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The Five Most Fattening Frozen Drinks
A report from the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine
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In the dog days of August, consumers are looking for frozen beverages that will help them stay cool without packing on the pounds. From Starbucks to Dunkin’ Donuts, popular eateries serve an assortment of smoothies, chillers, shakes, and other frozen drinks, including many marketed as healthful.

But when dietitians with the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine examined nutrient information for these beverages, they discovered that many of the most popular icy treats are actually diet busters packed with calories, fat, and sugar. This report highlights the five most fattening frozen drinks.

Background

Summer is smoothie season. Once found mostly in juice bars, frozen drinks have become mainstream in recent years, and these heavily marketed beverages capitalize on the old-fashioned fruit smoothie’s healthful reputation. Large chain eateries are ringing up billions of dollars in sales as they compete to create new frozen drinks to market as healthful and refreshing.¹ But some of these drinks contain so many calories and so much fat that an average consumer who drinks just one will have already taken in a substantial portion of his or her recommended daily caloric intake.

Findings

PCRM found that many popular frozen drinks aren’t healthful choices at all. Some are high in calories, fat, and sugar. This report lists the five worst frozen drinks from major eateries.

The Five Most Fattening Frozen Drinks		
Rank	Worst Drink	Company
1	P-nut Power Shake	Robeks
2	Berries & Kreme Chiller	Krispy Kreme
3	Strawberry Banana Smoothie	Dunkin’ Donuts
4	Mint Mocha Chip Frappuccino	Starbucks
5	Strawberry Breakfast Fruit Smoothie	Steak ‘n Shake

The Eateries

Dietitians at PCRM searched the Web and followed up on news reports and advertisements to find eateries offering frozen drinks.

PCRM then used company Web sites or customer service numbers to locate nutritional information on frozen drinks. PCRM evaluated the largest serving size available for each drink because vendors often use value pricing and other marketing tools to push consumers to purchase the largest option.

Rating System

For this report, PCRM employed three criteria: total calories, total fat, and sugar content. These factors are highly relevant to both weight management and overall health, and information on all three was available for all eateries that provided nutrition data.

Caloric intake is clearly one of the most important factors in achieving and maintaining a healthy weight. The U.S. Department of Agriculture advises balancing calories from foods and beverages with calories expended to maintain a body weight in a healthy range. According to the USDA, those who need to lose weight should decrease calorie intake while maintaining an adequate nutrient intake and increasing physical activity.²

Diets high in fat have been linked by scientific research to increased risk of cancers,³ diabetes,⁴ and heart disease.⁵

Excessive sugar consumption has been shown to have strong links to obesity. The American Dietetic Association says, "It's a good idea to try to limit portions."⁶ And the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization both call for limiting sugar to battle the global obesity epidemic.⁷

Using these criteria, PCRM ranked all frozen drink offerings at each eatery. PCRM dietitians then chose the worst item from each eatery. These five items (one from each eatery) were then compared with one another using the same three criteria (calories, fat, and sugar) to create a list of the five most fattening frozen drinks.

Methodology

Scores were determined by ranking items by the following:

- 1. calories** (highest to lowest)
- 2. fat** (highest to lowest), and
- 3. sugar** (highest to lowest).

Scores were then added together. The frozen drink with the lowest total number became the worst item, the drink with the second-lowest score became the second-worst, and so on.

Scoring System					
Eatery	Worst Frozen Drink	Rank for Calories: (highest to lowest)	Rank for Fat Grams (highest to lowest)	Rank for Grams Sugar (highest to lowest)	Overall Score (sum of rankings)
Robeks	P-nut Power Shake	1st (1,125 calories)	1st (48 grams)	3rd (99 grams)	5
Krispy Kreme	Berries & Kreme Chiller	2nd (960 calories)	2nd (40 grams)	2nd (115 grams)	6
Dunkin' Donuts	Strawberry Banana Smoothie	3rd (700 calories)	5th (40 grams)	1st (132 grams)	9
Starbucks	Mint Mocha Chip Frappuccino	4th (590 calories)	3rd (22 grams)	4th (79 grams)	11
Steak 'n Shake	Strawberry Breakfast Fruit Smoothie	5th (548 grams)	4th (11 grams)	5th (83 grams)	14

Detailed Results

1. P-nut Power Shake from Robeks: 1,125 calories, 48gm fat, 99m sugar. Size evaluated: 32 ounces.

While this drink's description makes it sound refreshing and fortifying, the 32-ounce P-Nut Power Shake, which contains milk and yogurt, eats up about half the recommended daily limit on calories and at least half the amount of fat recommended for the average adult. **A better choice:** the 16-ounce Protein Berry Workout with Soy Protein from Jamba Juice. With only 280 calories, 1 gram of fat, and 48 grams of sugar, the Protein Berry Workout with Soy Protein offers 14 grams of soy protein without the calories found in the P-nut Power Shake. Dedicated Robeks customers who aren't as focused on protein might consider the company's Zen Berry Smoothie, a healthful nondairy option (nutrition details below).

2. Berries & Kreme Chiller from Krispy Kreme: 960 calories, 40gm fat, 115gm sugar. Size evaluated: 20 ounces.

Gulping down a Berries & Kreme Chiller will put the average adult about halfway to exceeding the recommended daily limits on calories and fat intake—and the drink also contains about as much sugar as four Snickers bars. **A better choice:** The 20-ounce MangoFest from Smoothie King. Made with mangos, pineapples, and orange juice, this

drink has 285 calories, zero fat, and 69 grams of sugar—all from fruit sources. The fiber in fruit has been shown to help prevent some cancers, as does a diet low in fat.

3. Strawberry Banana Smoothie from Dunkin Donuts: 700 calories, 4gm fat, 132 gm sugar. Size evaluated: 32 ounces.

Strawberries and bananas are low in calories and full of vitamins and fiber, but this drink is profoundly unhealthy because of its high calorie and sugar content—about two-thirds of a cup. It also contains artificial colors, high fructose corn syrup, gelatin, and propylene glycol. **A better choice:** The 12-ounce Zen Berry Smoothie from Robeks, a nondairy blend of fresh-squeezed orange juice, strawberries, bananas, soy sorbet, and ice, has 190 calories, 1 gram of fat, and 29 grams of sugar, as well as 5 grams of dietary fiber, plenty of vitamins A and C, and about half the daily recommended allowance of calcium.

4. Mint Mocha Chip Frappuccino from Starbucks: 590 calories, 22gm fat, 79gm sugar. Size evaluated: 24 ounces.

While Starbucks does not market its Frappuccinos as healthful beverages, consumers may be surprised at how bad the nutritional numbers are. In addition to a hefty dose of calories and sugar, the 24-ounce Mint Mocha Chip Frappuccino contains 60 milligrams of cholesterol and 22 grams of fat, 13 grams of which are artery-clogging saturated fat. Starbucks is marketing its new Vivanno Nourishing Blends as healthful, but some of these drinks contain a surprising amount of sugar. The Orange Mango Banana Blend with Matcha, for example, contains 42 ounces of sugar—more than some Starbucks Frappuccinos. Anyone determined to get a chilly caffeine fix will find that a simple iced coffee is friendlier to the waistline than the Starbucks frozen drinks. **A better choice:** A Starbucks tall iced soy latte translates into just 80 calories, 2 grams of fat, and 8 grams of sugar.

5. Strawberry Breakfast Fruit Smoothie from Steak ‘n Shake: 548 calories, 11gm fat, 83gm sugar. Size evaluated: 16 ounces.

While Steak ‘n Shake claims its breakfast fruit smoothies are “excellent sources of vitamins, minerals, protein and calcium,” almost 20 percent of this 16-ounce smoothie’s calories are derived from fat and more than half of these calories are from saturated fat. The drink also contains trans fat and more than one-quarter of the average adult’s daily recommended caloric intake.

More Healthful—and Delicious—Frozen Drinks

Not all frozen drinks come with such a hefty health price. To cool down and stay trim, avoid drinks containing added sugar and dairy products in favor of beverages that are primarily fruit—with low calorie, sugar, and fat content. These factors can help lower the risk for heart disease, some cancers, and obesity.

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