

America's Healthiest Restaurants

[Eat This, Not That](#)

by [David Zinczenko](#), with [Matt Goulding](#) a Yahoo! Health Expert for Nutrition

Eating out invariably raises a number of tricky questions: sit-down or drive-thru? Burgers or pizza? Thin or stuffed crust? Choosing one over the other could mean saving hundreds of calories in a single meal, and up to 50 pounds of flab in the course of a year and countless health woes over the course of a lifetime. That's why Eat This, Not That! launched an investigation and put 66 major chain restaurants under the nutritional microscope—so that you and your family can continue to eat out, but do so knowing the types of insider tips and savvy strategies that can help melt fat all year long. And the good news is that many fan favorites scored top marks!

To separate the commendable from the deplorable, we calculated the total number of calories per entrée. This gave us a snapshot of how each restaurant compared in average serving size—a key indicator of unhealthy portion distortion. Then we rewarded establishments with fruit and vegetable side-dish choices, as well as for providing whole-grain options. Finally, we penalized places for excessive amounts of trans fats and menus laden with gut-busting desserts. What we ended up with is the Eat This, Not That! Restaurant Report Card, which will show you how all of the nation's largest eating establishments stack up nutritionally.

Check out those restaurants that scored a B+ or higher:

A- Chick-fil-A

Between the breakfast and lunch menus, there are only two entrées at Chick-Fil-A that break 500 calories, a rare feat in the fast-food world. What this means is that you can't possibly do too much harm—especially if you stick to the chicken. And unlike the typical fast-food chain, Chick-Fil-A offers a list of sides that goes beyond breaded and fried potatoes and onions. (Just beware the large cole slaw, which adds an extra 600 calories to your daily intake!) That's why we dub the Atlanta-based chicken shack one of our all-time favorite fast-food restaurants.

Also, be sure to check out [our exclusive list of the best and worst restaurants for kids](#) to find out why Chick-fil-A receives an even higher grade when it comes to kids' meals.

SURVIVAL STRATEGY: The worst thing you can do is supplement your meal with a milkshake—not a single cup has fewer than 600 calories. And instead of nuggets or strips, look to the Chargrilled Chicken Sandwiches, which average only 320 calories apiece.

A- Subway

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.

Along those same lines, [try to avoid anything from this indispensable list of the 14 worst “healthy” foods in America](#), too. They'll trip you up--and easily expand your waistline.

A- Jamba Juice

Jamba offers a viable and tasty solution to the dearth of fresh fruits and vegetables in the American diet: Stick it all in a blender and let us slurp it up. But make this your rule: If it includes syrup or added sugar, it ceases to be a smoothie. Jamba Juice makes plenty of real-deal smoothies, but their menu is sullied with more than a few faux-fruit blends. Just make sure you choose the right one.

SURVIVAL STRATEGY: For a perfectly guilt-free treat, opt for a Jamba Light or All Fruit Smoothie in a 16-ounce cup.

And unless you're looking to put on weight for your new acting career, don't touch the Peanut Butter Moo'd. [On this shocking list of the 20 Unhealthiest Drinks in America, it sits worryingly close to the top.](#) (You'll be amazed by what's number one!)

A- Au Bon Pain

Sure the menu has its pitfalls, but what menu doesn't? The bottom line is that Au Bon Pain combines an extensive inventory of healthy items with an unrivaled standard of nutritional transparency. Each store has an on-site nutritional kiosk to help customers find a meal to meet their expectations, and the variety of ordering options provides dozens of paths to a sensible meal.

SURVIVAL STRATEGY: Most of the café sandwiches are in the 650-calorie range, so make a lean meal instead by combining a hot soup with one of the many low-calorie options on the Portions menu. And if you must indulge, eschew the baked goods in favor of a cup of fruit and yogurt, or serving of chocolate-covered almonds.

B+ Boston Market

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.

B+

Cici's Pizza Buffet

Cici's began in Texas in 1985 and now boasts more than 600 locations, proving definitively that Americans love a good buffet. The good news for our waistlines is that the crust is moderately sized, and the pizza comes in varieties beyond simple sausage and pepperoni. But if you check your willpower at the door, you're probably better off skipping the pizza buffet entirely.

SURVIVAL STRATEGY: It takes 20 minutes for your brain to tell your body it's full, so start with a salad and then proceed slowly to the pizza. Limit yourself to the healthier slices like the Zesty Vegetable, Alfredo, and the Olé, which is a Mexican-inspired pie with only 108 calories per slice.

B+

McDonald's

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.

B+

Taco Bell

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 Stuff 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.

B+

Wendy's

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.