

Foods That Fool

When it comes to losing weight, we all know that cutting back on calories is critical. It takes great effort to make healthy food choices, thus it's infuriating when you're fooled by a food that sounds diet friendly but is actually loaded with calories, sugar, and fat! Here's a rundown on some of the popular offenders. I call them foods that fool.

- **Granola** -- Most brands are loaded with calories and sugar. In fact, granola is one of the most calorie dense cereals on the market. A typical $\frac{2}{3}$ cup serving has 220 calories and 17 grams of sugar - that's more than 4 teaspoons of sugar. What's more, most people pour 2-cup portions - that's a whopping 660 calories and 51 grams sugar (12 teaspoons -- yikes!).

Joy's Solution: Watch the portions. Stick with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup or 4 tablespoons of granola... and mix with $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of another less caloric cereal like Bran Flakes, Total, Kashi Heart-to-Heart, Wheaties, or plain Cheerios. You also can sprinkle 2-3 tablespoons of granola on nonfat, flavored yogurt (again, enjoying the crunch and flavor while minimizing the amount).

- **2% Reduced-Fat Milk** -- 2% reduced-fat milk is not that low-fat/low-calorie when you consider that whole milk is 3.3% fat.

Breakdown for 1 cup milk:

- Whole milk: 150 calories
- 2% reduced fat milk: 120 calories
- 1% reduced fat milk: 100 calories
- Skim milk: 80 calories

Joy's Solution: Switch from 2% reduced-fat milk to skim milk - and assuming you have one serving each day - at the end of the year, you'll save more than 14,000 calories and drop 4 pounds!

- **Chicken Caesar Salads** -- It's a salad, right? What could be unhealthy? Thanks to excessive dressing, croutons, and cheese, a standard chicken Caesar salad can total 1,130 calories and add more than 90 grams of fat to your diet!

Joy's Solution: Request NO dressing (you'll save up to 475 calories) and lose the croutons (another 70 calorie savings). Instead, toss with 1-2 teaspoons olive oil and unlimited balsamic vinegar. This lighter version provides about 685 calories - for a savings of 445 calories. If you can't give up the Caesar dressing, at least order it on the side and use only 2 tablespoons. Some people save salad dressing calories with the dipping method - request it on the side and lightly dip your fork into the dressing before each bite.

- **Dried Fruit** -- All fruit is packed with nutrition; however, dried fruit is significantly higher in calories than fresh fruit when you calculate comparable amounts. That's because you're taking out all the moisture leaving a small piece of concentrated sugar (albeit "natural" sugar).

Consider this:

- 12 small pieces of dried mango = 320 calories
- 2 red apples + 15 grapes + ½ small cantaloupe = 320 calories

Joy's Solution: If you're watching your weight, eat fresh fruit! You'll get much more volume and satisfaction.

- **Yogurt Covered Nuts** -- This yogurt snack is strictly food for the soul! It's filled with calories, sugar, fat... and clearly NO active cultures. In fact, 20 yogurt covered nuts = 460 calories, 32 grams fat, 14 grams saturated fat, and 8 teaspoons sugar.

Joy's Solution: Skip the candy and enjoy the real thing: take one cup nonfat, flavored yogurt and mix with one tablespoon peanuts, soy nuts, chopped walnuts or slivered almonds. Only 160 calories.

- **Banana Chips** -- Bananas fried in oil and sugar - over the top! Consider that 1 cup typically provides 300 calories, 20 grams fat, 18 grams saturated fat (that's the artery clogging type), and 19 grams sugar (4.75 teaspoons).

Joy's Solution: Enjoy a fresh, frozen banana for only 110 calories (no fat or added sugar). For an extra treat, try a sliced banana dipped in 2-3 tablespoons of Hershey's Light chocolate syrup - my kids love it.

- **Trail Mix** -- Although packed with healthy nutrients and fiber, traditional trail mix is also loaded with calories that add up quickly. In fact, ½ cup typically equals 350 calories (that's the same number of calories as 11 cups of air-popped popcorn).

Joy's Solution: Keep trail mix portions to ¼ cup servings. When you're looking for a snack with greater volume, enjoy 5-6 cups of air popped popcorn. But if weight is not an issue, go for it.

- **Fruit Smoothies** -- It's true, fruit smoothies can provide a lot of nutrition, but they pack in the calories as well. One 24-ounce smoothie provides about 450 calories. That's the same amount of calories in 10-12 doughnut holes!

Joy's Solution: Save fruit smoothies for occasional indulgences or make less caloric homemade versions using 1-2 servings fruit, ½ cup skim milk, and ½ non-fat flavored yogurt. For a thicker consistency, pre-freeze fruit and/or add ½ cup crushed ice.

Credit – Joy Bauer, M.S., R.D., C.D.N.