

# Nutrition Labeling at Restaurants, Supermarkets & Other Food Service Establishments

Congress passed a national law in March 2010 requiring calories to be posted on menus, menu boards, and for food on display at restaurants, supermarkets, convenience stores, and other food service establishments with 20 or more outlets [21 U.S.C. 343(q)(5)(H)].

Menu labeling allows Americans to exercise personal responsibility and make informed choices for a growing part of their diets.

People want nutrition information from food service establishments: **80% of Americans support menu labeling in chain restaurants; 77% want calorie labeling at convenience stores; and 81% favor having supermarkets provide calorie information for their prepared, restaurant-type foods.**<sup>1</sup>

## Eating out is a big and problematic part of Americans' diets

Americans consume, on average, one-third of their calories from eating out.<sup>2</sup> Studies link eating out with obesity and higher caloric intakes.<sup>3</sup>

Children typically eat almost twice as many calories when they eat a meal at a restaurant compared to a meal at home.<sup>4</sup> When eating out, people eat more saturated fat and fewer nutrients, such as calcium and fiber, than at home.<sup>2,3</sup>

People need nutrition information to manage their weight and reduce the risk of or manage heart disease, diabetes, or high blood pressure, which are leading causes of death, disability, and high health-care costs.

SIGNATURE SIDES			
	REG CAL	LG CAL	
RED BEANS & RICE	230	680	
COLE SLAW	220	570	
CAJUN FRIES	260	770	REG \$2.39
MASHED POTATOES	110	450	
GREEN BEANS	40	120	LG \$4.29
CAJUN RICE	170	450	
ONION RINGS	280	560	
CORN ON THE COB	190	380	
BISCUITS			
(1)	\$5.89	260	(6) \$4.99 1560
(12)	\$7.99	3120	



**Without nutrition information, it is difficult to compare options and make informed decisions.**

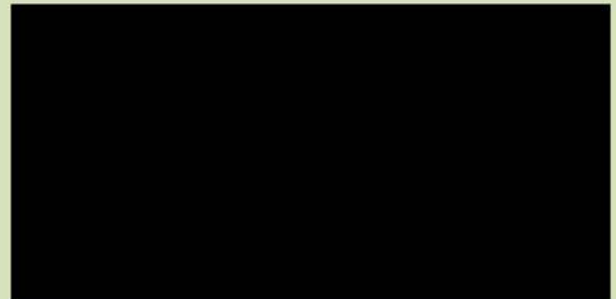
2,000 calories per day is used for general nutrition advice. Who would guess...

Large movie theater popcorn from [redacted] without "buttery" topping has over 1,200 cal and 60 g (three days' worth) of saturated fat



A regular order of cheese fries with ranch dressing from [redacted] contains almost 1,800 cal

A pecan roll from [redacted] has almost double the calories of a chocolate pastry (410 cal)



A side order of jalapeno corn bread from [redacted] has 690 cal, a side order of fries has 390 cal

A grande hot chocolate from [redacted] contains 320 cal while a cappuccino contains 120 cal



A regular oriental chicken salad from [redacted] contains 1,400 cal while the [redacted] Chicken and Shrimp contains 620 cal

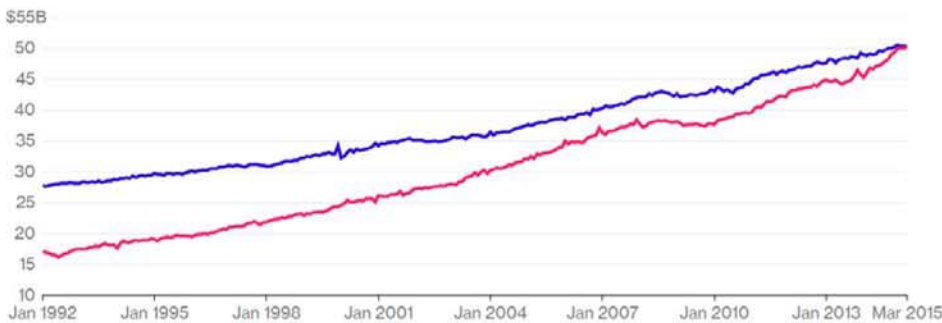


[redacted] red hot beef burrito contains 340 cal

## Pass the Menu, Please

Spending on dining out has overtaken grocery store purchases for the first time ever

■ Groceries ■ Restaurants & Bars



Source: Commerce Department

Bloomberg

In March 2015, sales at restaurants and bars surpassed spending at grocery stores for the first time, making it half of food dollars spent.<sup>5</sup>

On a typical day, 33% of children, 41% of adolescents, and 36% of adults eat at a fast-food restaurant.<sup>6</sup>

A health impact assessment from Los Angeles County estimated that menu labeling could avert 40% of the 6.75 million pound average annual weight gain in the county (population aged 5 years and older).<sup>7</sup>

## Menu labeling

Though not all studies are able to measure an effect of menu labeling, many show that providing nutrition information at restaurants can help people make lower calorie choices and spur the reformulation of existing food items and the introduction of nutritionally improved items.

- A New York City study found **15% of customers reported using menu labeling and purchased 106 fewer calories in a fast-food lunch** than customers who did not see or use the calorie information.<sup>8</sup>
- A study conducted in New York City ██████████ restaurants found that menu labeling had little effect on beverage calories, but reduced calories in food purchases by 14%. **Together, this is a 6% decrease in calories on average per transaction.** For people buying more calories, the effect was bigger, a 26% decrease.<sup>9</sup>
  - A 6% decrease in calories purchased at chain restaurants would mean a **30 calorie per person per day decrease in intake population-wide.**<sup>9</sup> Keeping in mind that the obesity epidemic is explained by a **less than 100 calorie per day imbalance**,<sup>10</sup> such a change could have a meaningful impact on public health.
- In a restaurant study conducted in Philadelphia, displaying calorie and nutrient labels next to all food-item descriptions and prices resulted in **an average purchase of 151 fewer calories, 224 mg less sodium, and 4 g less saturated fat** relative to unlabeled sites.<sup>11</sup>
- Parents of children 3–6 years old presented with a ██████████ menu with calorie labeling **ordered an average of 100 fewer calories for their children** than did parents who did not receive calorie information.<sup>12</sup>
- A study in King County, Washington found a **significant decrease in calories (41 calories) in entrée items** at 37 chain restaurants after implementation of menu labeling.<sup>13</sup>
- From 2012 to 2013, **newly introduced menu items in the largest U.S. restaurants were 56 calories lower on average** (a decline of 12%).<sup>14</sup>
- Between spring 2010 and spring 2011, **fast-food restaurants decreased children's menu entrees by 40 calories.**<sup>15</sup>
- Between the years of 2005 and 2011, **healthier food options increased from 13% to 20%** at five fast-food chains subject to menu labeling.<sup>16</sup>



For more information, contact the Center for Science in the Public Interest at 202-777-8352 or nutritionpolicy@cspinet.org or visit [www.menulabeling.org](http://www.menulabeling.org)

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