

# The Worst Appetizers in America

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A funny thing has happened to America's restaurant appetizers: They've started growing bigger than the meals they prepare us for. It's now common to wolf down 500 or 600 greasy calories before we even start on our entrees.

One might wonder where all the calories end up. The answer is: our collective belly-fat supplies. The obesity rate stayed constant in only 13 states last year, while the other 37 states saw an increase. This big fat growth — which stretches over 75 percent of America — is due in no small part to our propensity to eat full meals before we eat full meals. (It's not uncommon anymore to take in two days' worth of calories in one meal at one of our favorite restaurants.)

To help you wrap your arms around the problem, we've gathered the most gluttonous pre-meal binges in America. If this list doesn't make you hungry, then you're already ahead of most of us.

## CHILI'S

Texas Cheese Fries w/ Jalapeno-Ranch Dressing

2,070 calories

160 g fat (73 g saturated)

3,730 mg sodium

**Fat Equivalent:** Like eating 16 Taco Bell Crunchy Tacos!

After we identified Chili's Awesome Blossom in our investigative report here on [The 20 Worst Foods in America](#), the chain's 203 fat grams of deep-fried onion disappeared from the menu. Unfortunately that's like taking a kiddie shovel to a menu that needs to be cleared with a front loader. The Texas Cheese Fries with jalapeno-ranch dressing has nearly two days' worth of sodium in this one starter — and nearly four days' worth of saturated fat.

## ON THE BORDER

Grande Fajita Nachos – Mesquite-Grilled Steak

1,970 calories

127 g fat (54 g saturated)

3,780 mg sodium

**Fat Equivalent:** Like eating an entire package of Oreos!

Even if you're only one of four people working on these nachos, you'll still bludgeon your belly with half a day's worth of fat. The same is true for the Border Sampler. Opt instead for the 500-calorie basket of Chips & Salsa.

### **OUTBACK STEAKHOUSE**

Aussie Cheese Fries with Ranch

2,030 calories

??? g fat

??? mg sodium

**Calorie Equivalent:** Like eating as many as 21 White Castle Hamburgers!

Consider this one of America's most questionable appetizers. That's because Outback doesn't provide full nutritional data for any of its products, forcing diners to guess exactly how many day's worth of fat and sodium must really be crammed into this cheesy mess.

Earlier estimates from nutritional analysis groups put the pile at 2,900 calories with close to 200 grams of fat; even with Outback's more conservative calorie counts, these frightening fries should be avoided at all costs.

### **PIZZA HUT**

Taters (full order)

1,580 calories

104 g fat (20 g saturated)

4,160 mg sodium

**Sodium Equivalent:** Like eating more than two full bags of Ruffles Original Potato Chips!

A bag of Ruffles has about 11 servings, which means these tater-tot miscreants carry the heart-taxing sodium load of 22 servings of potato chips. Throw these over your shoulder for good luck; you'll avoid nearly two days' worth of sodium that come with this one side. And to discover other salty foods you should steer clear of, [check out these 20 foods your cardiologist won't eat!](#) They're among America's worst.

### **ROMANO'S MACARONI GRILL**

Romano's Sampler (fried calamari, fried mozzarella, tomato bruschetta, garnish)

1,640 calories

98 g fat (22 g saturated)

4,000 mg sodium

**Calorie and Sodium Equivalent:** Like eating more than 10 Extra Crispy Drumsticks from KFC!

This sampler is a roundup of the worst offenders on the menu: fried calamari, fried mozzarella, and tomato bruschetta. The only massive calorie bomb they bypass is the 980-calorie Shrimp Artichoke Dip. With a menu as heavy as Macaroni Grill's, you'd be better off skipping the starters altogether.

### **RUBY TUESDAY**

Grand Sampler (fire wings, southwestern spring rolls, fried mozzarella, and chicken tenders)

1,644 calories

100 g fat

**Calorie Equivalent:** Like eating 5 McDonald's Cheeseburgers!

There's enough fried food here to feed an entire Little League baseball team, so unless you're taking them to Ruby's (and you have signed permission slips) after the game, I'd recommend avoiding a swing at this bad pitch.

### **T.G.I. FRIDAYS**

Jack Daniel's Sampler (Jack Daniel's glaze over fried shrimp, Sesame Jack Chicken Strips, and Baby Back Pork Ribs)

2,330 calories

??? g fat

??? mg sodium

**Calorie Equivalent:** Like eating more than 8 Steak Fajita Hot Pockets!

Thanks to new legislation in New York City, chain restaurants were forced to post their calorie

counts on their menus. As a result, what Fridays' patrons discovered was that they've been unwittingly paying for a clobbering with a big, greasy fat stick. More than half the appetizers top 1,000 calories.

### **UNO CHICAGO GRILL**

Pizza Skins (full order)

2,400 calories

155 g fat (50 g saturated)

3,600 mg sodium

**Calorie Equivalent:** Like eating a Large Domino's Hand-Tossed Sausage Pizza!

Would you ever think of saying to a waiter: "Why don't you start us off with a large meat pizza?" If you're ordering for a party of more than 5 it might be OK, but for smaller groups, it's tilting toward gluttony gone wild. Order the Thai Vegetable Pot Stickers instead — the only item carrying fewer than 800 calories.