

# Nutrition Action

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HEALTH LETTER®  
CENTER FOR SCIENCE IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

## I Can See Clearly Now

How to protect your vision

**SUPERMARKET**  
safety

Calories on  
the menu  
**What's the catch?**

*Hot Grill Summer*  
Tips & Tricks

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CENTER FOR  
Science IN THE  
Public Interest  
*America's Food and Health Watchdog*

CELEBRATING  
**50 YEARS**

M E M O

# 50...and Counting



**F**ifty years ago, Nixon was in the White House, more than 300,000 American troops were in Vietnam, the 26th Amendment gave 18-year-olds the right to vote, Americans landed on the moon and re-

turned to Earth for the third time, and the Rolling Stones released the landmark album *Sticky Fingers*.

In short, there was a lot going on in 1971.

That was also the year three young scientists—a microbiologist, an oceanographer, and a chemist—operating out of low-budget, borrowed space in Washington, DC, inked the founding documents of the Center for Science in the Public Interest.

The microbiologist, Michael Jacobson, went on to lead CSPI until 2017.

Fast forward 50 years, and CSPI has firmly established itself as America's food and health watchdog.

Among much else, we successfully led the fight for:

- Nutrition Facts on food labels.
  - Calorie counts on chain-restaurant menus.
  - A ban on artificial trans fat.
  - Getting soda and junk food out of schools...and more fresh fruits and vegetables in.
  - Landmark legislation to curb pathogens like *Salmonella* in food.
  - Health warnings on alcoholic beverages.
- As a member of CSPI, you share in these

and other historic victories.

During the pandemic, we have made the case for science-based approaches to tests, treatments, and vaccines for Covid-19, and we blew the whistle on hydroxychloroquine, colloidal silver, and other fake coronavirus cures.

We have also worked hard to ensure that the nation's pandemic response helps struggling families buy enough food, and that it protects the workers who put food on our plates as well as the consumers who eat that food.

But while CSPI values and honors its past, we don't shrink from the challenges ahead. We envision a population free of preventable disease and an equitable, sustainable food system that makes healthy food accessible to all.



Co-founders Jim Sullivan (far left), Michael Jacobson (third from left), and Al Fritsch (third from right).

And thanks to a generous grant from Bloomberg Philanthropies, we are expanding our reach with new campaigns to revamp the food environment. Our goal:

healthier foods on restaurant menus, at supermarkets, and in school cafeterias.

I thank you for sharing CSPI's commitment to independence, scientific rigor, and transparency. And I ask for your continued support as we work together to ensure that our next 50 years will be even better than our first 50.

We couldn't be more excited about the opportunities ahead.

Wild horses couldn't drag us away.

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CELEBRATING  
50 YEARS

# I Can See Clearly Now

## How to protect your vision

**A**ge-related macular degeneration is the leading cause of vision loss for U.S. adults aged 65 and older. Diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, and cataracts also impair the sight of millions of Americans. Here's what may—and may not—keep your eyes in good working order.



**Emily Chew** is the director of the Division of Epidemiology and Clinical Applications at the National Eye Institute. An ophthalmologist and retina specialist, Chew has designed, led, or analyzed the Age-Related Eye Disease Study (AREDS, AREDS2), the Action to Control Cardiovascular Risk in Diabetes Eye Study, and the Early Treatment Diabetic Retinopathy Study. She spoke to *Nutrition Action's* Bonnie Liebman.

### A Retina at Risk

**Q: What is age-related macular degeneration, or AMD?**

**A:** In the eye, we have a structure called the retina, which lines the inside of the eyeball. Our best vision comes from the very central part, which is the macula.

With AMD, the retina loses tissues that are important for seeing well and focusing. Patients also have problems adapting to the dark—for example, going from a very bright room to a dark theater. And reading in dim light is much harder.

Eventually, you can get central vision loss, so you have this blind spot in the center of the visual field, and things are no longer sharp in the areas around it. [See “Macular Degeneration,” p. 4.]

**Q: And there are two types?**

**A:** Yes. One is called neovascular, or the so-called wet type. Neovascular means

you have abnormal new blood vessels that may lead to bleeding and an acute loss of vision. That type we can treat with injections into the eye of drugs that counteract vascular endothelial growth factor, or VEGF, which is important for growing new blood vessels.

The dry type is called geographic atrophy, which is a slow withering away of the normal cells and structures in the retina. Even patients who start out with the wet type are likely to end up with geographic atrophy. That's the type that we have no treatment for.

**Q: What led to the first Age-Related Eye Disease Study?**

**A:** In the 1990s, we had a study

looking at the natural history of macular degeneration. But we wanted to see if we could treat it.

At the time, trials were testing whether very high doses of vitamin E, vitamin C, and beta-carotene could prevent cancer and cardiovascular disease because those vitamins are antioxidants.

Unfortunately, they didn't.

**Q: And some evidence suggested that antioxidants could protect the retina?**

**A:** Yes. So the first AREDS trial randomly assigned 3,640 people with macular degeneration to take either a high dose of three antioxidant vitamins—E, C, and beta-carotene—or zinc, or both, or a placebo for five years.

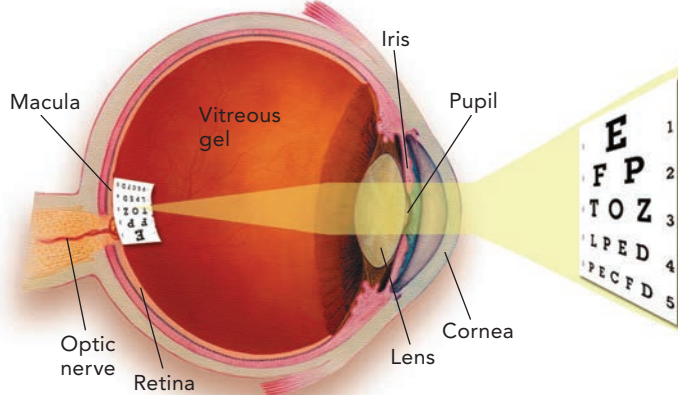
We added zinc because a small study suggested that it could reduce vision loss in people with macular degeneration. We also included copper, because a high dose of zinc can make it harder to absorb copper, and a copper deficiency can cause anemia.

**Q: What did AREDS find?**

**A:** The AREDS supplements didn't stop people from progressing from early to intermediate macular degeneration. But in people who had intermediate AMD, the combination of vitamin C, vitamin E, beta-carotene, zinc, and copper resulted in a 25 percent reduction in the risk of progression to late AMD after five years.

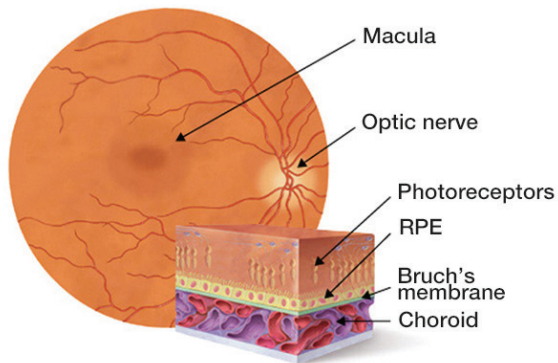


## Anatomy of the Eye

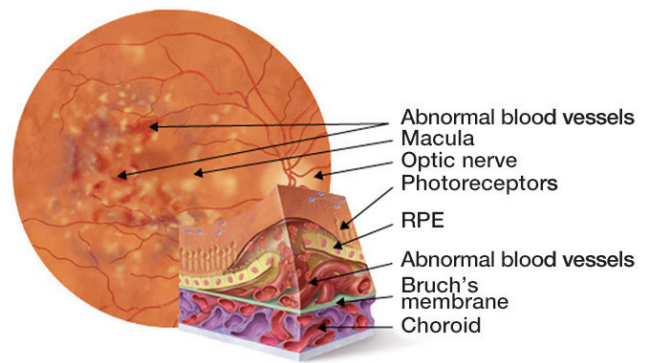


The lens, which focuses light rays onto the retina, is supposed to be clear. Opaque areas, called cataracts, scatter light and blur vision. When the macula—the center of the retina—degenerates, it blurs the sharp, detailed vision that you need to read, drive, sew, etc.

# Macular Degeneration



**The normal eye.** Photoreceptors (rods and cones) produce waste that's removed by the retinal pigment epithelium (RPE), Bruch's membrane, and the choroid working together like a fireman's bucket brigade. Waste that doesn't get broken down collects in bundles called drusen (not shown).



**The macula degenerates.** If drusen build up, they can disrupt the RPE, the photoreceptors, and vision (dry macular degeneration). If abnormal blood vessels begin to grow, they can bleed or leak fluid onto the retina (wet macular degeneration).

We have calculated that 13 people would need to take the AREDS supplement for five years to prevent one person from progressing from intermediate to late AMD.

**Q: That's quite effective.**

**A:** Yes. And we still saw about a 30 percent lower risk of late AMD in the supplement takers five years after the trial was finished.

And by then, 70 percent of people in both groups were taking the supplement, which we offered everyone at no cost. No one was taking a placebo.

**Q: What led you to do the second trial, AREDS2?**

**A:** We were always concerned about the beta-carotene in the supplement we were testing, because two major trials had reported that high-dose beta-carotene supplements increased the risk of lung cancer in smokers or asbestos workers.

In fact, we asked the AREDS participants who were smokers or former smokers if they wanted to switch from taking either beta-carotene or the placebo to either zinc or the placebo. About two-thirds did.

**Q: So you wanted to test an alternative to beta-carotene?**

**A:** Right. We knew all along that the pigment in the macula is made up of lutein and small amounts of its nearly identical cousin, zeaxanthin. But those supplements weren't commercially available during the AREDS trial.

**Q: Lutein is found in leafy greens?**

**A:** Yes. When we asked people in the

Fish is a major source of two omega-3 fats—docosahexaenoic acid, or DHA, and eicosapentaenoic acid, or EPA. And DHA is part of the structure of the retina. But we didn't know if the omega-3s were responsible for the lower risk of late AMD in people who ate more fish.

So in AREDS2, we randomly assigned people who had intermediate AMD to lutein versus no lutein, omega-3s versus no omega-3s, beta-carotene versus no

beta-carotene, and a high versus a lower dose of zinc. [See "What AREDS2 Tested."]

**Q: Why test a lower dose of zinc?**

**A:** We were concerned because in AREDS, people who took zinc had an increased risk of hospitalizations, mostly for urinary retention in men who had benign enlargement of the prostate.

But when we looked at the lower versus high dose of zinc in AREDS2, we saw no difference in adverse effects.

**Q: What else did AREDS2 find?**

**A:** DHA and EPA had no harmful or beneficial effect. And people who got beta-carotene had double the risk of lung cancer than those who got lutein and zeaxanthin. Roughly 90 percent of those cancers occurred in former smokers.

## What AREDS2 Tested

AREDS2 tried to improve on the first AREDS formula (vitamin C, vitamin E, beta-carotene, zinc, and copper).

### Everyone in AREDS2 got

Vitamin C (500 mg), vitamin E (180 mg), and copper (2 mg)

### In addition, people got

EITHER	OR
Lutein (10 mg) + Zeaxanthin (2 mg)	No Lutein + Zeaxanthin
DHA (350 mg) + EPA (650 mg)	No DHA + EPA
Beta-carotene (15 mg)	No Beta-carotene
Zinc (80 mg)	Zinc (25 mg)

Source: JAMA 309: 2005, 2013.

AREDS study about their diets, two foods popped out. Those who ate lots of green leafy vegetables were less likely to have AMD than those who ate few greens. And people who consumed fish at least twice a week were less likely to progress to late AMD than people who ate fish less often.



A scene as viewed by someone with a healthy retina.

That's why the PreserVision AREDS2 supplements you can buy have vitamin C, vitamin E, lutein, zeaxanthin, zinc, and copper, but no omega-3s or beta-carotene. That's the brand we used in the trial.

**Q: What can you tell people who don't have intermediate AMD?**

**A:** The AREDS supplements are not for individuals with early or no AMD. But a healthy diet may help.

We asked the AREDS and AREDS2 participants—which included people



How a scene might look if you have macular degeneration.

with early or no AMD—about their usual diets, then followed them for 10 years.

Overall, the risk of progressing to intermediate AMD was about 20 percent lower in people who ate a healthy Mediterranean diet—that is, a diet that's high in vegetables, fruits, beans, nuts, whole grains, and fish, has a moderate amount of alcohol, and has more unsaturated than saturated fat.

Those results are not as compelling as a randomized trial, but my Dutch friends have seen similar results in the Rotter-

dam Study. They often say that you can eat your risk away by having a good diet.

**Beyond the Macula**

**Q: What are cataracts?**

**A:** The lens in your eye helps focus the light onto your retina.

With age, the lens becomes more opaque, or cloudy.

We have a good treatment for that. Everybody knows someone who has had cataract surgery. But if we could find something that would delay cataracts, we could make a dent in rates of surgery.

However, in the AREDS trials, the supplements had no benefit. When we looked at people who ate few foods with lutein and zeaxanthin, those who got those

supplements were less likely to need cataract surgery. But that result would need to be confirmed in a trial looking only at those people.

**Q: Do multivitamins help?**

**A:** In a trial of U.S. male physicians, those who were randomly assigned to take a multivitamin had a 9 percent lower risk of cataracts than those who got a placebo. But in an Italian trial, people who were randomly assigned to take a multivitamin had a lower risk of one type of cataract and a higher risk of another type.

Since we don't know who is going to get which type of cataract, our advice is to eat well, stop smoking, and wear sunglasses year-round to protect your eyes from ultraviolet rays.

**Q: What causes diabetic retinopathy?**

**A:** The high blood sugar levels that occur in diabetes can damage both the large blood vessels in the heart and the small blood vessels in the kidney, nerves, and

eyes. So people with diabetes can get heart disease, kidney disease, neuropathy, and retinopathy, which strikes the blood vessels in the retina and can lead to vision loss.

**Q: How?**

**A:** The damage to your eyes starts when the tiny blood vessels that go to your



How a scene might look if you have a cataract.

retina get blocked, which can make them leak fluid or bleed. To compensate, your eyes grow new blood vessels that don't work well and can leak or bleed easily.

**Q: Can retinopathy be treated?**

**A:** We do have good treatments. Some are injections of anti-VEGF drugs inside the eye that actually improve vision. The last 10 years have been remarkable in changing how we treat the disorder. Prior to that, we only had laser treatments, which are still an important part of our treatment strategies.



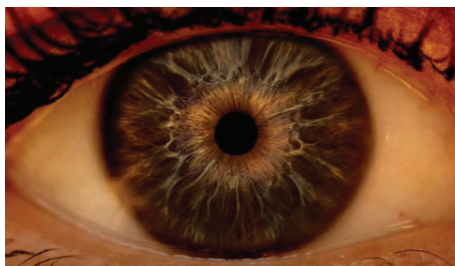
How a scene might look if you have diabetic retinopathy.

# Digging for Lutein

Looking for lutein in vegetables? Here's how they stack up.

Vegetable (½ cup, cooked, unless noted)	Lutein + Zeaxanthin (mg)
Spinach	10.2
Swiss chard	9.6
Spinach (2 cups raw)	7.3
Collard greens	5.9
Kale	2.9
Romaine lettuce (2 cups raw)	2.2
Peas	2.0
Brussels sprouts	1.0
Zucchini	1.0
Broccoli	0.8
Asparagus	0.7
Yellow corn	0.7
Green beans	0.4
Iceberg lettuce (2 cups raw)	0.4

Source: USDA Food Data Central.



An undilated eye (left) reveals far less than a dilated eye (right).

## Q: Wouldn't you notice if you lost your side vision?

**A:** You might not, because if you've got two eyes, you're always scanning. You might notice if you look straight ahead and you can't see your hands when they're held out to your sides.

## Q: Does that test with a puff of air always detect glaucoma?

**A:** No. Simply measuring the eye pressure is not sufficient. An ophthalmologist or optometrist needs to test the degree that you can see beyond the center of your visual field and do a dilated eye exam to see if the nerve is damaged.

## Q: Can a dilated eye exam also detect other disorders?

**A:** Yes. As you get older, a dilated eye exam is crucial to help us screen for eye diseases like macular degeneration, cataracts, and diabetic eye disease. They can all sneak up on you very easily. When your eyes are dilated, an ophthalmologist can view the retina more easily and fully.

## Q: How often do you need an exam?

**A:** The American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends a complete eye examination at age 40, and even earlier if you have diabetes, high blood pressure, or a family history of eye disease.

If you're 65 or older, you should have your eyes checked every year or two. And if you have diabetes or wear contact lenses, see your eye specialist every year, no matter your age.

## Q: What is dry eye syndrome?

**A:** It's a very common condition. Each time we blink, our tears moisten the cornea, the clear outer layer of the eye. The cornea works well if it's well moistened.

Dry eye can feel like you have sand in your eye. It can cause blurred vision, and it can be quite annoying and distracting.

The main treatment has been replacing tears with artificial tears, but they're inconvenient, and they don't last long.

## Q: Do omega-3 fats help?

**A:** No. The DREAM study tested whether omega-3 fatty acids can improve hydration and help moisten the cornea. The trial randomly assigned roughly 350 people with dry eye to take 3,000 milligrams a day of DHA and EPA or a placebo. The omega-3s made no difference.

## Q: What about supplements like Ocuvite, which claim to support eye health?

**A:** Other than PreserVision AREDS2 for people with intermediate AMD, we don't recommend any supplements. It's a crazy world these days in terms of what claims and supplements are out there.

It's not a well-regulated business. 🍷

## Q: Can people lower their risk?

**A:** Yes. The good news is that if you lower your hemoglobin A1c, which is a measure of blood sugar control, you can reduce the risk of diabetic eye disease.

Controlling your blood sugar, blood pressure, and lipids like LDL cholesterol are important goals for patients with diabetes. Diet has a lot to do with all three.

## Q: What is glaucoma?

**A:** Glaucoma, which is typically caused by abnormally high pressure in the eye, damages the optic nerve. Over time, you can lose vision, usually starting along the sides of your visual field. It is more prevalent and occurs at a younger age among African-Americans. It usually has no symptoms.



How a scene might look if you have glaucoma.

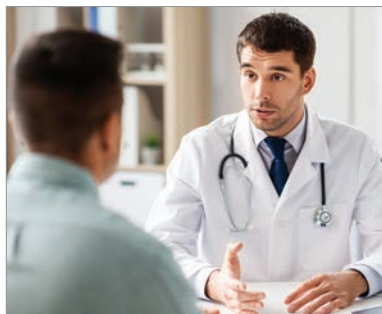
## For Eyes

- Smokers have a higher risk of cataract, AMD, and optic nerve damage. Ready to quit? Go to [Smokefree.gov](http://Smokefree.gov).
- Keep a lid on blood sugar, blood pressure, and LDL cholesterol.
- Get a dilated eye exam by age 40, at least once every 2 years if you're 65 or older, and yearly if you have diabetes.
- Wear sunglasses that block both UVA and UVB rays and a hat with a brim to block the sun.
- To protect your heart (and possibly your vision), eat a diet that's rich in vegetables, fruit, beans, whole grains, and fish, and replace saturated fats with unsaturated fats.
- If you have intermediate AMD, take the PreserVision AREDS2 supplement.
- Claims that supplements "support" or "promote" vision or eye health don't require much evidence. Ignore them.
- For more information about eye health, go to [nei.nih.gov](http://nei.nih.gov).

# Quick Studies

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

## Catching Colorectal Cancer Early



Everyone aged 45 or older should get screened for colorectal cancer, says a new recommendation from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. (The American Cancer Society has had similar advice since 2018.)

Until now, the task force had recommended screening only for adults aged 50 to 75. (It still leaves doctors to decide whether to screen adults aged 76 to 85.)

However, the incidence of colorectal cancer in adults in their 40s has climbed by nearly 15 percent since 2000.

**What to do:** Get screened at 45 (earlier if you have risk factors like inflammatory bowel disease or adenomatous polyps). Avoiding a colonoscopy? Try a test that detects DNA biomarkers of cancer or hidden blood in your stool.

*JAMA* 325: 1943, 1965, 1978, 1998, 2021.

## Size Matters

Bigger servings lead to bigger snacks. People consumed nearly 300 calories' worth of popcorn when given a small (3½ oz.) bag—but nearly 400 calories when given a large (7 oz.) bag—to eat while watching TV in a university lab.

The real-world difference may be greater. At home, people ate 300 calories from the small bag and 500 calories from the large bag.

**What to do:** Trying not to overindulge? Shrink your servings.

*Appetite* 2021. doi:10.1016/j.appet.2021.105160.



## Cycle, Run, Walk, Dance, Repeat

Exercise plus a weight-loss drug can help keep pounds off and boost fitness, says a study funded by the drug's manufacturer.

Researchers randomly assigned 195 people with obesity who had lost roughly 30 pounds on a low-calorie diet to (a) take injections of liraglutide (Saxenda), a

drug that lowers blood sugar and inhibits appetite, (b) do 150 minutes of moderate (or, preferably, 75 minutes of vigorous) exercise a week, (c) take liraglutide and exercise, or (d) take a placebo.



After a year, the drug-plus-exercise group had lost another 7 pounds, the drug-alone group had lost another 2 pounds, and the placebo group had gained 13 pounds. Cardiorespiratory fitness improved only in the two exercise groups. Heart palpitations were more common in the drug-only (but not the drug-plus-exercise) group.

Liraglutide causes thyroid tumors in rodents, says the label warning. Whether it causes tumors in humans is unknown.

**What to do:** Get moving! Even if you take a weight-loss drug, exercise makes you healthier. 🍌

*N. Engl. J. Med.* 384: 1719, 2021.

## DASH Diets & Inflammation



A DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet may do more than lower your blood pressure.

Roughly 400 people with either

elevated or high blood pressure were randomly assigned to a typical U.S. diet or a DASH diet—both provided by researchers. The DASH diet was rich in fruits, vegetables, and low-fat dairy. It included poultry, fish, whole grains, and nuts, and was low in red meat and added sugars.

After four weeks, levels of c-reactive protein (a measure of inflammation) were 13 percent lower and cardiac troponin (a measure of damage to the heart) was 14 percent lower in those eating the DASH diet.

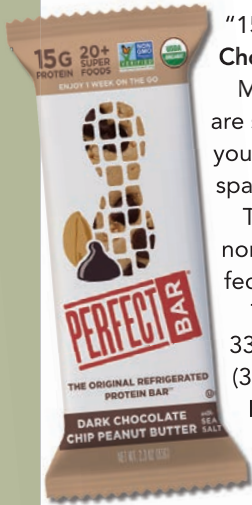
**What to do:** Eat a DASH-like diet, which may also lower your risk of type 2 diabetes, gout, and memory loss (see June 2020, p. 3).

*J. Am. Coll. Cardiol.* 77: 2625, 2021.

# Got a gim

BY LINDSAY MOYER &

## Perfect Marketing



"15 g protein. 20+ superfoods," says the **Dark Chocolate Chip Peanut Butter Perfect Bar**.

Maybe that's why the fudgy chilled bars are suddenly everywhere—from Starbucks to your supermarket's refrigerator case—and are spawning copycats galore from other bar brands.

The main ingredients: peanut butter and nonfat dry milk (not bad) and honey (not perfect).

They help explain why each 2.3 oz. bar packs 330 calories (hefty for a snack) and 12 grams (3 teaspoons) of added sugar. To its credit, Perfect is rolling out two smaller "snack size" bars.

What counts as a "superfood"? The company gets to decide. But whatever it is, don't expect much. The Dark Chocolate Chip Peanut Butter Bar, for example, has more sea salt than its blend of "dried whole food powders" like orange, apple, and carrot.

It's a "bar so fresh it belongs in the fridge," says the website. Hmm. That's also where you'd keep real superfoods. You know, things like fresh oranges, apples, and carrots.

## Sugar Bowl

What is it about açai?

The presence of the exotic berry makes it easy to overlook the sugary smoothie base and sugary granola toppings that often show up in "açai bowls."

A (230-calorie) frozen **Sam-bazon Organic Amazon Super-berry Açai Bowl**, for example, gets its 16 grams (4 teaspoons) of added sugar from tapioca syrup and cane syrup (in the smoothie) and brown sugar (in the granola topping). That's a third of a day's limit.

A **KIND Frozen Almond + Triple Berry Açai Smoothie Bowl** (350 calories) has only 8 grams of added sugar. But each yogurt-sized plastic bowl delivers another 13 grams of sugar from a processed "fruit blend" of juices from concentrate plus "fruit purée concentrate." Not exactly the real fruit smoothie you'd whip up at home.

At smoothie shops, all bets are off.

**Jamba's Açai Primo Bowl** (510 calories) has some berries and bananas, but there's also the "açai blend" (sweetened with white grape juice concentrate), sweetened soy-milk, granola (with "evaporated cane juice"), and honey. Sheesh.



**F**ood marketing in 2021: Replace added sugar with fruit powders or risky sweeteners; add protein, vitamins, or "superfoods"; slap on "immunity" or "hydration" or "keto" claims; steer shoppers

## Zero Sense

"ASPARTAME FREE," say **Zero Sugar Reese's Miniature Cups**.

Reese's skipped one risky sweetener...but added another. That's sucralose, which we rate as "avoid" (see [chemicalcuisine.org](http://chemicalcuisine.org)).

Then there are the fake fibers (like polydextrose) and the sugar alcohols (12 grams per 3-piece serv-

ing). No wonder the label warns that "excess consumption may lead to gas and bloating."

All told, a serving of Zeros has nearly as many empty calories (110) as the company's sugary mini cups (130).

Want chocolate with real food? Try **Skinny Dipped Almonds**. The **Super Dark + Sea Salt** has just 3 grams of added sugar in a 130-calorie serving (16 almonds) and no fake sweeteners.



## I Need a Gimmick

"I need immunity," says **B1U Lemon Chamomile** fortified water.

Each bottle has 140 percent of a day's vitamin C (the amount in two oranges) plus 20 percent of a day's zinc.

"2 oranges = 130 cals or this bottle = 0 cals," adds the side label. B1U's point: water pumped up with vitamin C and zinc beats 2 oranges.

Yes, it would take 2 oranges (or 1 red bell pepper or 1¼ cups of cooked broccoli) to get that much vitamin C. But the fruit or veg also packs a wallop of potassium, folate, fiber, etc.

Need immunity? Real food—not extra zinc and vitamin C—is the key (see Jun. 2020, p. 3).

A 16 oz. B1U runs \$2 or more. That's one heckuva profit for owner Ocean Spray.





# mmick?

KAAMILAH MITCHELL

away from real, unprocessed foods like fresh fruits and vegetables (they could cut into your sales). One thing companies didn't bank on: You'll see right through those gimmicks.

## Sweetened with Fruit...Powder



"No added sugar," says Cascadian Farm Organic Coconut Cashew Granola.

"Sweetened with fruit."

Make that fruit powder. Most of the cereal's sugar (7 grams per 2/3 cup) comes from dried date powder.

Health authorities tell us to eat less added sugar and more fruit. Fruit powder? Not what they have in mind.

Whole fruit is low in calorie density (calories per bite) and full of intact plant cells that you chew (so you feel full). Dried fruit powder misses out on both.

Why not toss some fresh or frozen fruit into your bowl of shredded wheat or oatmeal?

No added sugar...and no added powder. Win-win.

## A Protein Price

When snacks sprinkle on (a little) extra protein, that health halo often comes at a cost.

Take "protein-packed" Whole Foods 365 Lemon Blueberry Protein Oat Clusters. Despite the egg whites and pea and milk protein isolates, each 160-calorie serving delivers just 6 grams of protein...along with 7 grams of added sugar.

Why not spend those calories on an ounce of pistachios (6 grams of plant-based protein) or peanuts (7 grams) or pumpkin seeds (8 grams)? All come with a shot of healthy fats...and no added sugar.



## Fire that Hydrant



"Anchor your routine in hydration," says Hydrant's website, which suggests quaffing its electrolyte drink mix to "start your day with a boost" at 6 a.m., "keep your hydration levels up" after a workout, breakfast, or meditation at 9 a.m., "stay alert and focused" at 2 p.m., and "drift off with ease" at 9 p.m.

But unless you're exercising intensely for more than an hour, plain water is fine. (And if you do exercise enough to need to replace electrolytes—like sodium or potassium—that are lost when you sweat, plain water plus food should do the trick.)

That makes a four-a-day Hydrant Hydrate habit a needless source of calories (80 to 100), added sugar (3 to 4 teaspoons), and sodium (1,040 milligrams).

What about No Added Sugar Hydrant Hydrate? It's just a (salty) waste of \$1 per serving.

## Dumpin' Hines

Duncan Hines Keto Friendly cups "are single-serve, easy-to-prepare sweet treats made specifically for those seeking keto-friendly snacks," says the company's website.

But not for those seeking honest labeling.

Take the Double Chocolate Cake Mix. It has 300 calories, according to its label. But that doesn't include the 2 tablespoons of melted butter or oil you're supposed to mix in before microwaving. The label's only clue: "Scan QR Code or visit [www.duncanhines.com](http://www.duncanhines.com) for as prepared nutrition information." Gee, thanks.

"As prepared," you're looking at 500 calories. And with butter (not oil), the saturated fat hits a day's max (20 grams). Some "snack" for one.

Food companies are always cooking up cakes, cookies, and other junk dressed up with diet buzzwords (low-carb, high-protein, you name it). Keto is just the latest. 🍷



# What's the catch?

## Decoding calorie labels on menus

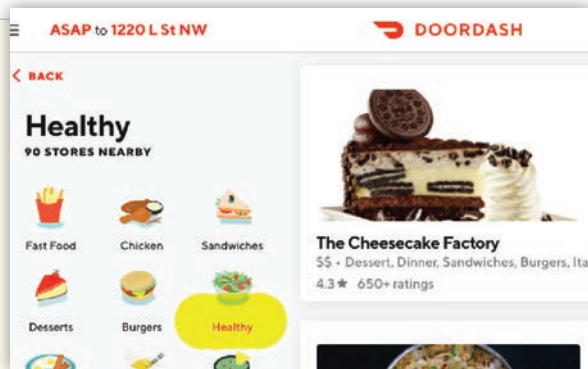
BY LINDSAY MOYER

Eating out or ordering in? If the restaurant has 20 or more locations, the menu has to list calories. (The Center for Science in the Public Interest, *Nutrition Action's* publisher, led the fight for that labeling law.)

But some menus—especially those online or in apps—are tricky. If you don't know the catch, you could end up with more calories (and added sugar or unhealthy fat) than you bargained for.

What's more, on delivery apps like DoorDash, Grubhub, and Uber Eats, you might see calories...or you might not. That's why CSPI has asked the FDA to tell companies that menus on "third-party" apps aren't exempt from the law.

(See other menus without calories? The FDA has said that it would "not object" if restaurants didn't disclose calories during the pandemic. But c'mon, it's been well over a year.)



### YOU CALL THAT "HEALTHY"?

**THE CATCH: "Healthy" labels.** Apps like Uber Eats, DoorDash, Seamless, and Grubhub offer search buttons for "healthy" restaurants. That's a decent way to narrow your options in one tap. And while it led us to plenty of salad shops and healthy-ish fast casual chains, it's no guarantee that the entire menu is healthy. In fact, sometimes burger joints and pizza shops showed up in "healthy" searches. With DoorDash, that included The Cheesecake Factory. *Really?*

### PER SERVING OR PER SCOOP?



**THE CATCH: Scoops.** Ben & Jerry's menu board lists calorie ranges for its different flavors, but it doesn't say that each range is for 1 to 3 "scoops" ...AND that even a "small" cup or cone has 2 scoops. (It may look like 1 big scoop when they hand it to you.) A "large" has 3 scoops.

So even though the menu board says "200-600" calories for, say, a Vanilla or Cherry Garcia ice cream, a "small" cup has 400.

Also confusing: the calorie range next to the price for a "small" on the menu board starts at 200 (not shown in photo). Why? The

company is using 2 scoops of sorbet (at 100 calories per scoop), not ice cream, to get its 200-calorie minimum.

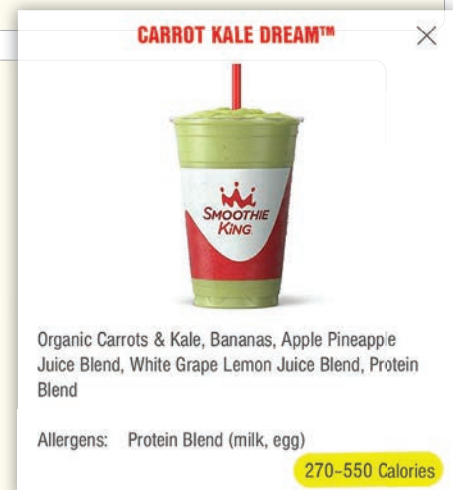
Surely, Ben & Jerry's didn't want customers to underestimate the calories in their ice cream. Nah.

### WHAT'S YOUR SIZE?

**THE CATCH: Sizes.** The Smoothie King app shows "270-550 Calories" when you order a Carrot Kale Dream smoothie.

But you have to check the nutrition information on the company's website to see what the range covers (270 calories for the 20 oz. size, 420 calories for 32 oz., and 550 calories for 40 oz.)

How convenient.



## PER SLICE?

**THE CATCH:** **Slices.** California Pizza Kitchen’s app lists pizzas along with pastas, salads, and other main dishes that typically serve one person. (So does its menu.)

Right below the California Veggie pizza, for example, it says “180 Cal.”

Hope you didn’t miss that “per slice” and “all pizzas are 6 slices” in the parentheses below the ingredients. The entire pizza? 1,080 calories.

The FDA’s rule: Restaurants can use “per slice,” “per wing,” “per breadstick,” etc., as long as they disclose the number of units that are in one order.

New rule: Read before you eat.



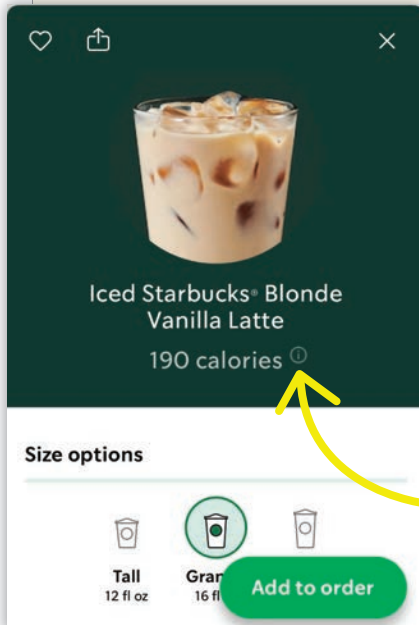
### California Veggie

180 Cal.

Broccolini, eggplant, Cremini mushrooms, sun-dried tomatoes, roasted corn, red onions and Mozzarella. Also available with goat cheese.

[Calories listed are per slice. All pizzas are 6 slices.]

## CUSTOMIZED CALORIES?



**THE CATCH:** **Swaps.** How do you take your coffee? With the Starbucks app, you can swap the default 2% milk for almond, soy, or another milk, add or subtract sugary syrups or whip, and more... without ever talking to a barista.

But see the tiny “i” in the circle next to “190 calories”? It says: “Information is based on standard recipes and

does not reflect customizations.”

So whether it’s Starbucks or other chains, don’t assume that an app’s calories, sugar, etc., match what you’re going to get *unless* you see the calories change as you add or remove ingredients.

## HOW’S YOUR MATH?

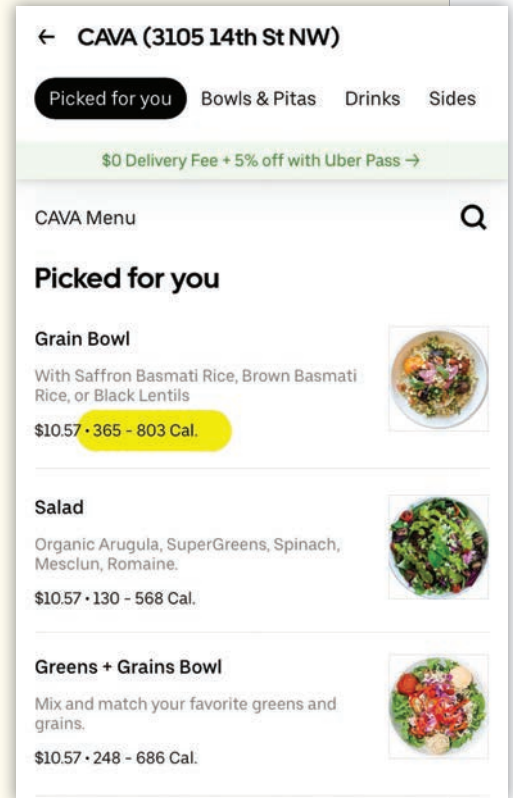
**THE CATCH:** **Ranges.** See a range in calories for a dish made up of customizable components? Don’t count on winding up near the low end.

Take the Grain Bowl at the fast-casual Mediterranean chain Cava. Uber Eats shows it as “365–803 Cal.”

Want to stay under 400 calories? Good luck.

The grain base alone has 200-plus. You can add up to three dips (25 to 60 calories each), one protein (210 to 300 calories) or roasted vegetable (60 to 190 calories), up to a dozen toppings, and a dressing or two (30 to 180 calories each). The toppings’ calories are all labeled—separately—on Uber Eats. Calculator, anyone?

Cava’s own app does the math for you. (Check next to the price after you “add to bag.”) Our advice: Use it to tally your order’s calories, even if you’re placing the order with the restaurant or on a delivery app. You can do the same on Sweetgreen’s app. Bravo!



← CAVA (3105 14th St NW)

Picked for you

Bowls & Pitas

Drinks

Sides

\$0 Delivery Fee + 5% off with Uber Pass →

CAVA Menu

### Picked for you

#### Grain Bowl

With Saffron Basmati Rice, Brown Basmati Rice, or Black Lentils

\$10.57 • 365 - 803 Cal.



#### Salad

Organic Arugula, SuperGreens, Spinach, Mesclun, Romaine.

\$10.57 • 130 - 568 Cal.



#### Greens + Grains Bowl

Mix and match your favorite greens and grains.

\$10.57 • 248 - 686 Cal.



## The Bottom Line

- No calories on a “third-party” delivery app? Check the restaurant’s website or app. (Bonus: If you order from the restaurant, you—and it—can dodge delivery app fees.)
- Don’t assume that calories include side dishes or dressing—especially if you have choices—or “optional” bread.
- See a slash (like “200/400 cal”)? That means your calories depend on *one* choice (say, either a cup or a bowl of soup).
- Ranges (like “300–700 cal”) mean your calories depend on your choice among *three or more* options (say, a side of fries, chips, or salad). Use the website or app or ask the restaurant to see the calories for each option.
- See a menu with confusing labels? Let the FDA know at [menuandvendingcomplaints@fda.hhs.gov](mailto:menuandvendingcomplaints@fda.hhs.gov). 🍌

# SUPERMARKET SAFETY

BY CAITLIN DOW

This year, roughly one in six Americans will suffer from a bout of food poisoning. And harmful bacteria or other microbes can mean more than just an upset stomach. Tainted food kills some 3,000 of us every year. The risk of getting sick is higher if you're pregnant, under age five or over 65, or have a weakened immune system. Here's how to keep your food safe, starting in the supermarket.

## MEAT & POULTRY

- Ignore "raised without hormones" on chicken and turkey labels. It's illegal to give those animals hormones. (It's not illegal to give hormones to cattle and hogs, however.)
- Unless you cook your meat until it's well done, skip "mechanically tenderized," "needle tenderized," or "blade tenderized" beef. It's been pierced by tiny needles that can push microbes from the surface into the meat.

## DAIRY & EGGS

- Avoid raw milk, which can be contaminated with *Campylobacter*, *E. coli*, *Listeria*, or *Brucella*.
- Check the ingredients list to make sure that soft cheeses like brie and Hispanic-style cheeses like queso fresco and cotija are made with pasteurized milk.
- Like a runny yolk? Look for pasteurized eggs, which have been treated to kill *Salmonella*.

## HANDLING

- Use produce bags like a glove to pick up and wrap raw meat, poultry, and seafood packages.
- Separate raw meat, poultry, and seafood from fruits, vegetables, and other foods in your shopping cart, grocery bags, and refrigerator.
- Pick up the most perishable items (like seafood) last before you hit the checkout.
- Wash reusable cloth produce and grocery bags—ideally, after each use—to kill any microbes they may be carrying.



## DELI COUNTER

The bug to worry about in deli meat is *Listeria*, which can live on the meat, on plastic, on metal, and in water. If *Listeria* contaminates a slicer, it can be almost impossible to get rid of. To lower your risk:

- Make sure the deli clerk puts on new gloves after handling each hunk of meat or cheese and places sliced meat or cheese on paper when weighing it.
- If you're over 65 or have a weakened immune system, try packaged deli meat, which is less likely to be contaminated.
- Don't buy more deli meat than you can eat within a few days. *Listeria* can grow at refrigerator temperatures.



## SEAFOOD

- Only buy fresh fish if it is refrigerated or nestled in ice. It should not smell fishy, sour, or ammonia-like.
- Whole fish should have firm flesh, red gills, clear eyes, and no odor. Avoid fillets that are discolored, dark, or dry around the edges.
- Fresh shrimp, scallops, and lobster meat should have a pearl-like color with little or no odor. Dark spots on shrimp are harmless. They occur if the shrimp haven't been treated with additives like the preservative sodium bisulfite.
- Avoid frozen seafood that has ice crystals on it, which may mean that it has been stored for a long time or thawed and refrozen. Frozen fish should be rigid, not bendable.

## PRODUCE

- Buy fresh-cut produce like bagged salad greens or half a melon only if it is refrigerated or nestled in ice.
- Skip raw alfalfa, mung bean, or other sprouts if you're pregnant, over 65, or immunocompromised. Microbes that can cause food poisoning love the warm, damp conditions that are required to grow sprouts.
- Don't buy "raw" or "fresh" juice or cider unless the label says it has been pasteurized.

## SALAD BARS & HOT BARS

- Grabbing a bite from a salad bar? Make sure the cold food is refrigerator cold.
- If you don't see steam coming from a hot bar, steer clear.
- Avoid any salad or hot-food bar that isn't protected by a sneeze guard.

## GROCERY & MEAL DELIVERY

- Arrange for food or meal kits to be delivered when you're home.
- Check the temperature of perishable-food packages with a food thermometer as soon as possible. Contact the company if any of the food is above 40°F.
- Refrigerate or freeze delivered food as soon as possible. Perishables shouldn't be left out above 40°F for more than two hours. 🍷

- Keep meat and seafood apart from vegetables and fruits on the conveyor belt.
- Pack your refrigerated and frozen foods in (reusable) insulated cooler bags. (Trader Joe's and some other supermarkets sell them.)
- In the summer, the trunk is much hotter than the rest of the car. Try to keep food in the air-conditioned cabin for the drive home.

# HOT GRILL SUMMER

BY CAITLIN DOW



Summertime is grilling time...and not just for meat. Here's how to avoid some common pitfalls and make sure your food is safe, healthy, and grilled to perfection.

## Marinate

■ Cooking meat, poultry, or fish at high temperatures can create heterocyclic amines (HCAs), which cause cancer in lab animals. Marinating before grilling slashes HCAs.

■ To prevent food poisoning, thaw and marinate meat in the refrigerator, and don't brush leftover marinade onto the meat while it's cooking.

■ Acids can make meat mushy. Don't marinate with acidic marinades for more than 20 minutes.

## Avoid flare-ups

■ Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) are carcinogens that form when fat or juices drip onto the fire and create flames and smoke. The PAHs in the smoke can stick to the food.

■ To create fewer PAHs, trim meat of all visible fat and move food away from the heat source (push the coals to the side or turn off the burner that's directly under the food).

■ To block smoke and flames, try putting foil over the grates. (Don't wrap the food in foil; that will steam it.)

## Keep it clean

■ Before cooking, heat the grill on high with the lid closed until very hot. Then brush the grates clean and use a folded paper towel held with long tongs to apply a thin layer of a neutral oil that's good at high temperatures (like peanut or canola).

## Switch utensils

■ Don't serve grilled meat, poultry, or fish with the same tray or utensils you used when they were raw.

## Check for bristles

■ Using a wire brush to clean your grates? Check the grill closely before cooking. Between 2002 and 2014, an estimated 1,700 Americans ended up in the emergency room after swallowing wire bristles that were stuck to grilled food.

## Pick plants

■ HCAs don't form in fruits, vegetables, or plant-based burgers, franks, and sausages.

■ Think outside the onion. If you've never grilled pineapple, peaches, edamame, or zucchini, you're in for a real treat.

## Meat: mind the temperature

- The more well-done or charred the meat is, the more HCAs it will have.
- Use an instant-read food thermometer to make sure the thickest parts reach a safe temperature. That means:

**Chicken:** 165°F

**Beef, pork, lamb (ground):** 160°F

**Beef, pork, lamb (steaks or chops):** 145°F

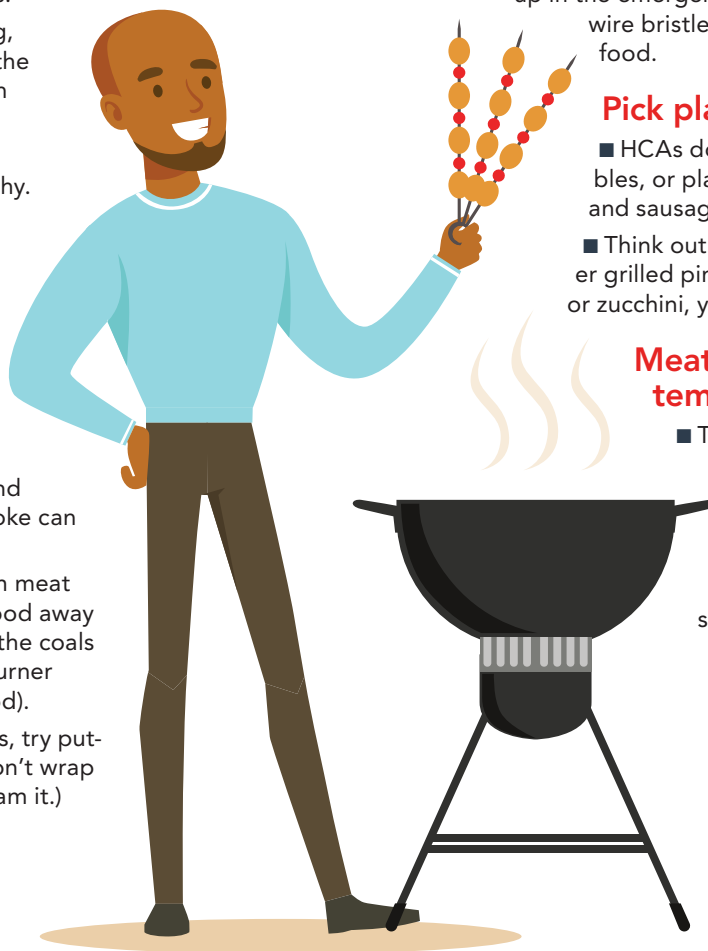
**Fish:** 145°F (or until the flesh is opaque and separates easily with a fork)

- To prevent chicken and fish from overcooking, start them on the hot side of the

grill, then flip them over to a cooler spot to slow down the cooking.

## Keep it cool

- Keep your cooler in the shade.
- Refrigerate leftovers promptly. Discard food that has sat out for more than 2 hours (1 hour if the outside temperature is above 90°F). 🍴



# The Healthy Cook

## Summer on a Plate

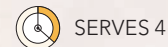


This refreshing take on Greek chicken souvlaki and tzatziki goes great with a side of whole wheat pita. Got extra cucumbers or another cool, crunchy veg? Slice 'em up with the tomatoes. Hello, summer. 🍅

### Chicken with Yogurt Sauce

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| ½ cup plain Greek yogurt (0% or 2%)             | 1 tsp. ground coriander or cumin         |
| ¼ cup minced cucumber                           | ½ tsp. dried oregano                     |
| 2 Tbs. minced fresh dill or mint                | ¼ tsp. brown sugar                       |
| 1 Tbs. lemon juice                              | ¼ tsp. black pepper                      |
| 1 clove garlic, grated                          | 1 lb. boneless, skinless chicken breasts |
| 2 Tbs. + 1 Tbs. + 1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil | 1 red onion, cut into wedges             |
| ¼ tsp. + ¼ tsp. kosher salt                     | 2 tomatoes, cut into wedges              |
| 1 tsp. paprika                                  |  |

1. Make the Yogurt Sauce: In a small bowl, whisk together the yogurt, cucumber, dill, lemon juice, and garlic with 2 Tbs. oil and ¼ tsp. salt.
2. In another small bowl, mix together the paprika, coriander, oregano, sugar, and pepper with the remaining ¼ tsp. salt. Pound the chicken to ¼-inch thickness and season with the spice mixture.
3. In a nonstick pan over medium heat, heat 1 Tbs. oil until shimmering. Sauté the onion until lightly browned, 3–4 minutes. Remove from the pan.
4. Sauté the chicken in the remaining 1 Tbs. oil until cooked through, 3–5 minutes.
5. Slice the chicken and serve with the onion, tomatoes, and Yogurt Sauce.



SERVES 4

PER SERVING (3 oz. chicken + 1 cup vegetables + ¼ cup sauce): calories 290  
total fat 16 g | sat fat 2.5 g | carbs 8 g | fiber 2 g | total sugar 4 g  
added sugar < 1 g | protein 29 g | sodium 300 mg

Photo: Kate Sherwood/CSPIN

**For more  
summer recipes**

Go to [nutritionaction.com/summer2](https://nutritionaction.com/summer2)  
for **White Fish Veracruz** and  
**Fattoush Salad & Falafel**

**For cooking  
advice**

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



## FOOD FIND

### Whatamelon



Want a slice of summer? **Watermelons** that are grown closer to home are hitting their peak about now.

We're not talking the

picnic watermelons of your youth. Some 9 out of 10 domestic melons are now seedless, and most are nowhere near as huge as the older oblong varieties with seeds.

True to its name, watermelon is—drumroll—about 90 percent water. So are cantaloupe and honeydew. That means tons of refreshment for just 50ish calories per cup.

And tons of nutrients. There's vitamin C, potassium, and (in cantaloupe and honeydew) folate. A cup of cantaloupe will also give you a third of a day's vitamin A, thanks to its beta-carotene. All for about the same price as a pint of berries. What a deal!

Got a smaller household? Try "personal" watermelons or mini or "sugar cube" cantaloupes.

The \$64,000 question with any melon: Is it ripe? For watermelon, check the underside for a creamy yellow spot. (Stripes don't signal ripeness.)

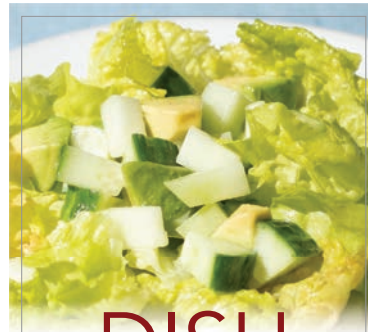
Ripe cantaloupe rinds have a yellowish cast. Ripe honeydews are creamy yellow and a bit tacky or waxy to the touch.

Your sliced melon a tad underripe? Use it in a savory salad (like our Dish of the Month) or a fresh salsa (for a recipe, go to [nutritionaction.com/melonsalsa](http://nutritionaction.com/melonsalsa)).

No matter how you slice it, summer time is melon time.

[watermelon.org](http://watermelon.org)

Photos: beataaldrige/stock.adobe.com (top left), Jimmy Dean (top right), Kate Sherwood/CSPI (bottom).



## DISH of the month

### The New Green Salad

Whisk together 1 Tbs. olive oil, 1 tsp. white balsamic, ½ tsp. mayo, ¼ tsp. dijon mustard, and ⅛ tsp. salt. Toss with 4 cups salad greens and ½ cup each honeydew, cucumber, and avocado. Serves 2.

## FOOD FAIL



### Don't Bite

"Give your morning a little boost with your morning favorites made mini," says the TV ad for **Jimmy Dean Loaded Sausage Bites**.

"No fork, no plate, no trouble."

And no...or at least not a lot of...real food. Take the **Meat Lovers Sausage, Egg, Cheese & Bacon** bites.

Jimmy whips them up out of ingredients you'd find in your pantry. You know: pork, water, potassium lactate, textured soy protein concentrate, enzyme modified cheddar cheese, gum acacia, natural flavors, sorbitol, xanthan gum, lactose, egg, soybean oil, nonfat milk, corn starch, potassium sorbate, nisin preparation, powdered cellulose, sodium phosphates, sodium



erythorbate, sodium nitrite, sodium diacetate, sodium lactate, salt, sugar, MSG, and more.

They're practically homemade!

Bonus: Each plastic cup delivers 9 grams of saturated fat (half a day's worth) and 840 milligrams of sodium (a third of a day's max), but only 290 calories.

That leaves room for some of Jimmy's other breakfast products! You've got your **Pancakes & Sausage on a Stick**, your **Stuffed Hash Browns**, your **Casserole Bites**, **Biscuit Roll-Ups**, **Breakfast Nuggets**, **Breakfast Burritos**, **Sausage Skillets**, and more.

"For those busy mornings that need the perfect breakfast," says the website.

Perfect for Jimmy's bottom line, that is.

[jimmydean.com](http://jimmydean.com)—800-925-3326

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