

9 Soups That Make You Fat

By David Zinczenko with Matt Goulding / Apr 29, 2011

Soup may be the ultimate comfort food. It's warm, it's nourishing, and you don't even have to chew it. No wonder Mom made it whenever you were sad, cold, or just plain under the weather.

But here's a dirty little secret: A lot of soups out there aren't comfort food at all. They're discomfort food. That's because they can make for a lot of discomfort every time you step on the scale, test your blood pressure, or try to squeeze into last year's swimsuit. Everybody likes a nice, rich broth, but some soups are the Donald Trumps of food: too rich, too thick, and ultimately, full of nonsense. (And like the Donald, some are pretty darn salty, too!)

So whether you're watching your weight, your blood pressure, or just your general health, take a second look at what's in your bowl. Here's how to spot a bad bisque, quick!



#9: WORST SUPERMARKET SOUP

Campbell's Chunky New England Clam Chowder (1 cup)

230 calories

13 g fat (2 g saturated)

890 mg sodium

Each can contains two servings, so the net damage of a full bowl is 460 calories and 1,780 milligrams of sodium. Eat that alongside a sandwich—even a simple ham and cheese—and you're facing an energy tariff of nearly 1,000 calories. The good news? Campbell's offers a Healthy Request collection of highly improved, updated versions of classic favorites. Make the swap here and you cut an effortless 200 calories from this can and slash the sodium by more than 50 percent.

130 calories

3 g fat (1 g saturated)

410 mg sodium

#8: WORST ASIAN SOUP



P.F. Chang's Hot and Sour Soup (Bowl)

400 calories

15 g fat (5 g saturated)

5,000 mg sodium

Soup is notorious for being loaded with sodium, but no other bowl on this page comes anywhere close to the 5,000 milligrams in Chang's Hot and Sour. Sure the mineral is necessary for normal bodily functioning, but no person should take in more than 2,300 milligrams per day. Most people would be better maxing out at about 1,500 milligrams. At current rates, Americans consume roughly double their recommended daily intake, which is perhaps why one in three—that's more than 100 million Americans—lives with high blood pressure. Unfortunately there's not a safe bowl on Chang's menu, so if you want soup, you'll have to downgrade to the starter size. Egg Drop is the best choice, but if you slip up and order a full bowl, expect the sodium to skyrocket to 2,410 milligrams.



#7: WORST POTATO SOUP

Applebee's Baked Potato Soup (Bowl)

440 calories

31 g fat (14 g saturated)

1,270 mg sodium

Starting your meal with this bowl of soup is like swinging through the McDonald's drive-thru for a Double Cheeseburger on the way to dinner. Of course, the cheeseburger is healthier—it won't saddle you with as much sodium or saturated fat. If you're looking for a starter soup, think broth. It whets your appetite without pumping you full of cream or butter.

#6: WORST SOUTHWESTERN SOUP

Chili's Sweet Corn Soup (Bowl)

450 calories

36 g fat (20 g saturated)

960 mg sodium

Unprocessed corn is a great source of fiber, folate, phosphorus, and manganese. But this bowl? It's just a great source of saturated fat. In fact, one serving contains 20 grams, which is your entire day's allotment. Instead, opt for the Chicken and Green Chile soup. It's garnished with heart-healthy avocado, and the heat from the peppers will jumpstart your metabolism. The sodium is a little higher, but in this case it's worth it—you shed 250 calories and cut the saturated fat by 85 percent.



#5: WORST VEGETABLE SOUP

Einstein Bros. Broccoli Cheese Soup (Bowl)

470 calories

33 g fat (19 g saturated, 1 g trans)

1,910 mg sodium

Most iterations of broccoli cheese soup are made up of very little broccoli and a whole lot of cheese, and no bowl exemplifies that problem better than this one from Einstein Bros. These florets amount to little more than flotsam in a sea of highly saturated dairy fat. Opt for the Chicken Noodle instead and you'll win every nutritional matchup as well as earn 80 percent of your vitamin A for the day.

#4: WORST CHOWDER

Red Lobster's New England Clam Chowder (Bowl)

480 calories

34 g fat (20 g saturated)

1,390 mg sodium

Notice something here? This is the second clam chowder on this list. That's because the New England version of the soup is made with a thick and fatty base of oil and cream. But don't worry; you don't have to give up chowder entirely. Just switch to Manhattan style. It swaps out the cream for tomato, eliminating virtually all the dangerous fats. If you make this switch just three times a week, you'll drop 9 pounds over the course of a year. The sodium's still culpable though, so make an effort to go low-sodium for the rest of the day.



#3: WORST BISQUE

Au Bon Pain's Lobster Bisque (Large)

540 calories

39 g fat (24 g saturated, 1.5 g trans)

1,830 mg sodium

Lobster on its own has a number of merits: it's tasty, low-fat, and loaded with protein. Too bad those merits don't hold up when it's drowning in a viscous puddle of fat. This bowl comes with the usightly blemish of trans fat plus 20 percent more saturated fat than you should consume in an entire day. And in terms of overall energy, you would have to run five miles to undo the damage. Better choice: Switch to the Tomato Rice soup. It keeps the calories commendably low and carries one of the lowest sodium counts you're likely to ever encounter in a commercially prepared soup.



#2: WORST CHILI

Panera's All-Natural Steak Chili with Cornbread (Large)

580 calories

26 g fat (8 g saturated)

1,330 mg sodium

Chili has a lot going for it: protein from the meat, fiber from the beans, and plenty of phytonutrients from the tomato base. This bowl might actually pass muster if it weren't for the 200-calorie hunk of cornbread that comes with it. If you must order the chili, opt out of the cornbread. Otherwise, you're better off with the soup-and-salad combo below.



#1: WORST "HEALTHY" SOUP

Cosi's Tomato & Basil Aurora Soup (Large)

597 calories

54 g fat (33 g saturated)

1,701 mg sodium

In terms of saturated fat, this bowl trounces every other soup on this page. That's nothing to be proud of. What's most frightening here is that one would expect a tomato-based soup to be relatively safe. Guess it's true what they say: You can't judge a soup by its vegetables. (They do say that, right?) Switch to the Chicken Queso Tortilla Soup for a low-calorie, high protein alternative.