

More Food, Fewer Calories

Eat more while taking in fewer calories by choosing foods based on their energy density

BY FRANK G. BOTTONE JR., PH.D.

One of the biggest challenges in cutting calories is dealing with hunger. There's nothing fun about eating less food than you're used to. But cutting down isn't just about volume, and it's not just a matter of shoveling less food into your mouth. It's also about energy density, a simple concept that enables you to consume significantly fewer calories without axing half your diet.

Energy density is defined as the number of calories divided by the number of grams in a food item. Foods containing mostly water or fiber approach zero calories per gram and are considered "energy lean," while high-fat, "energy-dense" foods can contain up to nine calories per gram.

Your body gauges fullness by the volume of food in your stomach. Choosing energy-lean foods works well because it allows you to eat your usual amount of food—if not

more—while still taking in fewer calories. If you've ever passed up a soup appetizer to save room for an entrée, you've inadvertently made an energy-density decision. Soups and stews contain lots of water; consuming the added volume contributes to fullness and means you'll consume fewer calories.

Whole grains, cereals, lean cuts of meat, and most fruits and vegetables are all nutrient-rich, energy-lean foods. On the other end of the spectrum, foods you'll want to limit or avoid include deep-fried anything, cheeses, and cream-based sauces.

Some energy-lean foods are obvious, like broccoli; others, like spaghetti with meat sauce, are not. What's certain is that reading labels and keeping energy density in mind is an easy, effective way to get lean, satisfied, and in better health.

THE TIPPING POINT
Every food has an energy-density value, from zero to nine. To lose weight, choose items with an energy density of around two or less as often as possible.

Frank G. Bottone Jr., Ph.D. is the author of *The Diet Denominator: Fill Your Tank for Less, a Practical Guide to Choosing Low Energy Density Foods.*

DENSITY SCALE

0

- Lettuce (0.1)
- Broccoli (0.3)
- Apple (0.5)

1

- Tilapia (1.0)
- Baked potato (1.1)
- Egg (1.6)

2

- Salmon (2.0)
- Miso soup (2.0)
- Guacamole (2.0)

3

- Pork sausage (3.4)
- Clif Bar (3.4)
- Oatmeal (3.8)

4

- Sugar doughnut (4.0)
- Popcorn (4.0)
- Granola bar (4.7)

5

- Ranch sauce (5.0)
- Fried bacon (5.4)
- Corn chips (5.5)

6

- Almonds (6.0)
- Walnuts (6.0)
- Pecans (6.7)

7

- Butter (7.0)
- Mayonnaise (7.1)
- Macadamias (7.3)

8

- Olive oil (8.0)
- Canola oil (8.8)
- Corn oil (8.9)

9

Pure fat

135
The maximum capacity, in ounces, of the average human stomach



CHARLES MASTERS: FOOD STYLIST; LIZA JERKOW/PLUM REPS