

Common Cookout Criminals: 4 Foods to Watch Out for This Summer

Barbecue season is officially here, and so are all its festive fixins! One's mouth can water just imagining buttery corn on the cob, succulent baby back ribs and a delectable ice cream sundae that puts the cherry on top of a delicious but not-so-nutritious summer season.

On my radio show this week, I had as my guest one of my dear friends, fellow fitness enthusiast and personal trainer Marquette Falbo. Together we discussed the foods we feel are the unhealthiest of summertime as well as better alternatives that will ensure you enjoy full-flavored fare without the guilty aftertaste.

Criminal No. 1: Corn on the Cob

First off, I'd like to share with you a little-known fact about corn: It isn't a vegetable! It's a whole grain. So if you're trying to form a balanced meal by adding an ear of it to your plate of beans and brisket at the next barbecue, you'd better also reach for something else—something green, preferably.

Often slathered with butter, corn can be a rich source of unhealthy fat and excess calories. Try to go light on the butter, or even forgo it altogether and use a touch of olive oil and some herbs and spices to flavor it instead. Or be a little crazy and just have it plain!

Criminal No. 2: Potato Salad

Homemade potato salad receives most of its calories from potatoes, eggs and mayonnaise. Of course, your diet can

accommodate these items, but it is better to consume them separately and in limited quantities. Traditional potato salad with full-fat mayo and eggs delivers 358 calories, 20 grams of fat and 170 mg of cholesterol per 1-cup service. (For cholesterol, 300 mg per day is the max limit for healthy people and 200 mg for those with high cholesterol.) The decadent dish may also compose more than *half* of your daily allowance of sodium.

Enjoy a healthier version by creating your own recipe using low-fat mayonnaise, egg whites (no yolks) and more flavorful veggies and seasonings like onion, cauliflower, celery, minced garlic and mustard. You can even replace the bulk of the mayo with Greek or fat-free yogurt. You'll eliminate a great deal of fat and get all the health benefits of yogurt, such as protein, calcium and B vitamins. For an added nutritional bonus, leave the skins on the potatoes; they offer more nutrients than the rest of the potato! You can also use purple potatoes, which boast higher levels of polyphenol antioxidants than white potatoes, not to mention they will no doubt make your potato salad look super-cool!

Criminal No. 3: Barbecue Ribs

Did you know just three ounces of ribs could easily contain 337 calories? The total fat and cholesterol can add up to be more than 33 percent of the daily value, leading to fatty plaque buildup in your arteries. Suffice it to say, ribs are not heart-healthy! On top of that—literally—ribs are often covered with salty, sugary barbecue sauce, which means more sodium and calories.

Be sure to trim the fat off the ribs and then season them with herbs and spices rather than sauces or other highly caloric liquids. Before putting them in the oven, brown them in a skillet. Not only does this break down the fat, it also adds flavor. Place the ribs in a 325-degree oven, so the fat can drip away from the meat as it heats. For a nice crust, remove

the rack from the oven, baste the ribs with olive oil, and then grill them over direct heat for just two minutes each side.

When it comes to barbecue sauce, BYOB—"Bring Your Own Bottle." Find a sauce that contains less than 500 mg of sodium per serving and less than 15 grams of sugar per serving, and avoid brands that list high fructose corn syrup among its first few ingredients. (Items listed first are heaviest by weight.)

Criminal No. 4: Lemonade

OK, I know lemonade is technically not a food, but this popular poolside beverage isn't as sweet as it tastes! One cup of the refreshing concoction often contains 105 calories and 25 grams of sugar—that's about six teaspoons!

Tropicana, known for its freshly squeezed orange juice, produces a lemonade that is full of added sugars and manufactured ingredients. The second ingredient listed on the label is high fructose corn syrup (HFCS), which I briefly mentioned earlier.

Here are a few of the health hazards associated with HFCS:

1. Significant risk of weight gain and obesity. A study conducted by Princeton University found that rats that were fed HFCS gained fat 300 percent more quickly than those fed an equal (or slightly larger) dose of fruit-derived sugar.

2. Hypertension and elevated "bad" cholesterol levels. High fructose doesn't just make your body fat, it also makes your heart fat. There is a strong link between the irresponsible consumption of high fructose corn syrup and elevated triglyceride and LDL (bad cholesterol) levels. Together, these can cause arterial plaque buildup and lead to heart problems including hypertension, heart disease and even stroke.

3. Liver damage. Like anything else you eat or drink, your

liver, gallbladder and kidneys process HFCS. And it's especially destructive to your liver. If you don't lead an active lifestyle, permanent liver scarring can occur. This greatly diminishes the organ's ability to process out toxins and, over time, can lead to a wide array of other negative health concerns.

4. Mercury exposure. Did you know high fructose corn syrup is often loaded with alarmingly high levels of mercury? One study found mercury in over 50 percent of samples tested. Mercury exposure can result in irreversible brain and nervous system damage—especially in young, growing bodies.

Odwalla Lemonade Quencher is made with all-natural ingredients and is high in vitamin C. It's fat-free, cholesterol-free and sodium-free. But like most naturally-sweetened, store-bought lemonades, it contains a whopping 41 grams of sugar, so remember to monitor your consumption. Santa Cruz Organic Lemonade offers additional vitamins and fun, fruity flavors such as mango, raspberry, orange and pomegranate.

Even better than organic lemonade from a grocery store aisle is the kind blended up in your very own kitchen! Here's an easy recipe I found on :

Ingredients

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup freshly squeezed lemon juice

6 or 7 strawberries

3 packets of Stevia powder (or liquid Stevia drops, to taste)

3 cups filtered water

Directions

Place all ingredients in a blender and blend it up!

I hope this article and its tips will help you enjoy a fitter,

healthier summer! And remember, it's okay to bite into a buttery ear of corn on the cob every once in a while, or lick your fingers clean after finishing off a few ribs slippery with sauce. Just don't make it an everyday occurrence.

Stay fit, stay faithful.

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