

Nik's Health Beat Desi foods and Calorie counts-1!



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some commonly prepared foods in terms of calories, proteins, fat, and carbohydrate contents.

Let us say you or a member of your family is on a special diet for diabetes or heart disease. Then you need to understand that most food we eat has energy stored in them as calories. Energy comes from three major ingredients in our foods: carbohydrates, proteins, and fats. The source of these ingredients does not matter (vegetarian or non-vegetarian) as for the calories are concerned.

Before we can calculate the calorie counts of our commonly used foods, we need to have an understanding of simple measurements of our foods. One teaspoon holds 5 grams of food or liquid. One tablespoon is equal to 15 ml of fluid. One ounce is equal to 30 grams. One cup holds 240 ml of oil.

Each gram of carbohydrates and proteins has 4 calories while each gram of fat has 9 calories. Let us look at some real life examples:

One cup of uncooked rice has 240 grams of carbohydrates and a total 960 calories (240 x 4). The same calculation applies for flour used for all types of nans, parothas, and chapattis. When we talk about carbohydrates, we need to keep a mind on the glycemic index which tells us which food raises your blood sugar level quickly. It may have an adverse effect on your insulin demand, especially in diabetic patients.

Half cup of butter (120 ml) has 1080 calories (120 x 9). The same principle applies to all types of vegetable oils. The animal fat contains more saturated fats which are bad. That is a topic for discussion at another time.

Raw foods such as chicken or meat have lots of water, and hence, the calorie count does not match with their weight. Lean skinless boneless 4.7 ounces of Chicken breast have 160 calories, 28 g of proteins, and 5 grams of fat. Four ounces of lean lamb-leg has 205 calories, 31 grams of proteins, and 8 grams of fat. Similar approximations can be made to other meats provided, they are skinless, boneless, and fat-trimmed.

Among the vegetable sources, half a cup of chickpeas contains 120 calories, 5 grams of proteins, 20 grams of carbohydrates, 2.5 grams of fat, and 5 grams of fiber.

One large potato (5.6 oz) contains 100 calories, 4 grams of proteins, and 26 grams of carbohydrates.

One ounce of peanuts contains 170 calories, 7 grams of proteins, 6 grams of carbohydrates, and 14 grams of fats. Other nuts have similar compositions.

One cup of regular milk (8oz) contains 160 calories, 9 grams of proteins, 12 grams of carbohydrates, and 8 grams of fats. If you use skim milk you can eliminate the 8 grams of fat and reduce the calorie count by 50% to 80 calories.

Let us calculate the composition of a chicken curry and rice dinner. Let us begin with raw ingredients and their approximate calories:

One cup of rice with 240 grams of carbohydrates contains approximately 1080 calories.

You choose chicken leg-quarters for curry since the chicken breast may be too dry. One pound of skinless chicken-leg quarters (16 Ounces) contains approximately 900 calories, 80 grams of proteins, and 64 grams of fat. Let us assume you use 120 ml of vegetable oil for cooking adding another 1080 calories. One big onion provides 30 calories from carbohydrates. Six ounces of tomatoes add 40 calories from 8 grams of carbohydrates.

This dinner composition includes total 3130 calories (1080+900+1020+70). The total composition includes 256 grams of carbohydrates, 80 grams of proteins, and 200 grams of fat.

Let us analyze this diet from a nutritional point of view. If we divide this diet into 4 servings, each serving will have 64 grams of carbohydrates, 20 grams of proteins, and a whopping 50 grams of fat, and a total 783 calories.

This is a very modest diet portion by any desi standard. How can we make this heart-healthy? The major culprit here seems to be the fats that we use in our desi cooking. We have no concept of how calories add-up when we use oil indiscriminately in our cooking. If we were to reduce

the oil used by 60 ml, we would reduce to total calories to 648, and the total fat intake to 35 grams per serving.

Our daily intake of carbohydrates should be less than 200 grams, proteins 50-70 grams and fats less than 50 grams.

Consider grilling your meat instead of making a gravy. The gravy is basically a fat emulsion containing vegetables, vegetable oil or worst yet, whipping cream that has 50% saturated fats.

Stay tuned for a part-2 of this article covering the composition commonly prepared desi foods, in terms of total calorie counts, carbohydrates, proteins, and fats

In the meantime, you are encouraged to visit www.sugarlandheartcenter.com and learn more about calorie counts, carbohydrates, proteins, and fats. You also can learn about nuts, low glycemic index foods, drinks, among many other things.

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You don't have to be a diet expert or a nutritionist to know when you are eating the wrong kinds of desi-foods. Take a look at some choices:

When there is more oil than a plate can hold, you are eating the wrong food (curry).

When the food tastes sweeter than sugar and richer than butter, then you are eating the wrong food (desserts).

When you have eaten two or three plates of rice, and you are still hungry, you need help.

When you have to loosen your belt by two inches, then you have eaten too much of the wrong foods (all of the above).

Now, knowing what we are doing is wrong, let us concentrate on learning a leaner and trimmer dietary habit for a heart-healthy lifestyle. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to craft out a simple heart-healthy diet. However, you need to understand the "Desi-Diet 101," principles and guidelines.

First, let us concentrate on counting the approximate calorie counts from the raw foods used in desi-cooking. Next, we will look at