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The next time you order a drink think twice. What is in that drink? This article will shed some light on most commonly ordered drinks, their compositions, and myths behind their labels. A common recipe for a drink is sugar, caffeine, alcohol, a secret agent, and tap water.

Soda

Most sodas have water, sugar, and a brand name secret ingredient. An average twelve-ounce can of soda has 150 calories, 35 grams of sugar (9 teaspoons of sugar!), 60-100 mg of caffeine, and water. A twelve-ounce can of SunKist has 190 calories and 52 grams of sugar.

Beer

A twelve-ounce can of beer has 150 calories, and 30 grams of alcohol. A light beer has approximately 90 to 120 calories. If you are drinking beer because you are thirsty, think again. Alcohol acts as a diuretic. It makes you lose more water than you get with your beer. If you sit and have four bottles of beer, you added 600 calories. That is just from you happy-hour drink alone! A 12-ounce can of Sierra Nevada Stout has 210 calories.

Energy Drinks

Do not be fooled by the drinks that are labeled "Energy Drinks". Even your regular soda is an energy drink. Energy in drinks comes mostly from carbohydrates or alcohol, and not from some secret ingredient. You may feel high are excited from or energy drink because of stimulants in

the form of caffeine. A 12 ounce can of Rockstar Original has 280 calories and 68 grams of sugar.

If sugar makes you high, then you are addicted to sugar just like someone can be addicted to alcohol or cigarettes. It is time for you to join a sugar anonymous group or start one for yourself and your buddies.

Coffee

Many people have developed a taste to coffee not knowing what they are getting. The alertness that you get from drinking a cup of coffee comes from caffeine, a substance found in most cold medicines. An average drink has 60-80 mg of caffeine. The calories come from sugar added to the coffee. So, a simple coffee may contain 8 ounces of hot water, 5 to 10 grams of sugar, some fat from milk, and 60 to 80 mg of caffeine, which is not bad. However coffee drinks may give you more than what you asked for. For example, Starbucks Venti 2% peppermint White Chocolate Mocha has a whopping 660 calories, 22 g of fat (14 g of saturated fat) and 95 grams of sugar.

A frozen coffee drink such as Cosi Double Oh! Arctic, Gigante (24 ounce) has 530 calories, 29 grams of fat, 55 grams of carbohydrates, 9 grams of protein, and 350 mg of sodium. It pays to read their labels.

Tea

Just like coffee, tea also contains caffeine. Some claim that green tea has antioxidants. As long as you are drinking a cup of black or white tea, it is alright. But, when you start adding 3-4 spoons of sugar and 4-5 servings of half and half, you are asking for trouble. When you start ordering some fancy tea combinations then you are talking about some big calories and unwanted fat. For example, Caribou Coffee Large Chai tea Latte has only 420 calories and 47 grams of sugar.

What's in a drink? Empty Calories, Sugar, Caffeine, & Water

Beware of iced tea in a can. It can be loaded with lots of sugar. A 20-ounce bottle of Lipton Iced Brisk Iced Tea has 210 calories and 55 grams of sugar!

Diet Drinks

You are calorie conscious and you want to switch to a diet drink. It is a good start. But, I want you to think a little more. Your diet drinks still may have caffeine. If you drink 4-5 cans of diet drink, you are still getting that excess amount of caffeine. A better approach would be to have a diet drink which has no caffeine. If you can live without the calories and caffeine, then you might as well fill your plastic bottle and tap water and label it, "Nik's Diet Drink!" No, you don't have to use my name. You can put your spouse's name and make that person immensely happy. O.K.! It is just a suggestion.

Lemonade

What could possibly be wrong with a glass of lemonade? Sure, it's a good drink if it contains water, lemon juice and a sweetener. When the sweetener happens to 30 to 50 g of sugar; Houston, we've got a problem! A 20 ounce bottle of Minute Maid Lemonade has just 250 calories and 68 g of sugar.

The next time you visit a restaurant, ask for a few slices of lemon. Most of the time, you can get it, as compliments of the chef. Squeeze the lemon juice in a glass of ice water. Add a packet of sweetener. Now, you have a zero-calorie lemonade. Don't share this information with your waiter. The waiter may label you as a "free-loader," and start charging you.

Smoothie

If you are ordering a fruit juice as a smoothie, you are in for a surprise. Most fruits have fructose which is a form of sugar. So, you will

get your share of sugar in a fruit flavor. A 30-ounce Large Peanut butter Moo'd Smoothie from Jamba Juice loads 1170 calories, 30 grams of fat, 192 grams of sugar, and 35 grams of protein. That is almost a day's worth of food. Unless you are trying to put on some weight before your wedding reception, you may want to stay away from such drinks.

Milkshakes

What is in a milkshake? It has milk with protein, sugar, fat, calcium, and sodium. If you are an adult, you do not need all that extra sugar and fat. Take for example, a basic milkshake has 328 calories, 50 g of carbohydrates, 7 g of fat, and 18 g of protein. However, as you move to more commercial brands, the calorie counts mount. For example, Denny's 12-ounce Vanilla Milkshake has 560 calories, 26 g of fat, 76 g of carbohydrates, and 11 g of protein. Compare that with 8 ounce of skim milk, which has 80 calories, 7 g of protein, zero g of fat, and 11 g of carbohydrates.

A Baskin-Robbins' 24-ounce chocolate milkshake has 990 calories, 40 g of fat, 149 g of carbohydrates, and 20 g of protein. You have to jog for 2 hours at 4.5 miles per hour to burn those calories!

Water

Water by any other name is an expensive imitation. Do not be enticed into thinking a special mineral water is better than the regular water. Your body needs 8 glasses of water per day. The best option is to get tap water or bottled water. There is really no advantage in spring water versus any other brands. In fact, several bottling companies actually use regular water to fill their labeled bottles. Yes, the tap water may contain impurities such as unwanted mineral, organic matters, among others. It also contains chlorine used

as a disinfectant. Some people have put a water purifying filter between the mainline and the line coming in to the kitchen. If you can afford to do that, it is fine. You can live without extra sugar, excess calories, and caffeine. But, you cannot live without water. So make sure that you get at least 8 glasses of water per day.

Final tips

If you are not sure what is the composition of your favorite drink, visit their website and look for the caloric information. Most fast food restaurants have posted the composition and calorie counts on their websites. Most cans have their ingredients printed on the cans. You can also visit your local bookstore and spend a Sunday evening browsing through a calorie count book to get a firsthand look at the composition of various drinks and make an educated decision about the next drink you want to order.

I do not want you to think I am cynical about all drinks. But, it pays to know what is in the drink that you order. I am trying to help you to become an educated consumer.

If you are eating a healthy diet, you can live a better life without that added sugar, excess caffeine, alcohol, vitamins, and minerals. The only useful ingredient in any drink is water and you might as well carry a bottle of tap water (certified by your city health department to be safe) and live a healthier life.

Disclaimer: The Information provided here is for educational purpose only. Please consult with your physician for any medical advice.

Visit www.sugarlandheartcenter.com for a more information.

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