsletter, I'm proud that we've maintained that same respect for scientific evidence for 46 years.

We look at the science on a wide range of nutrition and food safety topics, and we base our advice on the body of facts. We do that even when our bottom line is unpopular in certain quarters, as it sometimes is with certain dietary supplements, raw milk, or ingredients from genetically engineered crops.

When the science changes (as it has with trans fat and sucralose, for example), we change our views. And we're not afraid to criticize—or praise—foods, food additives, government agencies, or manufacturers.

I believe that most people also want national policies to be based on scientific evidence and the public's wellbeing. Today, though, I'm saddened that this country seems to be headed in a different direction.

Forget about the facts. If the president

doesn't agree, it's "fake news." There's always a convenient set of "alternative facts," whether the topic is voter fraud, crime rates, the state of the economy, or climate change.

Scott Pruitt, the new administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, has made a career of suing the EPA for alleged transgressions, while listening to oil and gas executives (and raking in their campaign contributions) instead of following the facts.

And Tom Price, the new Secretary of Health and Human Services, devoted his recent years in Congress to attacking the Affordable Care Act without apparent concern

for the millions of people who would lose health care coverage if his wishes came true.

I'm not the only scientist who feels depressed that facts may no longer be guiding policy. Fortunately, some of them are organizing a major rally in Washington, DC, on Earth Day, April 22,



to demand that the president and Congress respect science.

People in roughly 300 other cities—from Honolulu to Miami and Edinburgh to Auckland—are organizing local satellite rallies and marches on the same day. (To find one near you, go to MarchForScience.com.)

If you're planning on being in Washington for the rally, I hope to see you there!

Michael F. Jacobson, Ph.D., President
[Center for Science in the Public Interest](http://CenterForScienceinthePublicInterest)

CORRECTION

In March ("More Reasons to Reduce Red Meat," p. 11), we omitted a reference to a study on peripheral artery disease. The missing reference was *Am. J. Clin. Nutr.* 2017. doi:10.3945/ajcn.116.137497.

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what makes us EAT too much

BY BONNIE LIEBMAN

A Manhattan Project

“What we want to know when we talk about why we get fat is: do [people] get fat because they take in more energy than they expend—because they overeat, because they’re sedentary?” asks Gary Taubes, author of *Why We Get Fat* and *The Case Against Sugar*.

“Or is there something happening hormonally in their bodies that’s driving them to accumulate excess fat?”

That was Taubes, in a video on the Nutrition Science Initiative (NuSI) website.

In 2012, *Forbes* called NuSI “a Manhattan Project to end the obesity epidemic.” Co-founded by Taubes, NuSI was largely financed by billionaire former hedge fund manager John Arnold and his wife, Laura.

“Our goal: Conclusive evidence in the next decade,” says NuSI’s website. Now, some of NuSI’s evidence is starting to roll in.

Is a Calorie a Calorie?

Are all calories equal? Or is the body more likely to store—rather than burn—a calorie of carbs than a calorie of fat?

That was the first question tackled by NuSI’s Energy Balance Consortium of 10 obesity experts.

The accepted explanation for weight gain “is that you become fat because you’re eating more calories than you are burning, and therefore you store the excess as body fat,” explains Kevin Hall, senior investigator at the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases.

Hall led two studies designed to answer Taubes’ question: Do carbs drive

Two out of three American adults—and one out of three children and teens—are overweight or obese. And it’s not just here.

“Since 1980, WHO estimates that the worldwide prevalence of obesity has more than doubled,” [noted](#) Margaret Chan, Director-General of the World Health Organization, in October. “This shift to population-wide obesity is occurring with terrifying speed.”

What’s driving the obesity epidemic? Here’s the latest evidence.

you to gain more body fat because they boost levels of the hormone insulin?

“The argument is that people are consuming too many carbohydrates, which drive up insulin levels in the blood,” explains Hall.

“Insulin causes the body’s fat cells to suck in too many calories, and because calories are trapped in the fat cells, the rest of the body is starving. That makes

science progresses,” notes Hall.

Opposite Results

Hall’s first study housed 19 people in a lab where they ate only the food the researchers provided. Those diets cut 800 calories either from carbs (about half of the cuts came from sugar) or from fat for one week each.¹

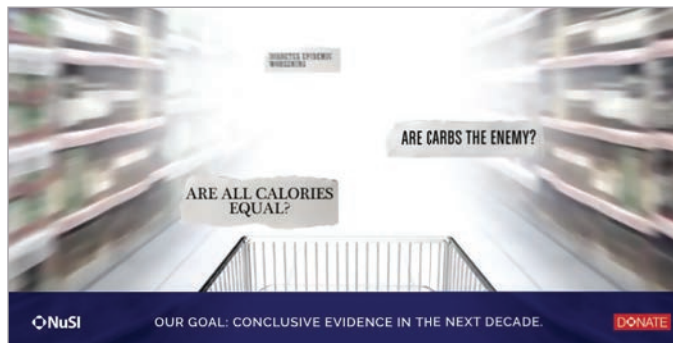
“When we cut carbs, daily insulin secretion went down,” says Hall. If the carbohydrate-insulin theory were correct, “that should have released fat from their fat cells, boosting fat loss while relieving the internal starvation and therefore causing calorie burning to go up.”

It didn’t. “The number of calories they were burning went down,” says Hall. “So we found the opposite result.” Instead of speeding

up fat loss, the low-carb diet actually slowed it down.

But that study didn’t cut carbs enough or last long enough, argued some critics. So Hall did a longer study (funded in part by NuSI) using a very-low-carb diet.²

“After one month of eating a high-sugar, high-carbohydrate diet, we cut the carbs down to 5 percent, cranked the



Carbs are not *the* enemy, say the latest studies from the Nutrition Science Initiative.

you hungrier, so you eat more calories.”

And because the body is starving, adds Hall, “it slows down its metabolic rate, so it burns fewer calories.” So cutting carbs should boost calorie burning and shrink body fat.

At least that’s the theory.

“The nice thing is that you can design experiments to test it, which is the way

fat up to 80 percent, and kept protein and calories constant,” Hall explains.

The result: “The rate of fat loss actually slowed down for the first two weeks, and then picked back up to the normal rate again for the last two weeks,” says Hall. So the low-carb diet

In studies that last a year or more, the difference in weight loss is negligible.⁴

“Sometimes you can’t see any significant difference, and sometimes you can see a few pounds difference that is clinically meaningless,” notes Hall.

The Diet-Fits Study

“This study should be able to document, for the first time ever, what happens when free-living participants maintain compliance with a very-low-fat diet and a very-low-carbohydrate diet for an entire year,” says the NuSI website.

“I couldn’t be more proud of the study,” says lead investigator Christopher Gardner, professor of medicine at Stanford University.

Gardner’s trial—called DietFits—randomly assigned 609 overweight or obese people to either a healthy low-fat diet or a healthy low-carb diet.

“We told everyone in both groups to eat as little white flour and sugar and as many higher-fiber vegetables as possible,” Gardner explains.

But the participants weren’t told to cut calories.

“If you prescribe calorie restriction, people feel deprived,” says Gardner. “So we just said, ‘Eat as low as you can on fat or carbs and don’t be hungry.’” And,

whether they cut fat or carbs, “each group reported a 500-calorie reduction.”

After a year, each group had lost an average of about 13 pounds.⁵ And, as in earlier studies, the results varied dramatically.

“Someone lost 60 pounds, someone gained 20 pounds, and we saw everything in between,” notes Gardner. “The range, which was similar in both diet groups, was stunning.”

DietFits looked to see if variations in one set of genes could explain the wide range. They didn’t.

“I’m worried that someone will say that genetics doesn’t predict weight loss,” says Gardner. “But humans have about 100 relevant gene variations, and we only looked at a combination of three.”

Other studies have also failed to find genes that explain why some people lose more weight on certain diets.

“We’ve found some statistically significant differences, but none that have a big impact,” says Frank Sacks, professor of cardiovascular disease prevention at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.⁶

Nor did it matter if people were resistant to their body’s insulin when they entered the DietFits study.

“We assumed that insulin-resistant people would do better on a low-carb diet—as they did in some earlier studies—but they didn’t,” says Gardner.



Domino’s sells a slew of calories—much of it white flour—for \$5.99.

didn’t speed fat loss.

“We did see a very slight increase in the number of calories that were being burned—57 more a day—on the very-low-carb diet,” adds Hall. But NuSI’s Energy Balance Consortium had agreed beforehand that only an increase of at least 150 calories a day would be meaningful.

“Our results add to the evidence from many other controlled feeding studies on more than 500 people,” says Hall.

Those studies failed to show that cutting carbs boosts calorie burning or fat loss more than cutting fat.³

“If anything,” says Hall, “there is a statistically significant greater fat loss and calorie burning on a low-fat diet. But the effects are so small that they’re physiologically meaningless.”

It’s still possible that a very-low-carb diet curbs dieters’ appetites. “We didn’t test that,” says Hall.

If so, that might explain why some studies report that people tend to lose more weight over the first few months when they are prescribed a low-carb diet.

“But over the long term that doesn’t seem to persist either,” says Hall.



7-Eleven started selling its Big Gulp in 1976. Soda leads to weight gain because its calories don’t register in the brain’s satiety centers.

Maybe that’s because both groups were told to eat healthy foods, he suggests. “In some older studies, when researchers told people to eat less fat,

they weren't particular about which lowfat foods. Coke and white flour and sugar are lowfat."

The full study hasn't been published yet, Gardner's team hasn't yet analyzed data looking at the participants' gut microbes, and two more NuSI studies are still in progress.

But the Arnolds are not funding new NuSI studies. If the Manhattan Project was looking for clear-cut answers, it didn't find them.

Calorie Overload

If it's not carb-fueled insulin surges that are making us—and the rest of the world—pile on the pounds, what is?

"We call it the push hypothesis," says Kevin Hall, "because we have essentially pushed this flood of calories into the food system."²

The goal, he says, was to make sure that nobody went hungry.

"Since the 1970s, we've put in place policies and improvements in agriculture to produce certain crops like corn and soy."

"And companies have come up with lots of very clever ways to engineer those cheap inputs—like high-fructose corn syrup, soybean oil, and white flour—into processed foods."

We're talking about everything from Coca-Cola and Powerade to Big Macs (from corn-fed cattle) and fries, Domino's, Cinnabon, Chipotle, and McCafé Shakes.

"We generated this wealth of cheap, convenient, palatable, highly marketed, and omnipresent foods, and we ate more as a result," says Hall.

And it's not just here. "We see the same effects throughout many nations around the world," says Hall.

The idea may have been to prevent hunger, he notes. But the result was obesity.

"If I had to place my money on what's driving obesity," says Hall, "I'd place it on the way we produce, market, and make highly palatable food available at every turn so you can't avoid it."

Mismatched Brains

So what if companies are constantly pushing us to eat and drink? Why can't we just say no?

One possibility: "The human brain evolved in a time where food was really scarce," says Ashley Gearhardt, assistant professor of psychology at the University of Michigan.

"So it's been optimized over the course

In contrast, we didn't need a defense against eating too much.

"The signals and brakes that we put on eating are pretty weak, because for most of human existence, they were completely unnecessary," says Gearhardt.

In other words, there's a mismatch between our old brains and a new world.

"In our current food environment, food is very available, and the foods that are most advertised and available have been engineered to be more potently rewarding than the foods that were available for much of human history," notes Gearhardt.

Our ancestors may have searched for berries. We can't walk through a mall without being tempted by 1,000-calorie Häagen-Dazs Banana Split Dazzlers with ice cream, fudge, whipped cream, and strawberries.

"People don't report that they can't lose weight because they can't stop eating apples or they're just eating too many beans," says Gearhardt. "The top foods we see people struggling with are pizza, chocolate, chips, cookies, ice cream, and french fries."⁸

And, except for soda, it's not just pure sugar that people crave.

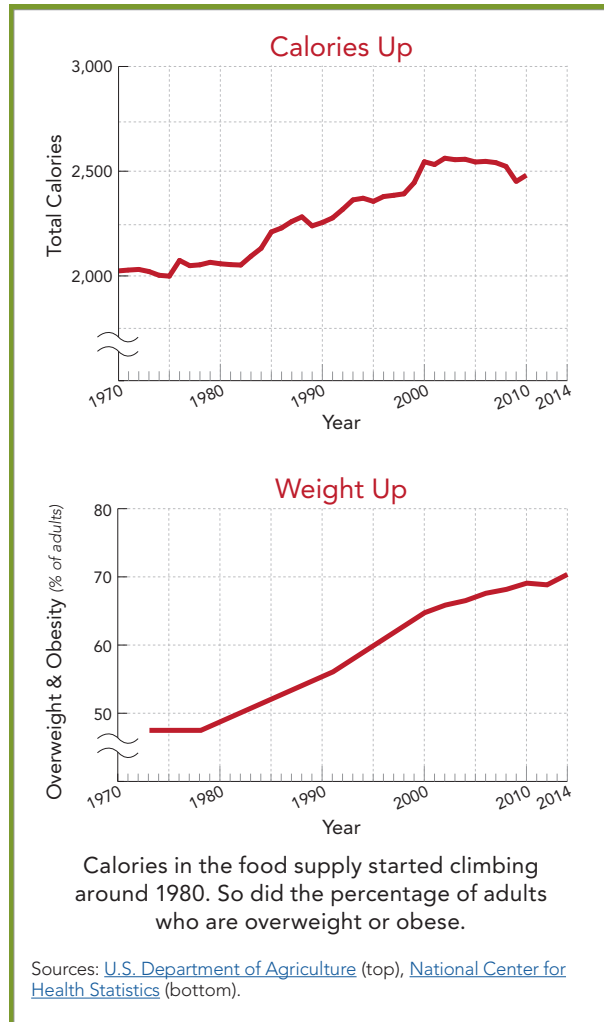
"People struggle the most with foods that have artificially high levels of fats and sugar or white flour, which often come bundled together. Plus many have flavor enhancers," notes Gearhardt.

"People don't struggle with salmon and brown rice and beans or fruits and vegetables. They'll say, 'I love strawberries or I really enjoy salmon,' but they aren't preoccupied with them."

Satiety Override

The body tries to warn the brain when we eat too much.

"Your gut sends signals telling the brain, 'Whoa, the stomach is starting to get a little distended, and I'm noticing there is enough blood sugar here, so we don't need any more calories,'" says Gearhardt.



of evolution to respond to food cues, and in particular to react to calorie-dense food. We're supposed to find foods rewarding and enticing."

That way, if we found a berry bush in the wilderness, "we'd remember how tasty the berries are and be motivated to go back to get them," explains Gearhardt. "So we have strong mechanisms in the brain to make sure we get enough calories."

“But those signals are slow, and they are more like a whisper than a yell.”

Eating a bowl of ice cream? Don’t expect that satiety signal to matter much.

“It’s going to get to your brain much slower than that immediate reward response you get every time you put another spoon of ice cream in your mouth, and it’s saying ‘Ooh, that’s good. More, more, more,’” says Gearhardt.

“The brain is saying, ‘Gosh, pay attention to that—that was awesome.’ And those reward signals are drowning out the slower, more subtle signals that the gut is sending to the brain.”

For some people, it’s even worse.

“When people who struggle with obesity or kids who are prone to weight gain look at a picture of ice cream, their brains are more responsive than those who are less at risk for obesity,” says Gearhardt.

And people who respond more to food commercials than to non-food commercials are more likely to gain weight over the next year.²



Fruits and vegetables are unlikely to override your satiety signals.

Ironically, those traits would have helped people survive in the past.

“For much of human existence, if you had a brain that said, ‘I remember where food is and I’m motivated to get it,’ you’d be more likely to pass on your genes,” notes Gearhardt.

“But because the food environment has flip-flopped, those people are now at a greater risk for health disorders that leave them with a shorter life expectancy.”

Instead, society blames them.

“The narrative is that people who are

What May Help

What can you do to resist the flood of junk food fighting for your attention?

■ **Don’t let yourself get too hungry.** If you’re too hungry, “your gut signals tell the reward system in your brain, ‘You need to really be on the lookout and respond intensely to any food cues you see,’” says Ashley Gearhardt, assistant professor of psychology at the University of Michigan. Her advice: Skip the crash diets and “focus on the quality of the food you eat.”

■ **Don’t drink your calories.** Sugary drinks—soda, sports drinks, energy drinks, or sweetened teas—lead to weight gain.

It’s not clear why. One possibility: liquid calories may not “register.” People eat only slightly less food when they drink a 150-calorie glass of cola with lunch than when they drink a zero-calorie glass of water or diet cola.¹

■ **Find foods that don’t cause war.** Hungry between meals? Try fresh fruit or carrots with hummus.

“Try to identify foods that you enjoy but that don’t cause an intense internal struggle—‘I’m only going to have one bite of this but, oh, God, I want more,’” suggests Gearhardt. “That’s exhausting. The willpower parts of our brain can only take so much.”

■ **Address your stress.** “Stress can be a huge cue,” notes Gearhardt. “Notice the emotional triggers that can set you up to crave palatable rewarding foods.”

Go for a walk, call a friend, try some meditation, or distract yourself. “The

craving will peak and then go down if you don’t give in to it,” says Gearhardt.

Why does stress take a toll?

“When we’re stressed, the executive control system in the brain—the signal to stop eating—is weakened. Stopping ourselves from doing things we want is taxing and energy intense. So when we’re stressed, there isn’t as much energy for that.”

■ **Get enough sleep.** When researchers let people sleep only four hours a



night for five days, they ate more and gained weight.²

In similar studies, “participants reported increased hunger,” says Erin Hanlon, assistant professor in the department of endocrinology, diabetes, and metabolism at the University of Chicago. “And their appetite was greatest for high-carbohydrate or high-fat foods.”

■ **Give yourself a break.** “I ask people to have some compassion for themselves, because it is really hard,” says Gearhardt. “Our food environment is set up to make it hard for people to eat healthier.”

¹ *Appetite* 44: 187, 2005.

² *Sleep* 36: 981, 2013.

struggling don’t have willpower or they just aren’t trying hard enough,” says Gearhardt. “In my clinical work and research, we see people trying so hard.”

“They’ve tried every diet under the sun, they’re willing to get surgeries and come to therapy and sign up for studies. It shows a lack of empathy and compassion to say, ‘It’s all this person’s fault,’ when it’s just a mismatch in someone’s biology and environment.” 🍌

¹ *Cell Metab.* 22: 427, 2015.

² *Am. J. Clin. Nutr.* 104: 324, 2016.

³ *Gastroenterology* 2017. doi:10.1053/j.gastro.2017.01.052.

⁴ *JAMA* 312: 923, 2014.

⁵ professional.heart.org/idc/groups/ahamhah-public/@wcm/@sop/@scon/documents/downloadable/ucm_492225.pdf.

⁶ *Diabetes* 61: 3005, 2012.

⁷ *Lancet* 378: 804, 2011.

⁸ *PLoS One* 2015. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0117959.

⁹ *Obesity* 22: 2544, 2014.

The Slow-Motion Disaster



Dr. Margaret Chan is Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO). Here are excerpts from "Obesity and diabetes: the slow-motion disaster," Chan's address to the 47th meeting of the National Academy of Medicine in October. To view the full speech, go to nam.edu/event/2016-nam-annual-meeting.

The world has 800 million chronically hungry people, but it also has countries where more than 70 percent of the adult population is obese or overweight.

Until the late 20th century, dietary issues in developing countries focused on the health consequences of undernutrition, especially stunting and wasting in children and anemia in women of child-bearing age....

That situation has changed dramatically. In just a few decades, the world has moved from a nutrition profile in which the prevalence of underweight was more than double that of obesity, to the current situation in which more people worldwide are obese than underweight.

In 1974, [a recent] study estimated that 105 million adults worldwide were obese. By 2014, the number had grown to 640 million...This is more than half a billion people....

And it is a bad situation, a slow-motion disaster.

Population-wide increases in body weight are the warning signal that big trouble is on its way....

Obesity contributes to the risk for cardiovascular diseases and some cancers. But the role of adiposity as an independent risk factor is strongest for diabetes.

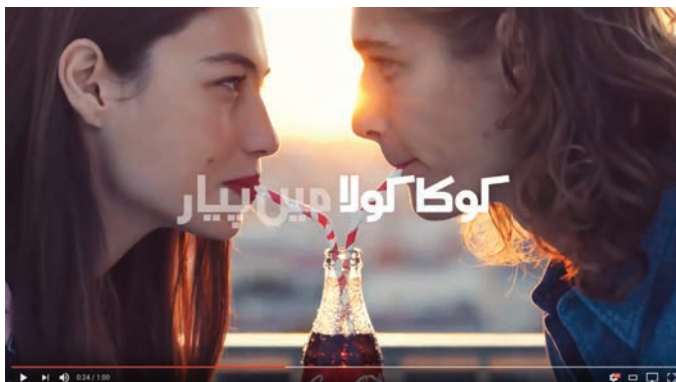
Moreover, diabetes with its costly complications, including blindness, limb amputations, and the need for dialysis, can place an extraordinary long-term burden on health budgets and house-

hold finances....

With these trends as a background, I want to make two points.

First, despite multiple efforts on multiple fronts, no country in the world has managed to turn its obesity epidemic around in all age groups.

Second, these trends ask us to think about what progress in the 21st century really means.



Coca-Cola's ads—irresistible in any language—help fuel the global obesity epidemic.

Economic growth and modernization, historically associated with better health outcomes, are actually opening wide the entry point for the globalized marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages and the switch from active to sedentary lifestyles.

For the first time in history, rapidly growing prosperity is making many previously poor people sick....

Ladies and gentlemen, diabetes is one of the biggest global health crises of the 21st century....

Each year, diabetes causes around 1.5 million deaths. High blood glucose contributes to an additional 2.2 million deaths, largely by increasing the risk

of cardiovascular disease. That means 3.7 million yearly deaths related to high glucose levels. Of these deaths, 43 percent occur prematurely, before the age of 70....

The *Lancet* 2015 obesity series points the finger at the international food system as the principal driver of the global obesity epidemic.

In addition, obesogenic environments are shaped by international trade policies, agricultural subsidies, heavy advertising, also to children, politically powerful lobbies, and money invested to distort the scientific evidence....

Following a series of high-profile mergers and acquisitions, agribusiness is now a global industrial complex operated by just a handful of large multinational corporations that control the food chain, from seeds, feed, and chemicals, to production, processing, marketing, and distribution.

The dominance and power of this industrial complex are immense. They help explain why highly processed junk food is becoming the new global food staple....

In a world full of so many uncertainties, economic, trade, and industry considerations can dominate national and international agendas and override the best interests of public health....

I have a final comment.

When crafting preventive strategies, government officials must recognize that the widespread occurrence of obesity and diabetes throughout a population is not a failure of individual willpower to resist fats and sweets or exercise more.

It is a failure of political will to take on powerful economic operators, like the food and soda industries.

If governments understand this duty, the fight against obesity and diabetes can be won. The interests of the public must be prioritized over those of corporations. 🍌

APRIL FOOLS!

BY LINDSAY MOYER & BONNIE LIEBMAN

Do you sometimes feel like every day is April 1st? In the supermarket aisles, it is.



“Just a tad sweet,” says **Honest Tea Pomegranate Blue Flavored Herbal Tea**. A tad? The bottle has about 100 calories’ worth of sugar—a day’s limit for women, according to the American Heart Association. At least it comes largely from the fruit pictured on the bottle, right? Nope. It’s mostly added sugar. The juice concentrates are there just “for flavor.” How much juice is in the bottle? Honest Tea won’t say. Don’t confuse Honest Tea with honesty.

“Made with real fruit,” boasts the bag of **Dove Strawberry & Cocoa Almond**. There’s fruit, all right. It’s just not strawberries. It’s “strawberry flavored cranberries.” How real is that? And don’t be fooled by the “calories 210” on the front. The entire package—about the size of a sandwich-size baggie—has 780 calories. Even if you happen to notice the tiny print that says “3.5 servings per pack,” you’d have to count out, let’s see, about 3/10 of the bag’s contents to get just 210 calories. No problem!



“4g protein,” says the box of **Special K Protein Chocolatey Peanut Butter Chewy Granola Bars**. A food can only boast about its protein if a serving has at least 5 grams. No worries, Kellogg’s lawyers must have said. Just bury this tiny print on the side of the box: “Good source of protein, 10% Daily Value or more per 40g (1½ bars).” Translation: You need to eat 1½ bars to get that good source of protein. Good old Specious K.

“240 calories per 1 cup,” says **Campbell’s Slow Kettle Style Portobello Mushroom & Madeira Bisque**. Yes, but each container, which sure looks like a single serving, holds nearly two cups. Maybe “about 400 calories per package” didn’t sound so appealing.



See those photos of spinach leaves, cucumber slices, and apple on the **Chobani Apple Veg Drink** bottle? The first ingredient may be yogurt, but it still seems like a great way to get your veggies. Whoops. The drink has more sugar than apple or cucumber purée and more natural flavors than spinach juice. Guess those spinach leaves were just a garnish.



Each 170-calorie **Luna Berry Greek Yogurt High Protein Bar** does have 12 grams of protein, as the package claims. But it’s largely from soy protein isolate, not the greek yogurt featured on the box. There’s more cane syrup (read: sugar) and natural flavors than “nonfat yogurt powder” and “greek yogurt flavored powder.” The Luna is nothing more than a Sugar Soy Protein Bar dressed up to look like real food. 🍌

EXERCISE

Can you trust the latest buzz?

BY CAITLIN DOW

1 Fast First?

“There’s actually a lot of research that supports skipping eating before exercise to maximize your fat-burning potential,” claims FitDay.com.

True...as far as it goes. Which isn’t very.

In small studies in active young men and women, those who did moderate-intensity aerobic exercise before breakfast—that is, while fasting—burned more fat while they exercised than they did on days they exercised after breakfast.¹

But that doesn’t mean they had burned more fat by the next morning.

“You have to look at fat burning on a 24-hour basis, or over the course of a week or longer,” says Brad Schoenfeld, an assistant professor of exercise science who heads the human performance laboratory at Lehman College in New York.

Only a few studies have done that.

For example, when 16 overweight or obese young women ate a 440-calorie meal either before or after a 25-minute high-intensity interval cycling session three times a week, both groups lost the same amount of body fat—roughly a pound—after six weeks.²

And in a study by Schoenfeld, 20 young women on a lower-calorie diet lost the same amount of body fat after four weeks, regardless of whether they drank a 250-calorie shake before or after they ran on a treadmill for an hour three times a week.³

His bottom line: “If you fast before exercise, you don’t seem to burn more fat over time. It’s the number of calories you burn that determines how much fat you lose over time.”

Advice to exercise before you eat is “an overhyped strategy,” says Schoenfeld. The best time to exercise is the time that works best for you—before or after.

“The most important factor with

What’s the latest word on the street about when, why, and how to exercise? Here’s what you may have heard...and what the best research says about it.

exercise is adherence,” notes Schoenfeld. “If people think they have to do their



Exercise before or after eating? Over the long term, it may not matter.

workout while fasted but they hate it, they may just quit exercising.”

¹ *Sports Med.* 2016. doi:10.1007/s40279-016-0594-x.

² *Obesity* 21: 2249, 2013.

³ *J. Int. Soc. Sports Nutr.* 2014. doi:10.1186/s12970-014-0054-7.

2 Brain Gain?

Can exercise keep your noggin in tip-top shape as you age?

People who report being more physically active are less likely to develop memory loss than those who say they’re sedentary.¹

“They are about 20 percent less likely to be diagnosed with dementia, and their cognitive function declines more slowly,” says Maria Fiatarone Singh, a professor of medicine and exercise and

sport science at the University of Sydney in Australia.

But when researchers put healthy people on treadmills several days a week for weeks or months to see if they do better than sedentary people on memory and other tests, “there usually isn’t a large effect on cognitive function,” notes Fiatarone Singh.²

Cue the dumbbells.

A handful of studies suggests that strength training may offer some boost to the brain.

For example, researchers assigned 155 older women with no cognitive problems to do strength training once or twice a week or balancing and toning exercises twice a week.³

After a year, the strength-training groups were faster than the balance and toning group on a test of executive function—the ability to plan, organize, and show other signs of mental flexibility. (One example: the test asked them to name the color of the word “blue,” which was printed in red ink.)

However, the strength trainers did no better on tests of working memory (remembering a list of numbers).

What about people who already have some memory loss?

Fiatarone Singh studied 100 older adults with mild cognitive impairment, or MCI.⁴ People with MCI are more likely to develop Alzheimer’s or other dementias. The volunteers were assigned to do an hour of strength training or computer-based mental training twice a week, both, or neither.

After six months, the strength trainers did better on a test of Alzheimer’s symptoms—being able to name a flower, pencil, comb, or other object, for exam-



It's too early to tell if strength training boosts some thinking skills.

"The sprint interval workout is 10 minutes, start to finish," says Gibala. "That includes warm up, bouts of sprinting, recovery in between, and cool down."

So far, the one-minute workout appears to be, well, working.

In a study of 19 sedentary young men, for example, those who did three one-minute workouts a week were just as aerobically fit after 12 weeks as

those who did three 45-minute bouts of moderate cycling a week. And their insulin was just as effective in lowering blood sugar after they were given a high dose of sugar.¹

So why would anyone exercise for 45 minutes, when they could get the same aerobic benefit in just 10?

Because one of those 10 minutes has to be the most intense, save-your-child-from-an-onrushing-bus kind of exertion.

"The trade-off for time is intensity," explains Gibala. "We're talking a 'sprint for your life' kind of effort."

Many people can't—or won't—push themselves that hard, he notes. But, he adds, they might still be able to benefit from interval training.

For example, in one study, Thai researchers assigned 43 older adults with type 2 diabetes to a sedentary control group or to one of two exercise groups.² Both exercise groups walked three times

a week for 30 to 40 minutes. But the *steady* exercise group walked at a constant moderate pace, while the *interval* exercise group built up—over 6 weeks—to alternating walking fast for 1 minute and moderately for 4 minutes.

After 12 weeks, both walking groups were in better shape than the sedentary controls. They were more aerobically fit, their insulin worked more effectively, they had lost more body fat, and their blood vessels dilated more easily.

But hemoglobin A1c—a long-term measure of blood sugar—improved only in the interval walkers. And they had better aerobic fitness and blood vessel function than the moderate-paced walkers.

"Interval training is also beneficial in people without diabetes," says Gibala. "If people take an interval approach, it's probably going to be better than moderate-intensity exercise for the same time commitment."

(Tip: If your goal is simply to burn calories, it doesn't matter if you walk or run. Walking a mile takes more time than running a mile, but it eventually burns about the same number of calories.)

"We really want to find the sweet spot between duration and intensity for different groups," says Gibala. "The more exercise menu options we can give people, the better."

¹ *PLoS One* 11: e0154075, 2016.

² *Scand. J. Med. Sci. Sports* 24: e69, 2014.

ple—than those who didn't lift weights. But they did no better on overall tests of memory, attention, or executive function.

And keep in mind that the people in these studies lift heavier and heavier weights as they get stronger.

"The volume and intensity of exercise programs for seniors are usually way too low," says Fiatarone Singh. "In our studies, those who lifted the most weight had the greatest improvements in cognition."³

(Before you hit the heavy weights, make sure you're doing it safely.)

Fiatarone Singh's bottom line: "What's good for the body is also good for the brain. The benefits of exercise don't stop at the neck."

¹ *BMC Public Health* 14: 510, 2014.

² *Psychosom. Med.* 72: 239, 2010.

³ *Arch. Intern. Med.* 170: 170, 2010.

⁴ *J. Am. Med. Dir. Assoc.* 15: 873, 2014.

⁵ *J. Am. Ger. Soc.* 2016. doi:10.1111/jgs.14542.

3 Just a Minute?

How low can you go? Martin Gibala is trying to answer that question.

"The number-one cited reason for why people don't exercise is lack of time," says the professor and chair of the department of kinesiology at McMaster University in Canada.

Gibala's group is hunting for training regimens with the most bang (cardiovascular fitness) for the buck (your time).

Their latest: the one-minute workout.

"That's a bit of a teaser headline," admits Gibala. The workout consists of three 20-second all-out sprints on a stationary bike (that's the minute) interspersed with bouts of easy cycling.



Try speeding up for a minute or two as you walk, bike, or run.

4 Get Up and Move?

"There are about three dozen chronic diseases and conditions associated with excess sitting," says James Levine, an endocrinologist at the Mayo Clinic.

For example, people who report sitting for the most hours per day have a higher risk of



Get up and walk every hour or two.

type 2 diabetes, heart attack, and stroke.¹

And their insulin becomes less effective (which may explain their higher diabetes risk).

In one study, “the day after 14 young healthy adults sat for nearly 17 hours, their insulin was roughly 40 percent less effective in lowering their blood sugar than it was after a day with lots of standing and moving about and just six hours of sitting,” says study author Barry Braun, professor and head of the department of health and exercise science at Colorado State University.²

But hitting the gym may not make up for a day at your desk.

For example, on four days when 18 sedentary young adults broke up a 14-hour period of sitting with standing (for 2 hours) and leisurely walking (for 4 hours), their triglycerides were lower—and they needed less insulin to handle a sugar-laden drink—than on the four days when they sat for 14 hours.³

But when they replaced one of the 14 hours of sitting with an hour of vigorous exercise, their insulin and triglycerides were no better than when they sat all day.³

“Think of it this way,” says Levine. “Why would you expect that something you do for 60 minutes a day would offset the harm of something you do for 13 or 14 hours a day?”

Two more reasons not to act like there’s glue on the seat of your chair:

■ **Artery function.** After 12 young men sat without moving their legs for three hours, their blood vessels were less able to respond to increases in blood flow than when they took a 5-minute walk during each of the three hours.⁴

■ **Mood, fatigue, hunger.** When 30 adults sat for 6 hours, they reported feeling less energetic later in the day than when they broke up the sitting with either one 30-minute brisk walk or one 5-minute brisk walk every hour. But only when they took the 5-minute hourly walks did they report fewer food cravings before lunch and better mood all day.⁵

Stuck in an office without a standing or treadmill desk?

“There are many options that don’t require fancy equipment,” says Levine.

Try walk-and-talk meetings. Or stand and pace when you answer the phone. Or walk to a co-worker’s office instead of sending an e-mail. Or take the stairs. Or park at the back of the parking lot.

Your goal, according to an expert panel in Britain: spend half your workday upright or moving around.⁶

“We want to develop the best catalogue of approaches that individuals and companies can use to get moving,” says Levine, who has worked with several companies that market standing desks and other gadgets that nudge people to move more.

Just make sure you don’t sit around and wait for his results.

¹ *Diabetologia* 55: 2895, 2012.

² *Metab. Clin. Exper.* 60: 941, 2011.

³ *PLoS One* 8: e55542, 2013.

⁴ *Med. Sci. Sports Exerc.* 47: 843, 2015.

⁵ *Int. J. Behav. Nutr. Phys. Act.* 13: 113, 2016.

⁶ *Br. J. Sports Med.* 49: 1357, 2015.

5 Keep Track?

“There’s even more evidence that fitness trackers don’t work,” declared Time.com last October.

Yikes. The news came from a study of 470 overweight or obese young adults who had lost an average of 18 pounds over six months with a mix of dieting and exercise.¹

Over the next 18 months, those who were assigned to use a fitness tracker regained more weight (about 10 pounds) than those who didn’t use a tracker (6 pounds). And the fitness tracker group was no more active than the control group, which reported its activity to a website.

Why? The study’s authors aren’t sure.

People using the trackers may have thought, “Oh, I exercised a lot today. Now I can eat more,” lead author John Jakicic, a professor in the department of health and physical activity at the University of Pittsburgh, told National Public Radio last September.

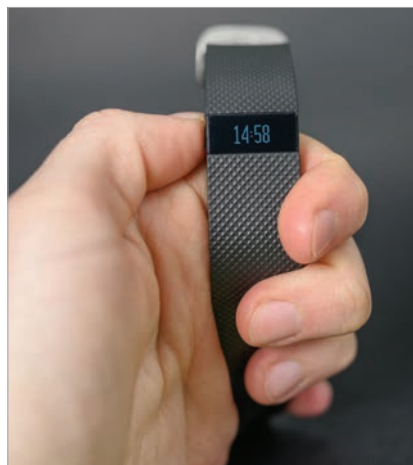
Or, fitness trackers may inspire some people and discourage others. Or maybe a tracker only helps if you’re cutting calories.

In an earlier study, people who got diet counseling and used a tracker lost more weight than people who just got a weight-loss manual.² People who got only the tracker or only the counseling did no better than those who got only the manual.

The bottom line: If you use a tracker, don’t toss it yet. Just don’t assume that taking, say, 10,000 steps a day

will make the pounds melt away.

And don’t assume that you can celebrate your tracked walks with a chocolate sundae. 🍌



Using a fitness tracker? Don’t reward yourself with a pizza.

¹ *JAMA* 316: 1161, 2016.

² *Int. J. Behav. Nutr. Phys. Act.* 8: 41, 2011.

Give Prediabetes the Boot?



One out of three adults have prediabetes. If a preliminary study pans out, the right diet could make it disappear.

Researchers randomly assigned 38 people who had prediabetes and were obese to one of two diets. Each cut 500 calories a day.

■ **The higher-protein diet** (30 percent of calories from protein; 40 percent from carbs)

relied largely on fish, chicken, lean meat, and low-fat cheese and milk for its protein.

■ **The higher-carb diet** (55 percent carbs; 15 percent protein) relied largely on whole grains, fruit, vegetables, and beans for its carbs. Both diets had the same fat (30 percent of calories), largely from healthy fats like oils and nuts.

After six months, 14 people had dropped out. However, blood sugar levels in the remaining 12 people on the higher-protein diet—but in only four of the 12 on the higher-carb diet—had fallen into the normal range. What's more, the higher-protein group had lower hemoglobin A1c (a long-term measure of blood sugar) and lower LDL ("bad") cholesterol, triglycerides, and some markers of inflammation.

Both groups lost the same amount of weight, but people on the higher-protein diet lost only fat, while those on the higher-carb diet lost both fat *and* muscle.

What to do: If you have prediabetes, try cutting back on carbs. (That will cut your calories and make protein a higher percentage of your diet.) Although this small study needs to be replicated, it's worth a try. And you needn't cut *all* carbs. You can still enjoy vegetables and fresh fruit, with small servings of grains.

[BMJ Open Diabetes Res. Care 2016. doi:10.1136/bmjdc-2016-000258.](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjdc-2016-000258)

Diabetes & Dairy

Is dairy fat linked to a lower risk of type 2 diabetes, as some studies claim?

Spanish researchers tracked roughly 3,350 people aged 55 to 80 who participated in the PREDIMED study for four years. All were at high risk of cardiovascular disease, and most were overweight or obese.

Participants who consumed the most saturated fat were twice as likely to be diagnosed with type 2 diabetes as those who consumed the least.

In particular, butter and cheese were linked to a higher risk, while full-fat yogurt was linked to a *lower* risk. (The study didn't look at lower-fat yogurt.)



What to do: It's too early to know if cheese and butter raise—or if yogurt lowers—the risk of diabetes because this type of study can't prove cause and effect. For now, your best bet is to eat less red meat and to stick to lower-fat dairy foods to lower your risk of heart disease.

[Am. J. Clin. Nutr. 2017. doi:10.3945/ajcn.116.142034.](https://doi.org/10.3945/ajcn.116.142034)

Resveratrol Strikes Out

"Helps maintain youthful cellular activity," claims ResVitalé's brand of resveratrol.

Resveratrol, which is found in red wine, grapes, and peanuts, among other foods, makes obese mice live longer. But it's unclear what, if anything, it does in humans.

Researchers gave 74 middle-aged men who had the metabolic syndrome a placebo or resveratrol at either a low dose (150 milligrams a day) or a high dose (1,000 mg). (Signs of the metabolic syndrome include elevated blood pressure, blood sugar, triglycerides, and waist size.)

After four months, resveratrol had no impact on blood pressure, blood sugar, body fat or muscle, liver fat, or inflammation. And the men who took the high dose of resveratrol had higher levels of LDL ("bad") cholesterol.

What to do: Until we know more about resveratrol's safety and effectiveness, don't waste your money on it.

[J. Clin. Endocrinol. Metab. 2017. doi:10.1210/je.2016-2160.](https://doi.org/10.1210/je.2016-2160)

Cramps & Magnesium

An estimated one out of two older adults report unexplained nighttime leg cramps.

In Europe and Latin America, magnesium supplements are a popular treatment for cramps. So Israeli researchers assigned 94 people who reported getting leg cramps at night to take either magnesium oxide (520 milligrams) or a placebo at bedtime every night. (Earlier studies that used magnesium citrate were inconclusive.)

After one month, the scientists found no difference in the frequency or severity of night leg cramps. (Each group reported a drop from about eight cramps per week to five per week.)

What to do: Don't expect magnesium supplements to keep you from getting leg cramps at night. 🍌

[JAMA Intern. Med. 2017. doi:10.1001/jamainternmed.2016.9261.](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamainternmed.2016.9261)

Can't-Say-No Risotto

BY KATE SHERWOOD



Farro—a delightfully nutty wheat kernel—makes an amazingly creamy risotto. While the farro is cooking, make the Mushroom or Tomato Basil Mix-In. 🍄

Got a question or suggestion? Write to Kate at healthycook@cspinet.org.

Basic Farro Risotto

Makes 4 cups 

- 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 1 cup farro
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 cups boiling water
- ¼ cup grated parmesan
- ½ tsp. kosher salt
- freshly ground black pepper

1. Heat the oil in a large, heavy pot over medium heat until shimmering hot. Add the onion and cook, stirring often, until tender, 3-4 minutes.

- 2. Pulse the farro in a blender until about half of the grains are broken into smaller pieces. Add the farro and garlic to the pot and stir until fragrant, about 30 seconds.
- 3. Stir in the water. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and cook until most of the liquid has been absorbed and the farro is still chewy, about 20 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- 4. Uncover, increase the heat to medium-high, and stir constantly until the farro is creamy and tender, about 5 minutes. If it's still too chewy, add ½ cup of boiling water and continue stirring until tender, about 5 minutes.
- 5. Stir in the parmesan and the mix-in. Season with up to ½ tsp. of salt and pepper to taste.



Mushroom Mix-In

- 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 lb. crimini (baby bella) mushrooms, finely chopped
- ¼ cup minced chives

- 1. In a large pan, heat the oil over medium-high heat until shimmering hot.
- 2. Sauté the mushrooms until browned, 5-7 minutes.
- 3. Remove from the heat and stir in the chives.

Per serving (½ cup farro + mix-in): calories 180 | total fat 8 g | sat fat 1.5 g | carbs 21 g | fiber 2 g | protein 6 g | sodium 180 mg



Tomato Basil Mix-In

- 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 cup chopped fresh tomatoes
- 1 cup grated zucchini
- ¼ cup basil leaves, minced

1. In a medium bowl, toss all the ingredients together.

Per serving (½ cup farro + mix-in): calories 170 | total fat 8 g | sat fat 1.5 g | carbs 19 g | fiber 2 g | protein 5 g | sodium 180 mg

Kate's Latest

From the Heart contains more than two dozen vegetable, bean, fish, and chicken recipes that help you follow the top-rated DASH diet. NutritionAction.com/FromTheHeart.

PIZZA PARTY



BY LINDSAY MOYER & BONNIE LIEBMAN

White flour, cheese, pepperoni. No one's confusing pizza with health food. But if you keep a box in your freezer for an occasional no-fuss meal, there's good news: A handful of decent pies are showing up in supermarkets.

Crusts are getting thinner or adding whole grains. And veggies like shiitake mushrooms, butternut squash, and arugula are replacing some—or all—of the cheese or processed meat. Plus, a new crop of whole-grain crusts lets you make your own pizza with toppings DiGiorno would die for.

It's still tough to dodge most of the salt, white flour, and saturated fat. But if you're hunting for a better pizza, here are some to try.

The information for this article was compiled by Leah Ettman.

Get Thin



"Farm-grown leafy spinach, 100% real mozzarella, our signature sauce and swirls of hearty garlic sauce," says Dr. Oetker **Virtuoso Signature Spinach Thin + Crispy Crust Pizza**. And boy does the good doctor pile on the spinach.

Thin-crust pizzas have fewer calories per slice.

Slice for slice, you get less (typically white) flour and fewer calories in thin-crust pizzas (though the thin crust may lead you to eat more slices).

Other thin-crust pizzas we liked: **Whole Foods 365 Goat Cheese & Pesto Thin Crust** and **DiGiorno Pizzeria! Thin Spinach & Mushroom**.

Your Slice or Mine?



About the same diameter, yet a CPK serving is a third of the pie, while a DiGiorno serving is a sixth.

A serving of **California Pizza Kitchen Four Cheese Crispy Thin Crust Pizza** has the same number of calories (about 300) as a serving of **DiGiorno Four Cheese Original Rising Crust Pizza**, according to their Nutrition Facts labels.

But even though both pies measure roughly 11 inches across, a serving of CPK's pizza is one-third of the pie, while for DiGiorno's (thicker-crust) pizza it's just one-sixth.

What gives? Labels define a serving of pizza as the fraction that weighs closest to five ounces. So they assume that you'd eat a narrower slice of a pizza that's heavier (thanks to a thicker crust or extra toppings) than a pizza that's lighter.

Would you? Maybe. Maybe not.

That's why we have no Best Bites and no chart that ranks calories or other nutrients in pizzas. The numbers depend on the serving size, and a serving is just too unpredictable.

The bottom line: When you compare Nutrition Facts on pizzas, make sure you do the math to match how much you're likely to eat.

Save on Salt

Amy's Light in Sodium Spinach Pizza proves that it's possible to get less salt—but no less flavor—in a frozen pie.

The single-serve (7 oz.) pizza keeps the sodium to a modest 390 milligrams (along with 440 calories and 6 grams of saturated fat). Our tasters never noticed the missing salt.



Light in sodium, not taste.

Thanks, Amy. Now how about some Light in Sodium pizzas with whole-grain crust?



Frozen pizzas with whole grain: a welcome...but rare...find.

Thick crust is 51 percent whole grain. Amy's Cheese & Pesto Pizza's crust is also half whole grain, though you'd never know it from the taste.

Or start with a ready-made whole-grain crust and add your own toppings (see "Upper Crusts").

Go Whole

When it comes to grain, don't confuse "multi" with "whole."

The "multi-grain crust" in Newman's Own Thin & Crispy Margherita All Natural Pizza, for example, has more salt than whole grain.

You're better off with a Freschetta Artisan Crust Pizza (just not the Pepperoni).

The thick crust is 51 percent whole grain. Amy's Cheese & Pesto Pizza's crust is also half whole grain, though you'd never know it from the taste.

Or start with a ready-made whole-grain crust and add your own toppings (see "Upper Crusts").

Upper Crusts

Ten minutes. That's about all it takes to bake a ready-made crust. Three of the best:

■ **Engine 2 Plant-Strong Stone Baked 100% Whole Wheat Pizza Crusts.** Lower in sodium than most, with a nutty, whole-grain taste. Check the freezer case at Whole Foods.

■ **Boboli 100% Whole Wheat Pizza Crust.** Slightly softer texture than Engine 2.

■ **Archer Farms Whole Wheat Thin Pizza Crusts.** Ultra-crispy, almost cracker-like crust, with more whole grain than white flour and lower in sodium than most. At Target.



A 100 percent whole-grain crust without too much salt. Nice.

Veg Out

Tired of veggie pizzas with just mushrooms, (tasteless) olives, and onions?

Try Whole Foods Marinated Grilled Vegetables Wood-Fired

Pizza. Its "mélange of marinated grilled vegetables" includes sliced eggplant, peppers, zucchini, broccoli, and asparagus. Or head to Trader Joe's and pick up a Trader Giotto's Kale, Sweet Potato & Butternut Squash Pizza.

Veggies offer more than flavor. Their potassium may blunt the rise in blood pressure from all the salt in your pizza.



Marinated and grilled eggplant, peppers, and zucchini. Yum.



Adding Veggies to Your Pizza?

- **Don't overdo it** or the crust will get soggy.
- **Slice raw vegetables thin** so they cook quickly.
- **Add delicate leaves**—arugula, basil, cilantro, parsley—after the pizza is out of the oven.
- **For deeper flavor**, add pre-roasted vegetables like onions, butternut squash, and peppers.
- **Don't fool yourself.** Extra veggies are nice, but you can only get so much from a pizza. So make sure you fill half your plate with a salad or vegetable side dish. 🍷

No Cheese, Please

One way to solve pizza's saturated-fat problem: lose the cheese.

Take Trader Joe's Roasted Vegetable Pizza. Between its shiitake mushrooms, roasted red peppers, artichoke hearts, slightly sweet caramelized onions, and balsamic vinegar, you might not miss the cheese.

Don't live near a TJ's? Amy's Roasted Vegetable No Cheese Pizza is nearly identical.



No cheese? No problem.



RIGHT STUFF

Caulipower



“Behold the power of cauliflower.” **Green Giant** isn’t kidding.

Open the freezer, pull out one of the Giant’s four varieties of **Riced Veggies**, and sauté for five minutes.

The “riced” cauliflower looks like white rice. It’s as satisfying as rice. But instead of refined carbs, you’re

getting 100 percent veggies—not even any seasonings, flavorings, or added salt.

Talk about simple. The name—**Cauliflower, Cauliflower & Sweet Potato**, or **Cauliflower & Broccoli**—is also the ingredient list. And the **Cauliflower Medley** is just cauliflower plus green peas, onions, carrots, and green onions.

So instead of the 120-or-so calories in half a cup of cooked rice, you get just 20 to 50 calories. And, since we’re talking veggies, they come with two grams of fiber and the vitamins and minerals you’d expect from cauliflower and friends.

Try sautéing a cup of the Cauliflower Medley in a teaspoon of olive oil and a dash of reduced-sodium soy sauce. In roughly five minutes you’ll have the perfect fried rice surrogate...for only about 70 calories.

“Enjoy as a great alternative to rice, potatoes and pasta,” says the website. The Giant makes it easy eating green.

greengiant.com—(800) 754-3381

Photos: Green Giant (top left), Jennifer Urban/CSPi (top right), Kate Sherwood/CSPi (center), ©bergamont/fotolia.com (bottom).



FOOD PORN

Happy Holiday?

“To make the holiday even sweeter, **The Cheesecake Factory** will also debut its newest creation—**Chocolate Hazelnut Crunch Cheesecake** topped with hazelnut crunch and Nutella on a blonde brownie crust,” announced the company last July.

What holiday? July 30th is National Cheesecake Day, of course. And “sweeter” is right.

Nutella, the “hazelnut spread with cocoa,” has more sugar and palm oil than hazelnuts or cocoa. That helps give each slice 1,410 calories, 54 grams of saturated fat (almost three days’ worth), and 92 grams (22 teaspoons) of sugar, almost all of it added.

It’s like eating an entire (half-pound) block of cream cheese slathered with half a cup of chocolate frosting.

Of course, by the time dessert arrives, you’ll have already inhaled a main dish like Farfalle with Chicken and Roasted Garlic (2,530 calories) or Pasta Carbonara with Chicken (2,160 calories).

“At The Cheesecake Factory, dessert isn’t just an option,” said the chain in a January Facebook post. “It’s a requirement.”

So should a cardiologist stationed by the exit.

thecheesecakefactory.com
(818) 871-3000



DISH of the month

Spicy Chickpea Poppers

Drain, rinse, and blot dry one 15 oz. can no-salt-added chickpeas. Toss well with 2 Tbs. olive oil, 1 tsp. paprika, ¼ tsp. coriander, ¼ tsp. cumin, ¼ tsp. chili powder, and ¼ tsp. salt. Roast at 450° F on a lined baking sheet for 25 minutes. Serves six.

quick tip

Mushrooms keep longer in a paper bag in the refrigerator than in a plastic bag or container. A dry, wrinkled mushroom is still perfectly good for making soups, stews, and sauces.

