7 Surprising Chain Restaurant Fat Bombs

Don’t let words like salad, grilled chicken, and avocado trick you into ordering an entree that’s actually overflowing with calories, sodium, and saturated fat.

Jared Beckman

Fat Bomb #1: Au Bon Pain Grilled Chicken Avocado Sandwich

Calories: 250
Fat: 10g (2g sat fat)
Order instead: Grilled Chicken Sandwich (Grilled)

Fat Bomb #2: Applebee’s Steaming Skillet Fajitas with Shrimp

Calories: 650
Fat: 40g (10g sat fat)
Order instead: Grilled Shrimp Skillet Fajitas

Fat Bomb #3: Chipotle Build Your Own Salad

Calories: 500
Fat: 30g (5g sat fat)
Order instead: Two-bowl (pinto corn tortillas, black beans, yellow vegetables, and red bell peppers)

Fat Bomb #4: McDonald’s Premium Crispy Chicken Club Sandwich

Calories: 800
Fat: 50g (10g sat fat)
Order instead: Premium Wraps - Chicken Sweet Chicken Chili (Grilled)

Fat Bomb #5: TGI Friday’s Hibachi Chicken Skewers

Calories: 450
Fat: 20g (5g sat fat)
Order instead: Hibachi Chicken

Fat Bomb #6: Wendy’s Spicy Chicken Caesar Salad

Calories: 550
Fat: 25g (5g sat fat)
Order instead: Chicken Caesar Salad Sandwich

Fat Bomb #7: Jamba Juice Peanut Butter Moo’d Smoothie (Original Size)

Calories: 450
Fat: 50g (10g sat fat)
Order instead: Protein Berry Workout Smoothie (16 oz)

You may be in a health-conscious mood and order the grilled vegetable dish, only to realize you’ve ordered something that’s high in calories and saturated fat. Many nutritionists say that it’s not what you order, but it’s what you choose to order more frequently.

Dinner doesn’t have to be a health disaster. Keri Gans, R.D., author of 100 Things Men Need to Know About Food Change Your Life, offers up seven over-the-top fast-food entrées and provides a healthier alternative to each.

“You never know what could be in the meal you choose,” says Gans. “You order a main course, and then you load your lettuce with heaps of cheese and a colossal scoop of guacamole. A smarter strategy for ordering Tex-Mex takeout: Use Chipotle’s online nutrition calculator, order based on calories, and see where your meal weighs in before you step up to order.

For a BIG change, you may want to order a simple meal or order a salad, but hold the dressing. “At a chain restaurant, you may think you’re ordering a salad, but when you load up on the dressing, you’re really eating a main course,” says Gans.

Another tip: Ask your server if the restaurant changes menu options, many of which don’t gel with what you’d normally eat to stay in shape.

But when you’re on a road trip with the boys or joining the fam for Grandma’s birthday dinner, you don’t always get to pick the place. Instead, you’re left with chain restaurant menu options, many of which don’t gel with what you’d normally eat to stay in shape.

Here are seven over-the-top fast-food entrees and the healthier alternatives.

Fat Bomb #1: Au Bon Pain Grilled Chicken Avocado Sandwich

Calories: 250
Fat: 10g (2g sat fat)
Order instead: Grilled Chicken Sandwich (Grilled)

Chicken and avocado are the secret ingredients to low-cost, lean eats. Most chain restaurants have lightened entrees, which is great. The problem is, most people don’t order the healthier versions.

Pepper chicken is the ultimate post-gym snack, but when it’s done up like dessert—as in, blended with frozen yogurt and chocolate—you might as well stop for a Big Mac. The problem is, even the lighter entrées aren’t really that healthy. Fat and sodium content is still high, and the portion sizes are huge. Fat and sodium content is still high, and the portion sizes are huge.

If you’re working out, you want to avoid potential make-out sessions outside of your gym. A Big Mac is at least 500 calories, high in sugar, and high in fat. Skip the Double-we komen get 850 calories, high in sugar, and high in fat.

Fat Bomb #2: Applebee’s Steaming Skillet Fajitas with Shrimp

Calories: 650
Fat: 40g (10g sat fat)
Order instead: Grilled Shrimp Skillet Fajitas

The idea of a seafood entree seems tame, but when it’s steaming with oil and adorable, coral pink shrimp, you’re in for a real nutrition bomb. “It’s not a Healthy Choice, because it’s really high in calories, fat, and sodium,” says Gans.

Fat Bomb #3: Chipotle Build Your Own Salad

Calories: 500
Fat: 30g (5g sat fat)
Order instead: Two-bowl (pinto corn tortillas, black beans, yellow vegetables, and red bell peppers)

When you’re grilling them at home, veggie-heavy fajitas make a superlean, nutrient-packed dinner. But at a restaurant, “sizzling” translates to loads of oil and/or grease.

Fat Bomb #4: McDonald’s Premium Crispy Chicken Club Sandwich

Calories: 800
Fat: 50g (10g sat fat)
Order instead: Premium Wraps - Chicken Sweet Chicken Chili (Grilled)

Grilled chicken is a great go-to muscle food, but watch out for sweet-tasting sauces. This miso-glazed entrée is the perfect example of how sugar can crank up the sodium content. “It’s not a Healthy Choice, but it’s also not something you want to order,” says Gans.

Fat Bomb #5: TGI Friday’s Hibachi Chicken Skewers

Calories: 450
Fat: 20g (5g sat fat)
Order instead: Hibachi Chicken

It’s always a good idea to avoid the food you’re eating, but when it’s something you never would have ordered in a restaurant, you might as well order a Big Mac.

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When you’re ordering a smoothie, make sure to order a low-sodium, low-fat protein shake. This smoothie is the ultimate post-gym snack, but when it’s done up like dessert—as in, blended with frozen yogurt and chocolate—you might as well stop for a Big Mac. The problem is, even the lighter entrées aren’t really that healthy. Fat and sodium content is still high, and the portion sizes are huge.

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