

10 “Healthy” Foods That You Should Not Eat

1. Natural Flavors

Often containing preservatives and solvents, natural flavors mimic substances found in nature and induce consumers to crave more of the product being consumed. If you ever tried to eat one potato chip, you know what I’m talking about.

Some common examples of “natural” flavors include:

- Monosodium glutamate, or MSG, is a known excitotoxin found in many products under a variety of other names, including, but not limited to, yeast extract, hydrolyzed vegetable protein, plant protein or simply “glutamate.” Glutamate can trigger headaches and disrupt normal cell function.
- Castoreum is an FDA approved food additive that comes from the anal glands of a beaver. Yup, you heard that right, beaver butt. It apparently has a raspberry taste to it and is used to flavor things like baked goods, chewing gum, pudding, hard candy and dairy products. I’d love to know who figured this out. While it’s not known to be harmful as MSG, is this something you would knowingly choose to ingest?



- Carmine - or as I like to call it, beetle juice. As with castoreum, vegans beware! Carmine is a food coloring made from beetle parts that have been crushed, boiled or dried and can be found in candy, ice cream, lemonade, yogurt, waffles, etc. According to the PubChem database, it can lead to skin irritations, asthma, and even anaphylaxis.

Avoid: “natural” flavors!

Choose instead: whole foods with ingredients you can pronounce and understand.

2. Low Fat / Fat-Free

One of the greatest disservices to human health has been the notion that dietary fat should be avoided. The brain is mostly made up of fat and needs it to function properly. It’s the type of fat you consume that matters. Saturated and trans fats, as well as hydrogenated oils can increase the risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and elevate so-called “bad” cholesterol levels.



Avoid: Canola, corn, cottonseed hydrogenated, peanut, sunflower, and safflower oils. Note that these oils are often found in a variety of products including condiments, chips, salad dressings, and prepared foods at many salad bars.

Choose instead: Try coconut, avocado, extra virgin olive oil, nuts and seeds like chia, flax, pumpkin, sesame, sunflower (seeds not oil).

3. Sugar-Free

When you see these words, think chemical sh*t storm and run like hell! Usually sugar-free is an indication of artificial sweeteners like aspartame, for example, a known carcinogen that can also cause type 2 diabetes, metabolic dysfunction, weight gain and more. Other artificial sweeteners to avoid are Splenda (Sucralose), Equal, Sweet 'n Low and Truvia, which is cleverly marketed to make health conscious people believe they are purchasing stevia. Truvia is actually made from Erythritol (an alcohol sugar made from genetically modified corn), Rebiana and natural flavors.



Avoid: All artificial sweeteners, ingredients you can't pronounce, and products simply labeled "sugar" as this is generally genetically modified beet sugar.

Choose instead: In a perfect world, it's best to avoid sweetened foods, however better choices include coconut sugar, pure stevia made from the whole leaf without other additives, monkfruit, date paste, honey, and maple syrup.

4. Energy Bars



Most energy bars are glorified candy bars in disguise. Words like "natural" appear on the label but if you read the ingredients you'll find that the majority of them are anything but, often containing high fructose corn syrup, sucralose, hydrogenated oils, genetically modified soy, those mystery "natural" flavors and various unpronounceable ingredients. Even the healthier brands are often loaded with sugar, albeit of a more wholesome variety.

Avoid: While super convenient, most energy bars are best avoided.

Choose instead: buy whole fresh fruit and raw, preferably sprouted, nuts and seeds to snack on. Organic is best.

5. Farmed Fish

Despite what you may have heard about getting more Omega 3 fatty acids as found in fish, many farmed fish live in crowded pens filled with waste, disinfectants, antibiotics and vaccines. Tilapia, which has become quite popular, is often imported from China where regulatory standards are lacking.

Sadly, wild caught fish isn't all that appealing either as it often contains high levels of mercury. Add to that concerns over radiation coming from Fukushima and you may want to make another choice.



Choose instead: Consider getting your omega fatty acids from plant-based sources, i.e. chia, hemp seeds and oil, flax seeds and oil, seaweed, leafy greens, wild rice, berries (especially blueberries, mangoes and honeydew melon).

6. Agave Syrup

Once upon a time, agave was considered the darling of the raw food world, though that is no longer the case. Even Dr. Oz was quoted as saying “We used to think that because agave has a low glycemic index and doesn’t spike your blood sugar like regular sugar does, it would be a good alternative for diabetics. But it turns out that, although agave doesn’t contain a lot of glucose, it contains more fructose than any other common sweetener, including high-fructose corn syrup.”



Choose instead: Other than fresh fruit, which is highly recommended, it’s not a good idea to use other types sugar very often due to their negative health affects on the body. But on those occasions when you’d like to include some, consider coconut sugar, maple syrup, stevia or monkfruit. You can also make a date paste by blending pitted dates with enough purified water to create a paste consistency and use this in your recipes.

7. Fluoride

Although it’s not a food, I had to include fluoride in this list given that it is added to much off our water supply and toothpaste. But it gets worse. According to Dr. Mercola, some pesticides also contain fluoride and some food processors use sulfuryl fluoride (breaks down to fluoride after application) as a direct fumigant on certain foods, and for preventing pests in storage structures. Packaging like fast food wrappers that are grease resistant and pizza boxes are also suspect. Other crops commonly fumigated or sprayed directly with sulfuryl fluoride include, but are not limited to, cocoa, brown rice, walnuts, beans and grapes.



Fluoride is a neurotoxin and should be avoided. It has been linked to endocrine dysfunction, thyroid disorder, ADHD, lowered IQ, weight gain, depression, skeletal fluorosis and more.

Other sources of fluoride to be aware of are the chemicals in stain resistant clothing and non-stick cookware.

8. Gluten-free

Sadly, “gluten-free” has become a way to market less-than-healthy foods as manufacturers jump on the “natural” bandwagon to capitalize on market trends. While celiac disease is a very real and threatening illness, one where gluten should absolutely be avoided, most gluten-free choices are laden with rice, corn, potatoes and other high-carb, low protein ingredients. These foods also often contain soy and canola, both of which (along with corn) are likely to have been genetically modified.



Genetically modified foods have been designed to withstand large amounts of pesticides, have not been properly tested, and remain unlabeled. Recent research suggests that the glyphosate (RoundUp) pesticide being used on wheat is why so many people feel better when they avoid it.

Choose instead: opt for organic, whole foods that have been minimally processed. Always listen to your body’s signals after eating anything, even if it’s “supposed” to be healthy. If you get a tickle or an itch in your ear after eating a certain food for example, that’s often a sign that your body is reacting unfavorably. So, take that food out of your diet for several weeks and if it happens again after reintroducing it then you may want to avoid it. Remember, one man’s food is another man’s poison!

9. Sports Drinks

As summer approaches and we find ourselves outdoors playing in the sun, our need for electrolytes can increase.

There are many reasons why you may want to pass on the colorful concoctions marketed for this purpose. Artificial colors, high-fructose corn syrup (genetically modified), sucralose (reduces “friendly” bacteria in the gut), bromated vegetable oil, natural flavor (see #1 above), citric acid (generally made from black mold not fruit as the name suggests), just to name a few.

Choose instead: Try coconut water, especially raw from Young Thai coconuts. Avoid coconut water that has turned pink, despite manufacturers’ claims that it’s alright. The pink color is an indication that oxidation has occurred.

You can also make your own truly “natural” Gatorade with filtered water, fresh squeezed lemon, orange, a little maple syrup and a pinch of high mineral salt like pink Himalayan or Celtic grey.



10. Carrageenan

A common ingredient in nut milks, dairy products, processed foods and even dietary supplements, this seaweed extract is used as a stabilizing agent, emulsifier or thickener in nut milks, dairy products, processed foods and even dietary supplements.



According to Joanne K. Tobacman, MD, who published peer reviewed studies on carrageenan, it causes inflammation in the body. In fact, drug investigators have been reported to use carrageenan to *cause* inflammation in tissue in order to test anti-inflammatory properties of new drugs. And since inflammation is one of the root causes of many serious diseases you can see why carrageenan made this list.

While FDA recognizes carrageenan as GRAS (generally recognized as safe), given their track record, this doesn't give me any comfort.