

# Restaurant's Nutrition Score Card

## Applebee's (F)

We've tried repeatedly to get Applebee's to cough up the nutritional information on their menu items, but the food mogul refuses to cave. Without full disclosure, we have no choice but to give them a flunking grade. (And while Applebee's takes it sweet time coming clean, we took advantage of New York legislation requiring chain restaurants to publish calorie counts to find out what they're hiding. As you'll see from the numbers below, plenty.)

### SURVIVAL STRATEGY

The saving grace on the Applebee's menu is the handful of items created in partnership with Weight Watchers®, the only items for which the restaurant offers any nutritional information at all. Unfortunately that doesn't leave you much to choose from, but unless you want to play Russian roulette with your health, you're better off sticking to this menu.

## Arby's (C+)

Too bad Arby's didn't toss out their oversized breads when they removed the trans fats from the fries in 2006. If they had, you wouldn't have to worry about the extra 360 calories in the honey wheat sandwich bread. In fact, Arby's might be just a little too proud of its trans-fat free frying oil; the restaurant doesn't offer a single side that hasn't had a hot bath in the stuff.

### SURVIVAL STRATEGY

Don't think you're doing yourself any favors by ordering off the Market Fresh menu. You're far better off with a Roast Beef or Melt Sandwich, which will save you an average of nearly 300 Calories over a Market Fresh sandwich or wrap.

## Baja Fresh (D-)

It's a surprise Baja Fresh's menu has yet to collapse under the weight of its own fatty fare. About a third of the items on the menu have more than 1,000 calories, and most of them are spiked with enough sodium to melt a polar icecap. Order the Shrimp Burrito Dos Manos Enchilado-Style, for instance, and you're looking at 5,130 mg sodium—that's more than 2 days' worth in one sitting!

### SURVIVAL STRATEGY

Unless you're comfortable stuffing 110 grams of fat into your arteries, avoid the nachos at all costs. In fact, avoid almost everything on this menu. The only safe options are the tacos, or a salad topped with salsa verde and served without the elephantine tortilla bowl.

## Bob Evans (C)

Sure there are plenty of healthy entrée and side options on the menu, but don't let yourself be sucked in by the more gratuitous Southern-style creations. Some of Bob's food still suffers from a soggy case of trans-fat overload. The Stacked & Stuffed Pancakes, for instance, have between 6 and 9 grams per serving, and the Slow Roasted Chicken Pot Pie has a near heart-stopping 13 grams—not to mention the nearly 3,000 mg of sodium.

### **SURVIVAL STRATEGY**

Bob Evans became famous for its sausage, but each link on your plate adds 125 calories, 80 percent of which is pure fat. Opt instead for breakfast staples like oatmeal, eggs, fruit, and yogurt, which are all available as a Fit From the Farm Breakfasts that come with Turkey Links to quell the sausage cravings with less than half the fat.

## Boston Market (B+)

With more than a dozen healthy vegetable sides and lean meats like turkey and roast sirloin on the menu, the low-cal, high-nutrient possibilities at Boston Market are endless. But with nearly a dozen calorie-packed sides and fatty meats like dark meat chicken and meat loaf, it's almost as easy to construct a lousy meal.

### **SURVIVAL STRATEGY**

There are three simple steps to nutritional salvation: 1) Start with turkey, sirloin, or rotisserie chicken. 2) Add two noncreamy, nonstarchy vegetable sides. 3) Ignore all special items, such as pot pie and nearly all of the sandwiches.

## Burger King (C+)

We got word from Burger King in October 2008 that they were finally removing the trans fats from its deep fryer. That's an undisputed victory for the nutritional advocates, but don't think that means Burger King's menu is completely sans trans fat. The burgers and Whoppers are still sullied with the dangerous oils, with some harboring as many as 3 grams apiece. What's just as bad is that BK likes to smear 160 calories' worth of mayonnaise on just about everything, so you better get used to asking for you sandwich without.

### **SURVIVAL STRATEGY**

There are only two burgers you should even consider: the regular hamburger or the Whopper Jr. without mayo. Other decent options include the Chicken Tenders, the 9-piece Chicken Fries, or for breakfast, the Ham Omelet Sandwich. Pair any of these with BK's Fresh Apple Fries (fresh apples slices served with low-fat caramel dipping sauce) and a zero-calorie beverage, and you'll walk out with a decent meal that has less than 500 calories.

## Dairy Queen (D+)

Dairy Queen has a taste for excess that rivals that of other fast-food failures such as Carl's Jr. and Hardees. But unlike Carl's, DQ offers a whole slew of abominable ice cream creations to wash down its sodium-spiked, trans-fatty foods. Here's a look at one hypothetical meal: A Bacon Cheddar GrillBurger with Onion

Rings and a Small Snickers Blizzard, a staggering 1,740-calorie meal with 2,640 mg sodium and 83 grams of fat—2 grams of which are trans fats.

## **SURVIVAL STRATEGY**

If you're looking for real nutrition, you won't find it here, so your best strategy is to play solid defense. Skip elaborate burgers, fried sides, and specialty ice cream concoctions entirely. Order a Grilled Chicken Sandwich or an Original Burger, and if you must have a treat, stick to a scoop of soft serve or a small sundae.

## **Domino's (B)**

The risks facing Domino's pies are the same as those facing any other pizza purveyor: oversized crusts, fatty meats, and greasy shag carpets of cheese. But Domino's Crunchy Thin Crust cheese pizza is one of the lowest-calorie pies in America, which makes a ground foundation for a decent dinner. Just avoid the breadsticks and Domino's Oven Baked Sandwiches, which have average of 37 grams of fat apiece and enough sodium to fill your entire day's quota.

## **SURVIVAL STRATEGY**

Domino's thin crust has fewer calories than any other pizza chain's. Show your appreciation by making it your go-to order. Want toppings? Stick to ham and pineapple, or pure veggies.

## **IHOP (F)**

We knew IHOP was up to no good when it refused to reveal its nutritional information when first asked in 2007. But not even our suspicions could prepare us for the numbers that hit the board when a New York City law forced them to post their calorie counts: 1,200-calorie crepes, 1,300-calorie breakfast combos, and 1,800-calorie Crispy Chicken Strips. We give the restaurant an F for its closed-door policy, but it might not score much better even if we crunched the numbers.

## **SURVIVAL STRATEGY**

A short stack of pancakes or a single Belgian waffle are two of the only breakfasts that will get you out under 700 calories. As for the lunch and dinner, very few entrees have less than 1,000 calories. Your only safe bet is to stick to the "IHOP For Me" menu on the back page, where you'll find the nutritional content for a small selection of healthier items.

## **Jack in the Box (C-)**

This menu has plenty of suitable options, but where it fails, it fails in dangerous ways. At least half a dozen burgers surpass the detrimental 1,000-calorie mark, and everything that touches Jack's fryer emerges with a soggy load of trans fats. Order a side of Bacon Cheddar Potato Wedges, for instance, and you'll clog your arteries with 12 grams of trans fat, which is about six times the daily limit set by the American Heart Association.

## **SURVIVAL STRATEGY**

Keep your burger small or order a Whole Grain Chicken Fajita Pita—one of the best fast-food chicken entrees out there—with a fruit cup on the side. For breakfast order any Breakfast Jack without sausage. And whatever you do, don't touch the fried foods.

## KFC (B)

What no nutritionist wants to admit is that most fried chicken joints aren't the health hazards we make them out to be. KFC, the most vilified of the fried-chicken purveyors, makes an exemplary case-in-point. The menu's crispy bird-bits are offset by skinless chicken pieces, low-calorie sandwich options, and a host of sides that go way beyond the typical battered-and-fried potatoes and nuggets. And with meals that allow you to hand pick each piece that goes on your plate, you won't be forced to square off with that big, crusty, 5-gallon bucket of fried chicken.

### SURVIVAL STRATEGY

Go the skinless route or pal up with a Chicken Stacker or a Toasted Sandwich. Then adorn your plate with one of the colonel's healthy sides: Corn on the Cob, Three-Bean Salad, or KFC Mean Greens.

## McDonald's (B+)

The world-famous burger baron has come a long way since the days of Fast Food Nation—at least nutritionally speaking. The trans fats are mostly gone, the number of gut-wrecking calorie bombs are now fewer than ever, and the menu holds plenty of healthy options such as salads and yogurt parfaits. Don't cut loose at the counter just yet, though. Too many of the breakfast and lunch sandwiches still top the 500-calorie mark, and the dessert menu is fodder for some major belly-building.

### SURVIVAL STRATEGY

The Egg McMuffin remains one of the best ways to start your day in the fast-food world—feel free to use it as a replacement option for any of these [eight worst fast food breakfasts](#) in America! As for the later hours, you can splurge on a Big Mac or a Quarter Pounder, but only if you skip the fries and soda, which add an average of 590 calories onto any meal.

## Outback (F)

You wouldn't order a meal if the restaurant refused to tell you the price, would you? So why is it okay for them to without the nutritional information? Fat, calories, and sodium are all just as much a part of the overall cost of a meal as the dollar value. That's why we flunk Outback along with the rest of the nutritional holdouts. You don't show up for the test, you can't make the grade.

### SURVIVAL STRATEGY

Aside from taking the kitchen hostage and making your own meal, there's not much you can do to improve your visit at Outback. If you must have an appetizer, split the Seared Ahi Tuna, then move on to a filet, prime rib, or split the 14 oz. New York Strip. Assuming you skip the bread and house salad (590 calories), and you chose wild rice and steamed vegetables as your two sides, you might have a shot at escaping dinner for less than 1,000 calories.

## Pizza Hut (C)

In an attempt to push the menu beyond the ill-reputed pizza, Pizza Hut expanded into toasted sandwiches, pastas, and salads. Sound like an improvement? Think again. Every sandwich has at least 680 calories and 75 percent of your day's sodium. The salads aren't much better and the pastas are actually worse. That doesn't necessarily make Pizza Hut the worst parlor in the country, but it does put the pies in perspective. A

thin-crust slice of Cheese Pizza has about 190 calories. Eat a couple of those and you'll be doing just fine.

## **SURVIVAL STRATEGY**

Start with a bowl of Tomato Basil Soup, and then finish with a couple slices. The absolute best choices are on the Fit 'n Delicious menu, which offers slices as low as 150 calories apiece.

## **Quiznos (C-)**

Submarine sandwiches can only be so bad, right? We thought so, too, until we saw some of bloated offerings on Quiznos' menu. The bigger subs can easily carry a full day's worth of saturated fat and two days' of sodium, and the oversized salads aren't much better. Good thing Quiznos also provides an alternative. The sub shop's Sammies are served in flatbreads, and all fall between 200 and 300 calories apiece.

## **SURVIVAL STRATEGY**

Avoid the salads, large subs, and bread-bowl soups. Stick with a small sub or pair a Sammie with a cup of soup.

## **Romano's Macaroni Grill (D-)**

For years now we've been on Romano's case to clean up the menu at his beloved Macaroni Grill. So far we've had no luck. The fatty Italian spot serves some of the worst appetizers in the country, offers not one dinner entrée with fewer than 800 calories, and hosts no fewer than 60 menu items with more than 2,000 mg of sodium—almost an entire day's worth of the salt! A select few menu items earn the restaurant's Sensible Fare logo—a fork with a halo over it—but unfortunately these items can still carry up to 640 calories and 25 grams of fat.

## **SURVIVAL STRATEGY**

Thankfully Macaroni Grill will let you build your own dish. Ask for the marinara over a bed of the restaurant's whole-wheat penne, and then top it with grilled chicken and steamed vegetables. Just watch out for their salads—one of them made our list of [America's Worst Salads](#), so beware!

## **Subway (A-)**

A menu based on lean protein and vegetables is always going to score well in our book. With more than half a dozen sandwiches under 300 calories, plus a slew of soups and healthy sides to boot, Subway can satisfy even the pickiest eater without breaking the caloric bank. But, despite what Jared may want you to believe, Subway is not nutritionally infallible: Those rosy calorie counts posted on the menu boards include neither cheese nor mayo (add 160 calories per 6-inch sub), and some of the toasted subs, like the Meatball Marinara, contain hefty doses of calories, saturated fat, and sodium.

## **SURVIVAL STRATEGY**

Cornell researchers have discovered a “health halo” at Subway, which refers to the tendency to reward yourself or your kid with chips, cookies, and large soft drinks because the entrée is healthy. Avoid the halo, and all will be well.

## **T.G.I.Friday’s (F)**

We salute Friday's for one thing and one thing only, and that's their smaller portions menu. The option to eat smaller plates ought be the new model to dethrone the dogmatic bigger-is-better principle that dominates chain restaurants. But no matter how small they shrink the entrees, we're still forced to fail this chain due to their strict policy of nutritional secrecy.

### **SURVIVAL STRATEGY**

We realized just how dangerous Friday's menu was when a NYC ordinance forced them to cough up the numbers on their caloric bombs. Our advice: Stick to either their smaller portions menu or check out the Lighter Side of Fridays menu, which promises to find you meals with around 500 calories apiece.

## **Taco Bell (B+)**

Taco Bell combines two things with bad nutritional reputations: Mexican food and fast food. The result should be horrendous, yet somehow it works out so that a little prudence at the ordering window can bag you a meal with fewer than 500 calories. The potential for belly-building is still there, but the calorie bombs are generally easy to spot. And to limit the chances of a mistake, Taco Bell reengineered some of its classic items and listed them under the Fresco Menu for a savings of up to 10 grams of fat per item.

### **SURVIVAL STRATEGY**

Grilled Stuft Burritos, anything served in a bowl, and anything prepared with multiple "layers" are your worst options. Instead, order any combination of two of the following: crunchy tacos, bean burritos, or anything on the Fresco menu.

## **Wendy’s (B+)**

Scoring a decent meal at Wendy's is just about as easy as scoring a bad one, and that's a big compliment for a burger joint. Options such as chili and baked potatoes offer the side-order variety that's missing from less-evolved fast-food chains like Dairy Queen and Carl's Jr. Plus they offer a handful of Jr. Burgers that don't stray far over 300 calories. And for our money, the ¼-lb single is one of the best substantial burgers in the industry. Where they err is in their recently expanded line of desserts and a lackluster selection of beverages. But you're happy just drinking water, right?

### **SURVIVAL STRATEGY**

The grilled chicken sandwiches and wraps don't have more than 320 calories, which is less than even a small order of French fries. Choose the chicken or a small burger and pair it with a healthy side, and then hit the door before you receive the 500-calorie penalty for giving in to your Frosty hankering.