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"Eat Healthy, Live Happy"

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Food Fraud

Detective work should not have to be part of grocery shopping but it often is. Every food manufacturer wants their product to catch the consumer's eye. With clever marketing and advertising, they try to make their food appear to be the healthiest and best tasting option, but is it really? Adding vegetables, probiotics, and protein or creating "low carb" options are all seen as improvements but do they actually make the food better for you? Below are some of the latest food frauds out there.

Veggies Made Great Gluten Free Double Chocolate Muffins: Since vegetables are made mostly of water, their weight puts them at the top of the ingredient list, but right after veggies comes sugar. Each muffin has 8 grams added with very little dietary fiber, which should be coming from all of those vegetables. This muffin is more of a treat than a source of vegetables.

Cauliflower Pizza Crusts: Be careful with the vegetable claims on some of these. The "O That's Good" crust with its 33% cauliflower does not even contain enough cauliflower per serving to provide one serving of vegetables, which is only ½ cup, even in the Fire Roasted Vegetable Pizza. Not only that but the calories per serving are also equivalent to a lot of traditional frozen pizzas. There are options out there with more cauliflower (80%) and less calories ("50% less than regular pizza crust") like Green Giant Cauliflower Pizza Crust.

Veggie Pastas and Tortillas: When it comes to vegetable pasta, you are better off choosing the real thing, like zucchini, carrot, squash, or sweet potato noodles. The powdered versions of vegetables, like spinach, carrot, and/or tomato, used in most veggie pastas, like Ronzoni Garden Delight, and tortillas provide more color than nutrition.

Probiotic Infused Foods: Products like sparkling waters, chips, cereals, nuts, nut butters, seeds, granola bars, chocolate, and ice creams are advertising the addition of probiotics to entice consumers. Just know that both specific organism (identified by genus, species, and even strain) and dosage matter, and often there is not enough research on the probiotics being added to food products. Many manufacturers do not even disclose the organism or dosage per serving or the health benefits associated with them. With the premium price tag attached to these probiotic enhanced foods and beverages, foods naturally rich in probiotics, like yogurt (with live and active cultures), kefir, kombucha, kimchi, sauerkraut (fresh, not shelf stable), and miso are a better option.

Dessert Hummus: While it is definitely a better option than traditional frosting, watch your portion. Every 2-tablespoon serving provides 6 – 7 grams of added sugar. Although the first ingredient is chickpeas, the second is sugar so use this as a treat and don't scoop right from the tub. Measure your portion into a separate container before snacking. *Continued on back...*

eggie Chips and Stix: Don't be fooled by the word "veggie". Remember that potatoes are a vegetable too. Many veggie chips have similar amounts of calories, fat, and sodium to potato chips and are either made using other starchy vegetables, like cassava, taro, and sweet potato. Others claim to be made from non-starchy vegetables, like broccoli, beets, spinach, and tomatoes. Don't let the images fool you. Read through the ingredients carefully to see if the food actually contains any whole or cut fruit or vegetables, not concentrates or powders. Good Health Veggie Stix, for example, advertise their "Extra Goodness!" all over the package with vegetable images and quantified amounts of nutrients as follows.

2 ½ cups broccoli = 25 % vitamin A

3 ½ beets = 25% vitamin C

5 tomatoes = 15% vitamin E

7 cups spinach = 20% vitamin B6

and 2 carrots = 20% vitamin K

along with the following statement . . .

"Contains the following vitamin values of veggies per serving"

Wait a minute, what do they mean by "vitamin values"? If you read through the actual ingredients, the first five are as follows. **Potato Starch, Dehydrated Potato, Expeller Pressed Sunflower Oil or Safflower Oil, Rice Flour, and Salt** Since ingredients are listed from most to least, the first ingredients are a good indication of what makes up the majority of this food item, which happens to be refined grains. Much later on in the list, you will find some dehydrated tomato, spinach, green pepper, carrot, and broccoli. But at the end of the ingredients is where you will find all of those added vitamins, not from the dehydrated vegetables, of which the amounts are inadequate to provide enough nutrients. Misleading and inaccurate labeling claims provide consumers with a false sense of security that these processed foods are adequate dietary substitutes for fresh fruits and vegetables, which they are not.

Muscle Up with a Strong Gut

(source: Tufts University Health & Nutrition Letter, August 2019)

The gut microbiome, or the trillions of tiny microorganisms (or microbes) that live in our intestines, plays a role in digestion, nutrient absorption, intestinal health, and risk for chronic diseases, like diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Although preliminary, recent research suggests that there may be a connection between the microbiome and muscle mass. Size and strength of muscles tend to decrease with age. Staying active and including exercises that strengthen muscles is important, but you may also want to maintain a healthy gut microbiome. Scientists have found changes in the microbiome of older adults that increases inflammation, which may contribute to muscle loss. Animal research has also shown that changes in muscle composition, like fat buildup in muscle tissue, could also be influenced by gut bacteria. Although more research is needed, the gut microbiome is impacted by diet. Eating and/or drinking foods with live and active cultures, like yogurt and kefir, as well as fermented foods, like kimchi, kombucha, fresh sauerkraut (not shelf stable), and miso will help to populate the gut. Foods high in natural (not added) fibers, like fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, beans (legumes), and whole grains will help sustain healthy gut microbes and may be involved in the structure and function of muscles. So, go ahead and try to reach the recommended daily allowance for natural fiber, which is 25 grams for women up to age 51 years, 21 grams for women age 51 or older, 38 grams for men up to age 51, and 30 grams for men age 51 or older.



The articles in this newsletter are provided by
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Beat the Holiday Treats

Party appetizers often make it tough to stay on the healthy track. Bite size does not mean low calorie.

You won't believe the impact that just a few nibbles can have.

Mini Pigs in a Blanket:

The average person will eat about 3 of these bite size appetizers. Since each one has 70 calories, 5 grams of fat, and 128 mg. of sodium, this puts us at 210 calories, 15 grams of fat, and 384 mg. of sodium so far.

Mixed Nuts:

Nuts are healthy but high in calories. A mere quarter cup has about 340 calories, 30 grams of healthy fat, and 180 mg. of sodium. Take a few and then move away from the bowl.

Spinach Dip:

Traditional spinach dip has 166 calories, 16 grams of total fat, and 290.5 grams of sodium per $\frac{1}{4}$ cup. Of course, it is typically served with chips, which add about 100 calories, 5 grams of fat, and 82 mg. of sodium per 5 chips making this a 266 calorie snack with a total of 21 grams of fat and 372.5 mg. of sodium if you stick to 5 chips.

Swedish Meatballs:

The President's Choice version has 260 calories, 20 grams of fat, and 540 mg. of sodium per 6 meatballs. At least they are healthier than the pig's in a blanket.

Cheese and Crackers:

Two ounces of cheese, like cheddar, brie, or blue cheese, has approximately 220 calories, 18 grams of fat, and 360 mg. of sodium, and that is not even the triple cream. Six triscuits adds 120 calories, 3.5 grams of fat, and 160 mg. of sodium bringing the total for this appetizer to 340 calories, 21.5 grams of fat, and 520 mg. of sodium. That is if you only have two ounces of cheese, which is the size of about 8 stacked dice.



All of this, plus drinks and dessert, and you have consumed about 3,000 calories. Fat, salt, and sugar are not the only way to entice the taste buds.

These party pleasing hors d' oeuvres are an indulgence without the extra calories.

Shrimp Cocktail:

Loaded with protein and low in calories, this is the perfect appetizer to indulge in. Each medium shrimp provides 7 calories and a teaspoon of cocktail sauce adds about 5 calories so you can eat 10 of these for 120 calories.

Yogurt Based Spinach Dip:

The recipe below has 81 calories, 5 grams of total fat, 1 gram of saturated fat, and 290.5 grams of sodium per serving (¼ cup). To reduce the sodium in this recipe, try replacing the dry vegetable soup mix with a combination of garlic powder, onion powder, crushed dry parsley, dill weed, black pepper, and a small amount of salt to taste. Serve with vegetables for dipping, which add minimal calories but are loaded with vitamins and minerals.

Serves 16/Ingredients:

10 ounces Frozen Spinach

16 ounces Plain Nonfat Yogurt

1 cup Light Mayonnaise

1 Package Dry Vegetable Soup Mix (Suggested: Knorr)

Thaw spinach and squeeze out water. Place spinach in a large bowl and stir in yogurt, mayonnaise, and dry soup mix. Cover with plastic wrap and chill in the refrigerator for approximately 2 hours.

Toothpick Caprese:

Ten of these mini salads come in at about 100 calories.

2 Pints Grape Tomatoes

1 Bunch Basil Leaves, large leaves can be torn in half

1 (8 oz.) Container Mini Mozzarella Balls (Suggested: Belgioioso Pearls)

Balsamic Vinegar Spray (Suggested: Roland Balsamic Spritzer)

Toothpicks

Slide one grape tomato, folded basil leaf, and mozzarella ball onto a toothpick, and spray with balsamic vinegar. Place on a serving dish, and continue with the remaining grape tomatoes.



Olives:

Although the sodium content is a little high, olives are a low calorie snack option. Either black or green, 8 - 10 olives have only 45 calories.

Deviled Eggs with a Healthy Twist! Using either avocado or low fat mayonnaise reduces the calories and improves the nutrition of traditional deviled eggs. These high protein snacks are very filling and tasty with only 34-50 calories ea.

Guacamole Stuffed Eggs:

Makes 24 servings

12 Large Eggs, Hard Boiled, Peeled, and Cut in Half Lengthwise

2 ripe Avocados

1-2 Tbsp. Fresh Squeezed Lime Juice (to taste)

2 Tbsp. Red Onion, diced

¼ tsp. Salt

1 clove Garlic, minced

½ Jalapeno Pepper, minced with seeds for added heat (optional)

2 Tbsp. Fresh Cilantro, minced

Chili Powder to garnish



Remove yolks from egg halves, put 12 yolk halves in a bowl, and discard the rest or reserve them for another recipe. Add avocado, lime juice, red onion, salt, garlic, jalapeno pepper, and cilantro to the bowl, and stir gently until it reaches the desired consistency. Stuff egg white halves with avocado mixture. Sprinkle each with chili powder if desired. Serve immediately or refrigerate until served.

Eating Well Deviled Eggs

Some of the filling is replaced with nonfat cottage cheese.

(source: www.eatingwell.com, EatingWell May/June 2009)

Makes: 24 servings / Active Time: 20 minutes / Total Time: 20 minutes / Ingredients:

12 Large hard-boiled eggs (see Tip), peeled

1/3 cup nonfat cottage cheese

1/4 cup low-fat mayonnaise

3 Tbsp. minced fresh chives or scallion greens

1 Tbsp. sweet pickle relish

2 tsp. yellow mustard

1/8 tsp. salt

Paprika for garnish



Eating Well Deviled Eggs (continued)

Halve eggs lengthwise with a sharp knife. Gently remove the yolks. Place 16 yolk halves in a food processor (discard the remaining 8 yolk halves). Add cottage cheese, mayonnaise, chives (or scallion greens), relish, mustard and salt; process until smooth. Spoon about 2 teaspoons yolk mixture into each egg white half. Sprinkle with paprika, if desired.

Make Ahead Tip: Cover and refrigerate for up to 1 day.

Tip: To hard-boil eggs: Place eggs in a single layer in a saucepan; cover with water. Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to low and cook at the barest simmer for 10 minutes. Remove from heat, pour out hot water and cover the eggs with ice-cold water. Let stand until cool enough to handle before peeling.



HAPPY
Holidays

Social gatherings are often centered on food, but true holiday spirit is about celebrating together, establishing lasting traditions, and giving to others. Use parties as a time to catch up with friends and family. Party food doesn't have to be high in calories, especially when shared with friends and family filled with holiday cheer. Enjoy comforting, healthy food and fun this holiday season.

Sincerely, Kristin Niessink MS, RD, LDN