

Diet-Busting Foods That May Surprise You

There are many foods that seem like they're healthy but are actually loaded with calories and fat.

Beware of the counterfeit food, disguised as healthy and seemingly good for your diet, but secretly packing quite a calorie punch. There are plenty of suspects out there, ones that might seem like they should be obvious, and others that sneak past your lips without you even knowing it. Either way, they add a significant number of calories to your diet. From soup to nuts, here are the biggest culprits.

Soups

"We frequently think of soup as a filler, but not necessarily a rich source of calories," says Susan Moores, a registered dietitian and spokeswoman for the American Dietetic Association.

So for lunch, you have a nice light salad (Warning! See below!) and a hearty soup complete with crackers, all the while patting yourself on the back for sticking to your diet. The bad news is that certain soups can be packed full of calories and fat, especially favorites like New England clam chowder or cream of broccoli.

"Broth soups are great, but cream or milk-based soups can be fairly high in fat, with more than 300 calories for 8-12 ounces," says Moores.

Sugar-Free Cookies

"Sugar-free cookies fall into the fat-free phenom," says Moores. "When an ingredient considered bad -- such as fat or sugar -- is removed, often people will think that means fewer calories or even no calories."

In other words, they give themselves a license to eat and eat and eat until the package is empty because, hey, no sugar means no calories, right? Wrong -- sugar-free doesn't necessarily mean good for your diet.

"Checking the package label will tell the true story," says Moores. "It's not uncommon for a fat-free or even sugar-free food to have nearly the same number of calories as its regular counterpart, and taste-wise, there's no comparison to the real deal."



Pork

Is it the other white meat?

"Some cuts or preparation techniques make pork great," Moores tells WebMD. "Others don't." Depending on the cut, the piece of pork in front of you can be comparable to low-fat, low-calorie chicken, or as high in fat as a hot dog. And even if it's a lean cut of meat, adding sauce or cheese to a nice slice of pork can ruin its value to your waistline.

"Loin cuts such as tenderloin and sirloin are lean," says Moores. "Often it's preparation or sauces that make pork a boon or a bust."

Coffee

You can't get your day started without a big cup of java, and as a stand-alone, you'll be glad to hear it's OK for your diet.

"Coffee by itself is calorie free," says Moores.

But start adding on accessories and your seemingly innocent morning coffee turns your diet in the wrong direction.

"Coffee drinks can be astronomically high in calories depending on the ingredients and size of the drink one selects," says Moores. "I've seen one coffee drink that contained more than 1,000 calories for 16 ounces. Ouch."

Salad Dressings

Salad dressings are notorious for sneaking loads of extra calories and fat onto what might seem like a healthy meal.

"Some studies show that women who are high salad eaters get up to 60% of their total fat each day from salad dressings," says Rick Hall, a registered dietitian and advisory board member for the Arizona Governor's Council on Health, Physical Fitness, and Sports.

Throw on a little cheese, croutons, and bacon bits, and your lunch is starting to look less healthy, more calorie packed, and detrimental to your diet.

Breakfast Bars

Don't be fooled by the wrapping.

"Some breakfast bars look healthy and even have healthy looking pictures on the box," Hall tells WebMD. "But if you look at the actual calories and extra sugars in its ingredients, it's pretty high."

The telltale trick, explains Hall, is to see what's listed first on the ingredient list.

"When one of the first two or three ingredients is high-fructose corn syrup, that's something to be very cautious of," says Hall. "And that's what you see with a lot of the breakfast bars."

Dried Fruits and Granola

"Dried fruits don't contain any water, which makes them very dense in calories," says David Levitsky, PhD, who is a professor of nutrition and psychology at Cornell University.

Foods like raisins, dried apples, and apricots look healthy on the outside, but on the inside, they're secretly carrying more than their fair share of calories.

"A handful is OK," says Levitsky. "But if you sit down and eat the whole package thinking they're low-calorie, you're wrong."

The same goes for granola.

"Granola sounds great, but it's very rich in fat, so you have to watch how much you eat," says Levitsky.

Juice and Soda

"You might think it's just a drink, and not even notice the calories, but they add up," says Levitsky.

You have a juice midmorning, and a soda midafternoon, and next thing you know, you've consumed an extra 400 calories in liquids.

"Don't get carried away with the idea that drinks other than water are calorie-free," says Levitsky. "You have that extra snack or drink each day thinking it's not a lot, but you're not thinking about the long-term consequences."

Low-Fat/Low-Cal Foods

"When these low-carb diets came out, people would look at a cake and see that it was labeled as no fat and low calorie, and they'd eat the whole thing," Levitsky tells WebMD.

Unfortunately, no fat and low calorie doesn't mean you can have your cake and eat the whole thing, too.

"At the end you have to be careful because they still contain calories," says Levitsky. "Low calorie does not mean no calorie."

Nuts

"Nuts are generally healthy," says Levitsky. "They're a good source of protein and vitamins."

But the tricky thing about nuts is that they're only healthy if you can eat just one serving.

"The problem with peanuts is that most people don't eat half a cup and walk away," says Levitsky. "Once you get started it's hard to put a jar of peanuts down."

That's when your diet goes south.

"Nuts are extremely high in fat and calories," says Levitsky. "And if you're sitting there with a bag or jar of peanuts, look out."

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