

The Worst Drive-Thru Foods in America (And What to Eat Instead!)

Men'sHealth.

By [David Zinczenko](#), with [Matt Goulding](#) - Posted on Mon, Apr 20, 2009, 12:18 pm PDT



Time and money are two things Americans can't afford to waste. So it's not surprising (though slightly disappointing) that the drive-thru is considered one of the greatest inventions of all time. There's even a study to prove it. In 2005 and 2006, researchers asked 600 adults and teens why they eat so much fast food. Three of the top four responses? It's quick, easy, and affordable. Taste came in third, with only 69 percent of respondents listing flavor as a factor in their fast-food love.

Drive-thru foods may be convenient and easy on the wallet, but they're loaded with unhealthy fats, added sugars, carbohydrates, and sodium. Translation: They're no bargain at all when it comes to your health. But jam-packed schedules and a dismal economy make the occasional drive-thru meal a part of life. That's why [Eat This, Not That!](#) studied the open-air menu boards and compiled a list of the worst items out there, plus better alternatives. Avoid these dietary land mines and save more than a few minutes and a couple of bucks—how does up to 20 pounds in a year sound?

WORST MILKSHAKE

McDonald's Large Triple Thick Chocolate Milkshake

1160 calories

27 g fat (16 g saturated fat)

168 g sugar

510 mg sodium

You'd be better off eating two Quarter Pounders than sucking down one of these belt-breaking shakes. Steer clear of milkshakes at the golden arches. If you have

to have a frozen dessert, order a vanilla ice cream cone to save more than 1,000 calories. Make swaps like that every week and watch the pounds melt off!

Eat This Instead!

Vanilla Reduced-Fat Ice Cream Cone
150 calories
3.5 g fat (2 g saturated fat)
18 g sugars
60 mg sodium

Check out our list of the [20 worst drinks in America](#) to see other equally atrocious beverages. It's possible to lose more than 30 pounds of fat a year--just by focusing on what you drink!

WORST VALUE-MENU ITEM

Burger King Spicy Chick'n Crisp Sandwich
450 calories
30 g fat (5 g saturated fat)
810 mg sodium

Lean economic times make the value menu more appealing than ever. And that's fine—most dollar menus have a few sensible items. But if you eat this sandwich often, saving a few bucks will quickly result in a surplus around your waistline.

Eat This Instead!

Whopper Jr. without mayo
290 calories
12 g fat (4.5 g saturated fat)
500 mg sodium

WORST MEXICAN ENTRÉE

Taco Bell Grilled Stuff Beef Burrito
680 calories
30 g fat (10 g saturated fat)
2120 mg sodium

Ditch this and order two grilled steak soft tacos (or any menu item) "fresco" style, and the Bell boys will replace cheese and sauces with a chunky tomato salsa, helping to cut calories in half and fat by at least 25 percent.

Eat This Instead!

Two Grilled Steak Soft Tacos, Fresco Style

320 calories

9 g fat (3 g saturated fat)

1100 mg sodium

WORST HOT SANDWICH

Sonic Chicken Club TOASTER Sandwich

742 calories

46 g fat (11 g saturated, 0.5 g trans)

1,742 mg sodium

How can a chicken sandwich pack so much fat? Start with a fried chicken breast, add bacon, cheese, and mayo, and you're there. Add to that the sodium equivalent of 53 saltine crackers, and you're looking at a serious dietary disaster. Ditch the chicken for beef and save 10 grams of fat.

Eat This Instead!

Sonic Burger with Mustard

540 calories

25 g fat (9 g saturated fat)

730 mg sodium

WORST CRISPY CHICKEN SANDWICH

Hardee's Big Chicken Fillet Sandwich

800 calories

37 g fat (6 g saturated fat)

1890 mg sodium

A general rule: Avoid sandwiches with words like "big" and "monster" in the name. Hardee's Monster Thickburger is another example—it comes in at 1,420 calories, 108 grams of fat, and more saturated fat than you want in 2 days.

Eat This Instead!

Charbroiled BBQ Chicken Sandwich

415 calories

5 g fat (1 g saturated fat)

1175 mg sodium

WORST ROAST BEEF SANDWICH

Arby's Roast Beef and Swiss Market Fresh Sandwich

810 calories

42 g fat (13 g saturated fat)
1780 mg sodium

The unwholesome trinity of mayo, Italian sub sauce, and processed Swiss cheese make this sandwich the clear loser in the battle of the beef. The Super Roast Beef replaces mayo with a low-cal spicy pepper sauce and totals 370 fewer calories.

Eat This Instead!

Super Roast Beef
440 calories
19 g fat (7 g saturated fat)
1061 mg sodium

WORST DRIVE-THRU KIDS MEAL

Burger King Kids Double Cheeseburger and Kids Fries with Small Coke
950 calories
42 g fat (17 g saturated fat, 4.5 g trans fats)
1,410 mg sodium

BK's dubious double burger earns the distinction of being the fattiest meal for an on-the-go kid, with nearly a day's worth of saturated fat for the average 8-year-old.

Eat This Instead!

4-piece Chicken Tenders with Strawberry-Flavored Applesauce and unlimited water
280 calories
11 g fat (3 g saturated fat)
440 mg sodium

WORST CHICKEN STRIPS

Dairy Queen 6-Piece Chicken Strip Basket
1,270 calories
67 g fat (11 g saturated fat)
2,910 mg sodium

These strips deliver more grams of fat than four DQ Homestyle Burgers, and nearly 300 more calories than a Large Strawberry CheeseQuake Blizzard.

Eat This Instead!

Grilled Chicken Salad with Fat-Free Italian Dressing

280 calories

11 g fat (5 g saturated)

1,550 mg sodium

WORST DRIVE-THRU BREAKFAST SANDWICH

Jack in the Box Sausage, Egg & Cheese Biscuit

740 calories

55 g fat (17 g saturated fat)

1430 mg sodium

Skip biscuits at all costs. This one contains nearly a full day's worth of saturated fat (check out the [12 worst breakfast foods in the supermarket](#) for other must-have tips on starting your morning right--rather than with a rude awakening!). Instead try the Bacon Breakfast Jack--16 grams of protein makes it a surprisingly good way to start your day.

Eat This Instead!

Bacon Breakfast Jack

300 calories

14 g fat (5 g saturated fat)

730 mg sodium

WORST SIDE

Arby's Large Mozzarella Sticks

849 calories

56 g fat (26 g saturated fat)

2730 mg sodium

Anything with as much saturated fat as a Triple Whopper should not be called a side. If it's cheese you crave, order the French Dip 'N Swiss or Hot Ham and Cheese Sandwich instead to save more than 500 calories.

Eat This Instead!

Martha's Vineyard Salad with Light Buttermilk Ranch Dressing

389 calories

14 g fat (5 g saturated)

923 mg sodium

WORST POTATO SIDE

Jack in the Box Bacon Cheddar Potato Wedges

720 calories
48 g fat (15 g saturated fat, 12 g trans fats)
1,360 mg sodium
48 g carbohydrates

You probably don't need us to tell you that bacon, cheese, and fried potatoes are not a healthful trio. What's worse, though, is that Jack in the Box cooks in trans-fatty vegetable shortening, which has been linked to heart disease. It's no secret that French fries can ruin an otherwise sensible meal, but these things take destruction to another level entirely.

Eat This Instead!

Mozzarella Cheese Sticks (3)
240 calories
12 g fat (5 g saturated fat, 2 g trans fats)
420 mg sodium

WORST SALAD

Chick-fil-A Chick-n-Strips Salad with Buttermilk Ranch Dressing
800 calories
60 g fat (12 g saturated fat)
1745 mg sodium

With 17 more grams of fat than Taco Bell's Fiesta Taco Salad, this is the worst salad from any drive-thru. The dressing alone sets you back 42.5 grams of fat.

Take a look at our list of the [worst salads in America](#) and see how this one compares.

Eat This Instead!

Chick-fil-A Southwest Chargrilled Salad with Fat-Free Honey Mustard Dressing
360 calories
8 g fat (3.5 g saturated fat)
1170 mg sodium

WORST DESSERT

Dairy Queen Large Strawberry CheeseQuake Blizzard
990 calories
39 g fat (24 g saturated fat)
114 g sugars

This creation combines ice cream, strawberry syrup, and hunks of cheesecake for a high-fat dairy dessert. If you're set on a Blizzard, go bananas. A small Banana Split Blizzard has 7 fewer fat grams than the small Oreo, Cookie Dough, Peanut Butter Cup, or Strawberry Cheesecake flavors. Or stray from the Blizzard and satisfy your sweet tooth with a small chocolate sundae instead to save major calories and fat.

Eat This Instead!

Small Chocolate Sundae
280 calories
7 g fat (4.5 g saturated fat)
42 g sugars

WORST FISH SANDWICH

Burger King BIG FISH Sandwich with Tartar Sauce
640 calories
32 g fat (5 g saturated fat)
1540 mg sodium

Fish is only healthy when it's not breaded and fried in partially hydrogenated oil. Here, the fry treatment translates into a bunch of unhealthy fat and 108 grams of carbohydrates.

Eat This Instead!

Whopper Jr. without mayo and Garden Salad
365 calories
12 g fat (4.5 g saturated fat)
1230 mg sodium

WORST CHEESEBURGER

Hardee's Monster Thickburger
1,420 calories
108 g fat (43 g saturated fat)
2,770 mg sodium
230 mg cholesterol

This burger is called "Monster" for a reason. It's got the caloric equivalent of almost six McDonald's hamburgers, the saturated fat equivalent of 43 strips of Oscar Mayer bacon, and the sodium equivalent of 84 saltine crackers. You'll almost satisfy your entire day's worth of calories in one sitting, so opt for the significantly less monstrous Low-Carb Thickburger, instead, and save 1,000 calories that you can allocate to more deserving and nutritious fare.

Eat This Instead!

Low Carb Thickburger
420 calories
32 g fat (12 g saturated fat)
1,010 mg sodium

WORST "HEALTHY" FOOD

Arby's Roast Turkey and Swiss Market Fresh Sandwich
708 calories
29 g fat (8 g saturated fat)
1,676 mg sodium

Avoid any sandwich made on honey wheat bread: Two slices contain a staggering 361 calories and 68 grams of carbs. Cut those in half by sticking to a sesame bun.

Eat This Instead!

Chicken Cordon Blue Sandwich (grilled)
488 calories
18 g fat (4 g saturated fat)
1,560 mg sodium

WORST GRILLED CHICKEN

Jack in the Box Chipotle Chicken Ciabatta
690 calories
28 g fat (9 g saturated fat)
1,850 mg sodium

Unlike many other fast food restaurants that have made the shift away from trans fats, Jack in the Box's menu has a number of items with more than 5 grams of the stuff—and some with up to 13 grams of it! There's no "safe" level of trans fats, but the recommendation is that you don't eat more than 2 grams of the heart-harming junk per day. Add fries to this sandwich, and you'll take in three and a half times your daily limit.

Eat This Instead!

Chicken Fajita Pita
300 calories
9 g fat (3.5 g saturated fat)
1,090 mg sodium

THE WORST DRIVE-THRU MEAL IN AMERICA

Carl's Jr. Double Six Dollar Burger
with Medium Natural cut Fries and 32 oz Coke
2,618 Calories
144 g fat (51.5 g saturated fat)
2892 mg sodium

Of all the gut-growing, heart-stopping, life-threatening burgers in the fast food world, there is none whose damage to your general well-being is as catastrophic as this. Consider these heart-stopping comparisons: This meal has the caloric equivalent of 13 Krispy Kreme Original Glazed Donuts; the saturated fat equivalent of 52 strips of bacon; and the salt equivalent of seven and a half large orders of McDonald's French fries!

Eat This Instead!

Famous Star with Side Salad with Low Fat Balsamic Dressing and 32 oz Iced Tea
685 calories
38 g fat (10.5 g saturated fat)
1520 mg sodium

If you enjoyed this article, play this interactive [Eat This, Not That! game](#) to see which food is healthier for you and improve your nutrition knowledge. (The answers will shock you!) Also, [learn what 100 calories look like](#)—it'll help you achieve your weight-loss goals going forward.

Also, sign up for the [Eat This, Not That! premium website](#), where you'll find more great stories like this, plus A-Z nutrition facts and information for all your favorite restaurants and supermarket items. It's like having your own personal nutritionist on call, 24/7! And make sure to sign up for the [FREE Eat This, Not That! newsletters](#) for helpful weight loss tips and tricks delivered straight to your inbox twice a week.

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