

Dining Out with Dr. Boz

Guess who's back?! It's your favorite columnist in the whole entire universe. It's ME! It's Dr. Boz!!! What? I'm **NOT** your favorite columnist? Surely you jest! Regardless of your love/hate for me, I am back again with another installment of "Dining Out with Dr. Boz." For those new to the column, here's how it works: Each month I review the nutritional information of an eating establishment. Thus far it's been exclusively fast food places, but I intend on including sit-down restaurants as well. In fact, if I am super motivated over the next few days, you *might* get a double dose of me this month. I know everyone is super excited right? **RIGHT???**

(Dr. Boz note: So much for that "super motivated" thing—you'll have to wait another month for my first sit-down restaurant review, so try to contain the excitement until then!)

The purpose of this column is not to destroy the process of dining out, despite what others may tell you or what you may personally believe. Rather, my goal is to inform you, my humble reader, of the potential pitfalls lurking out there when it comes to restaurant and fast food dining. I believe we are all at least somewhat aware the foods available in these eating establishments are, more than likely, not particularly healthy. I also believe the vast majority of individuals prefer "living in the dark" when it comes to the nutrition of restaurant foods. Why? Because once you know – I mean **really** know – what you're eating, it's much harder to convince yourself it's OK to eat it again. It's easier to keep eating the things we like. Change is difficult, even if the change is for the best.

Believe it or not, I do this because I care. Yes, it's true! And as I said last month, if that makes me the bad guy, so be it. I'm a big boy. I can take the heat!

At the request of my most awesome and (semi) anonymous Editor, this month's review explores the menu of **Wendy's**. Apparently the salads changed recently, so Mr./Ms. Anonymous was curious to hear how the changes affected his/her favorite salad(s). Since Wendy's is another fairly popular fast food place, I figured it wouldn't hurt to take a look at the menu as a whole. Buckle up folks. We're in for a bumpy ride! First stop: **Salads!**

Item	Calories	Fat (g)	Saturated Fat (g)	Sodium (mg)	Fiber (g)	Sugar (g)	Protein (g)
Apple Pecan Chicken Salad	350	12	7	1210	5	20	37
Roasted Pecans	110	9	1	60	1	4	1
Pomegranate Vinaigrette Dressing	120	6	1	320	0	15	0
Baja Salad	550	33	14	1610	12	12	33
Seasoned Tortilla Strips	80	4.5	1.5	105	1	0	1
Creamy Red Jalapeno Dressing	100	10	2	270	0	1	1
BLT Cobb Salad	460	26	12	1490	3	4	46
Avocado Ranch Dressing	200	21	3.5	430	0	2	1
Spicy Chicken Caesar Salad	450	25	11	1290	6	3	32
Gourmet Croutons	80	3	0	220	0	0	2
Lemon Garlic Caesar Dressing	210	21	4	350	0	1	3
Classic Ranch	220	22	3.5	380	0	2	1
Light Classic Ranch	100	9	1.5	390	0	2	2
Italian Vinaigrette	140	12	1.5	360	0	7	0
Fat Free French	80	0	0	190	1	16	0
Thousand Island	320	31	5	580	0	7	1

(All information at <http://www.wendys.com/food/pdf/us/nutrition.pdf>)

Let me clarify a few things with the information above. First, the components listed immediately after the salads are included with the purchase (or at least they are to the best of my knowledge). Second, if they are listed separately then they are **not** included in the nutritional numbers for the salad alone. So for example, the Apple Pecan Salad with the Pecans included is actually 460 calories. Finally, the numbers for each dressing is for **one** packet. I included the additional dressing options as well. The ones listed after the specific salads are the standard dressing for it.

Now for my review: **WOW!** These are the **salads**? As has been a theme in this column since the beginning, the sodium numbers are **outrageous**! All are over 50% of the daily allowance, just for the base salad! Add in the dressing and topping and you're coming dangerously close to having all your sodium in one meal (a salad, no less). But beyond the



sodium, there are some other startling facts with these numbers. The fat (total and saturated) is ridiculous as well. 33g total fat and 14g saturated for the Baja Salad? Plus 1610mg of sodium? Then add in the tortilla strips and dressing and you have 730 calories, 47.5g fat (17.5 saturated), 1985mg sodium (!!!), 13g fiber (yay?), 13g sugar (actually not too bad), and 35g protein (pretty good). It's unbelievable to see a salad with these kinds of numbers. Sure, the protein is good (because of the meat), but at what cost?

Even the "good" salad (Apple Pecan Chicken) has 20g of base sugar, doubled if you include the pecans and dressing. And incidentally, how do they call something an "Apple Pecan Chicken Salad" and **not** include the **PECANS** in the nutritional data for the base salad??? One explanation, which I expect you would hear from a spokesperson for Wendy's, is the pecans are separated because of allergen concerns. Any types of nuts (especially peanuts) are often highlighted on menus because of potential food allergies. This is certainly a valid concern and a reasonable explanation to separate the pecans nutritionally. I would argue, however, a secondary reason for the move is to make the base salad look better. Without the pecans, the salad is clearly the best option in almost every nutritional category except sugar. Including the pecans? The salad isn't so hot. This is just my opinion, though. Your thoughts may differ. The sad moral here is this: Never assume a salad is "healthy." As the numbers above indicate, salads can be just as bad as anything else. What's worse, because we often assume a salad is "better" for us, we might then use that assumption to justify getting something else that is clearly **not** so good (like a Frosty perhaps?). Talk about making the problem worse! Sigh...I think I need to take a nap after looking at those salads. But no, we must move forward. We examined the salads. Let's take a peek at the sides. After all, we just had a super healthy salad! A side dish won't hurt, right? **WRONG!!!**

Item	Calories	Fat (g)	Saturated Fat (g)	Sodium (mg)	Fiber (g)	Sugar (g)	Protein (g)
Garden Side Salad	25	0	0	30	2	3	1
Caesar Side Salad	60	3.5	2	95	2	2	4
Gourmet Croutons	80	3	0	220	0	0	2
Lemon Garlic Caesar Dressing	110	11	2	180	0	1	2
Mandarin Orange Cup	90	0	0	10	1	18	1
Small Chili	220	7	3	870	6	6	18
Large Chili	330	10	4	1310	8	10	28
Shredded Cheddar Cheese	70	6	3	105	0	0	4
Kids' Meal Fries	210	10	2	180	2	0	2
Small Fries	330	15	3	280	4	0	4
Medium Fries	410	19	3.5	350	5	0	4
Large Fries	540	25	4.5	460	6	0	6
Plain Baked Potato	270	0	0	25	7	3	7
Sour Cream/Chives Potato	320	3.5	2	50	7	4	8
Cheese Potato	440	12	7	640	5	5	11
Chili and Cheese Potato	520	15	8	960	9	8	23

In some respects, these numbers aren't nearly as shocking as the salads, and quite honestly some are **better**. The side salads, for example, are really pretty good, minus the extras and the dressings of course. You have your healthy Orange Cup option (lots of sugar, though) which is nice for those who aren't fans of salads (yours truly). The chili is a toss-up. The calories aren't **awful** necessarily, and the fat, while not great, isn't atrocious. The sodium, as we've seen in past columns, is the killer. And forget about the cheese and/or saltines. You're adding little to the chili by including either cheese or crackers, except, of course, calories and sodium.

The potato products are a curious group. The first thing jumping out at me is, while the overall fat (particularly with the fries) is high, the saturated is **way** lower than with the salads. There is an easy explanation for this: cheese. The salads often include cheese, and **this** is where the saturated fat gets added. As we learned with McDonalds, the oil used to fry is generally healthier (e.g., low in saturated and trans fats). Wendy's notes the oil includes soy, corn, cottonseed, and hydrogenated soy. The term "hydrogenated" can be decoded and read as "bad," although Wendy's assures us it has zero grams trans fat. The rest of the oils though are typically listed in the "good" category (cottonseed is debatable, but that's a separate article entirely). The **point** here is, while the fat is there, it is the "good" kind for the most part. This doesn't mean "I can eat as much as I want." It **does** mean, "I don't have to completely flip out about it."

I do want to make one final point about potatoes. Despite what you may believe, potatoes are actually pretty healthy. As we see with the plain potato, there is virtually **no** salt in a potato. Further, it is high in fiber (7g!) and a good source of protein. In addition, potatoes are an **excellent** source of potassium and vitamin C; however, to get all the goodness from a potato, you need to eat the skin. Same goes for a variety of different produce options. Most of us are used to peeling skin, but we're also peeling away a lot of the good stuff!

The problem with potatoes is we tend to eat them with "fixings." Whether it's butter, margarine, sour cream, cheese, chili, or whatever you decide to throw on a potato, the potato **itself** is good. Just try to avoid the extras. As we see with the Chili and Cheese potato above, the calories double, the fat goes from zero to 15g (8g saturated), and the sodium is almost at 1000mg. The moral of **this** story is: Say yes to potatoes, but say no to the extra gunk. Your body will thank you later. An excellent source of information on the nutritional profiles of produce, as well as a variety of other processed products can be found at <http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodcomp/search/>. This is part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) website, so it is definitely very "official" when it comes to finding out the true nutritional content of the food you eat. Check it out!

Next up is the Wings/Nuggets portion of the menu. Wendy's separates this out, so I'll do the same:

Item	Calories	Fat (g)	Saturated Fat (g)	Sodium (mg)	Fiber (g)	Sugar (g)	Protein (g)
Spicy Chipotle Boneless Wings	500	20	4	1640	3	10	33
Honey BBQ Boneless Wings	570	18	3.5	1950	3	34	33
Sweet/Spicy Asian Boneless	540	18	3.5	2490	3	27	33
4pc. Kids Nuggets	180	12	2.5	340	0	1	12
10pc. Nuggets	450	29	6	850	0	1	23
BBQ Sauce	45	0	0	120	0	4	0
Sweet & Sour Sauce	50	0	0	120	0	11	0
Honey Mustard Sauce	80	6	1	220	0	3	0
Ranch Dipping Sauce	120	12	1.5	240	0	2	0

Not much to say here really. Calories aren't great. Fat is **bad**. Saturated, much like with the fries, is at least minimized. But check out those sodium numbers for the Boneless Wings! Not to beat a dead horse, but 2400mg/day is the recommended **maximum** for sodium. The Sweet and Spicy Wings are **over** that total. And that's just one meal **component**! Don't forget, those dipping sauces need to be added on as well. So if you're a "big dipper," you're adding in extra gunk as well. BBQ sauce seems to be the least of all the evils, so long as you can limit yourself to one container. If you **HAVE** to get some nuggets, go with the 5 Piece Chicken Nuggets (divide the 10 Piece in half). Overall though, looks like a section of the menu to avoid.

Oh wait – I didn't hit the sandwiches yet. After looking through **THESE** numbers, those nuggets aren't looking as bad. Take a look for yourself:

Item	Calories	Fat (g)	Saturated Fat (g)	Sodium (mg)	Fiber (g)	Sugar (g)	Protein (g)
Jr. Hamburger	230	8	3	480	1	6	12
Jr. Cheeseburger	270	11	5	690	1	6	15
Jr. Bacon Cheeseburger	320	16	7	650	1	5	17
Single w/Everything	470	21	8	880	2	10	26
Double w/Everything & Cheese	750	42	18	1370	2	10	49
Triple w/Everything & Cheese	1030	63	29	1860	2	11	71
Baconator ® Single	610	34	14	1170	1	9	32
Baconator® Double	870	63	27	1830	2	9	58
Bacon Deluxe Single	650	37	15	1380	2	11	34
Bacon Deluxe Double	870	52	22	1550	2	11	53

Item	Calories	Fat (g)	Saturated Fat (g)	Sodium (mg)	Fiber (g)	Sugar (g)	Protein (g)
Ultimate Chicken Grill	370	7	1.5	1150	2	9	34
Spicy Chicken Fillet	460	16	3	1330	3	7	26
Homestyle Chicken Fillet	470	18	3.5	1160	3	7	26
Chicken Club	630	31	10	1410	3	8	34
Crispy Chicken	350	15	3	830	2	4	15
Grilled Chicken Go Wrap	260	10	3.5	750	1	3	20
Homestyle Chicken Go Wrap	320	16	4.5	770	1	1	15
Spicy Chicken Go Wrap	310	15	4.5	860	2	1	15
Triple Stack	490	27	13	1160	1	6	34
Bacon Deluxe Triple	1150	73	32	2030	2	11	76
Baconator® Triple	1360	91	40	2490	2	10	84

My arteries clogged up just typing all that! There are some *ridiculously* unhealthy choices available for sandwiches. First though, let's look at the positives (shouldn't take long). The "Jr." line is at least manageable. The calories are not *awful* for the most part, and while the fat and sodium numbers aren't stellar by any stretch of the imagination, they're also workable within one's diet. The Ultimate Chicken Grill is one of the better options on the menu, possibly even the best, except for that 1150mg of sodium. The trend continues with Wendy's as we observed with McDonald's and Subway—if it's healthy for you, it's probably loaded with sodium. The wraps are surprisingly decent as well. Calorie counts are manageable, as well. Again, the fat and sodium aren't great, but there are worse options available (obviously).

Speaking of "worse options," that seems to include most of the menu, particularly the sandwich portion of the menu. I think one word adequately summarizes the nutritional values for most of these sandwiches: **BLECH!** Even your Single with Everything (except cheese apparently, given that the Double and Triple specifically mention the cheese in the name) starts to tread in no-no territory with fat and sodium. But what about those Double and Triple sandwiches?! Startling, aren't they? 1000 calories, almost 2000mg sodium, and 63g of fat (29g of which are saturated) for the Triple with Everything (and cheese – don't forget the cheese)??? It's crazy people, plain and simple. I can't express the following opinion loudly enough: **STAY AWAY FROM DOUBLES AND TRIPLES OF ANYTHING!!!** If you absolutely cannot live without a Triple, please choose the Triple Stack. It consists of three Jr. Patties. I am not endorsing the eating of this sandwich at all. I'm just saying if you feel the need to eat something with "Triple" in the name, go with the Triple Stack.

I included the three Triple sandwiches to illustrate a couple points. First, with the exception of the Triple with Everything (and cheese – still don't forget the cheese!), the other Triple sandwiches are not specifically listed in the nutritional file you can download. They *are* listed on the website itself, but not in the file. Second, I spoke to someone who works with Wendy's who informed me the Triples are rarely purchased. While this is good news, the thing to ask yourself is, "Why is it still on the menu?" Good question. It feels like it should be criminal to even *offer* that kind of sandwich. Finally, while the Triples are a rare order, I've also been informed the Doubles are more popular than Singles. We'll give a +10 for restraint in avoiding the Triples, but a -900000000000000 for opting to eat Doubles instead.

Finally, a review of Wendy's would not be complete without examining their delicious (and so *not* nutritious) Frosty™ Treats. Read it and weep folks:

Item	Calories	Fat (g)	Saturated Fat (g)	Sodium (mg)	Fiber (g)	Sugar (g)	Protein (g)
Chocolate Small	310	8	5	140	0	44	8
Vanilla Float w/Coca-Cola®	390	7	5	130	0	69	7
Chocolate Fudge Shake Small	410	11	7	190	1	58	8
Chocolate Fudge Shake Large	540	13	8	270	1	80	11
Frosty™-cino Small	380	11	7	140	0	53	7
Frosty™-cino Large	510	13	8	180	0	72	9
Cookie Dough Twisted Frosty	480	16	10	200	1	60	9
M&M's® Twisted Frosty	550	19	12	170	1	75	10
Oreo® Twisted Frosty	440	14	7	290	1	54	9
Coffee Toffee Twisted Frosty	540	20	15	230	1	69	9
Chocolate Jr. Frosty	155	4	2.5	70	0	22	4
Chocolate Medium	403	10	6.5	182	0	57	10
Chocolate Large	527	14	8.5	238	0	75	14

No big surprises here. Calories are bad. Fat is bad. Sodium is fine, although this also follows my rule that most foods high in fat are low in sodium and vice versa. Sugar counts are pretty bad, as well. There's just nothing good here, really. Perhaps if the only thing you get is a Frosty, then you won't be completely off course, but I certainly wouldn't get one in addition to actually **eating** at Wendy's too. The Jr. Frosty is actually the best choice. If you need a little Frosty fix, go for the Jr. Moderation is a good thing. Incidentally, how long have these shakes and "Twisted" things been around? I've apparently been out of the Wendy's loop for some time. Last I remember them adding was a Vanilla version of the Frosty. Times sure have changed for good ol' Dr. Boz! One last point—the small Frosty is the only version officially listed in the nutritional file you can download. They **do** tell you what to multiply everything by to get the numbers for the other sizes, so I did that for you here. No thanks necessary!

And so we come to the "Winners and Losers" portion of the column. I almost feel like there are no winners with this menu. So maybe instead of Winners/Losers, let's call them "Lesser Evils" and "OMG— STAY AWAY!!!" Again, this is purely my opinion based solely on personal experience and self-education. Consult your doctor, nutritionist, or other certified professional to get an "official" opinion, although I suspect those opinions will be very similar to mine. Anyway, here you go:

Lesser Evils

Side Salads (with minimal dressing)
Mandarin Orange Cup
Plain Baked Potato
Small Chili (no cheese or crackers)
5 Piece Chicken Nuggets (with no dipping sauce)
Barbecue Nugget Sauce (if you **have** to have a sauce)
 Jr. Hamburger/Cheeseburger
 Ultimate Chicken Grill Sandwich
Kids' Meals (eaten by adults – seriously)
 Any of the Go Wraps
 Jr. Frosty
Basically anything in its smallest (e.g., Jr.) form

OMG STAY AWAY!!!!

Salads with all the fixings and dressings
(base salads are bad enough as it is)
Anything labeled Large and/or Triple
 Boneless Wings
Anything with Bacon in the name
 ("Club" would qualify here too)
Any Frosty™ Treats (with the exception of the plain Jr.
 and possibly the Small)
Did I mention anything Large or Triple?
 Most of the menu

One final point regarding the above lists: I am not kidding when I say "Most of the menu." Quite frankly, I'm shocked at the nutritional values I see. The salads scare me because they're salads and people might think that makes them healthy. They're not. Yes, they have some healthy things in them, but they're also loaded with a bunch of unhealthy bits and pieces. The wings are drenched in salt. The sandwiches are abysmal, especially the Doubles and Triples. The Frosty Treats are actually some of the more **healthy** items on the menu, which is frightening and sad at the same time. Please . . . **PLEASE** be conscious of the above information if/when you go to Wendy's. Be educated about the foods you choose to eat. Don't assume something is good for you because it "sounds" good. For additional information about Wendy's nutrition, check out <http://www.wendys.com/food/NutritionLanding.jsp>. Not only can you download the file I used for this column, but you can actually customize your meal so you know **exactly** what you're eating. They have a calculator on the website where you can add menu items and personalize them by adding/subtracting topping and sandwich components. This is actually pretty helpful, because different sandwiches have different "standard" toppings. Definitely go check it out.

That's all I got folks. Like I said, don't kill the messenger, but if you need to get angry at someone, I can handle your wrath, just don't throw stuff at me. I'll catch everyone in August. And remember, dinner is on me. ☺

Is there an eating establishment you'd like me to review? If so, drop me an email at drboz75@yahoo.com. Or, if you have any other ideas for the column, feel free to send me a message. I'm definitely open to your feedback and/or harassment. Most of it, at least.