

The Worst Restaurant Breakfasts in America

By David Zinczenko / Oct 04, 2010

Remember when Britney Spears was a baby-faced singer with some cute dance moves? Remember when Lindsay Lohan was a funny actress who made neat movies? Remember when Tiger Woods was a great golfer who never made a wrong move?

Remember when breakfast was the healthiest meal of the day?

Food marketers didn't shave Britney's head, or sneak rum into Lindsay's Coke, or teach Tiger how to text message. But they sure have done a job on breakfast. And that's too bad, because a smart breakfast ought to be the most important meal of the day. And eating a good one ought to be easy. **Studies show that people who take time for a morning meal consume fewer calories over the course of the day, have stronger cognitive skills, and are 30 percent less likely to be overweight or obese.**

But when food marketers get their hands on it, "a hearty breakfast" turns into something more like "a heart-unhealthy breakfast." Because an unhealthy heart is exactly what many of the country's most popular breakfast joints are setting you up for, by peddling fatty scrambles, misguided muffin missiles, and pancakes that look like manhole covers. These foods are loaded with unhealthy fats, added sugars, and refined carbohydrates, which catapult your blood sugar, sap your energy levels, and tell your body to store fat. Start your day this way and you'll be ready for a second breakfast—and a nap—before 11 a.m. To help you avoid the morning mishaps, we searched out the good, the bad, and the greasy and uncovered some of the best and worst breakfast foods in America.



#6: Worst Breakfast Beverage

Starbucks Iced Peppermint White Chocolate Mocha with whole milk and whipped cream (24 oz)

720 calories

27 g fat (17 g saturated)

103 g sugars

Pure black coffee is one of the world's most potent elixirs. In fact, research shows that a morning cup can help decrease your risk of Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, and type-2 diabetes. That's good news, since 77 percent of U.S. adults over 18 years of age drink coffee on a daily or occasional basis. But here's the problem: There's a big difference between an untainted cup of joe and the souped-up, sugar-loaded blends (this particular drink contains 26 scoops of sugar) that list coffee as one of the ingredients. And this Iced Peppermint White Chocolate Mocha is the definition of caffeinated indulgence. You can switch to an equally delicious and refreshing drink (Starbucks has plenty, such as the caffe mocha, which is still coffee with chocolate in it, after all), and cut 520 calories in the process!



#5: Worst Pastry Breakfast

Cinnabon Regular Caramel Pecanbun

1,100 calories

56 g fat (10 g saturated, 5 g trans)

47 g sugars

This isn't breakfast—this is dessert. And an atrocious one at that. The only speck of nutrition to be found in the bun comes from the nuts. Too bad they're coated in sugar. This dangerously bloated bun contains nearly an entire day's worth of fat and more than half of your daily allotment of calories. That's as much as you'll find in 8 White Castle hamburgers. The Cinnabon Stix below are far from a healthy breakfast, but they're better than nothing (albeit barely).



#4: Worst Scrambled Eggs Breakfast

Bob Evans Border Scramble Biscuit Bowl

1,028 calories

57 g fat (25 g saturated)

3,055 mg sodium

Bob Evans also offers a Border Scramble Omelet, which contains nearly 400 fewer calories than this overflowing biscuit bowl. The difference is in the bowl itself (several hundred calories of carbohydrate-loaded dough) and the cheese sauce—this biscuit bowl boasts a Queso sauce that no one in his or her right mind would consider a healthy topping. Instead of switching to the Border Scramble Omelet, however, cut another hundred calories by choosing the Garden Harvest, which is also loaded with vegetables.



#3: Worst Breakfast Sandwich

Denny's Grand Slamwich

1,320 calories

90 g fat (42 g saturated, 1 g trans)

3,070 mg sodium

Word to the wise: If a restaurant menu item is named for its monstrous size, there's not a chance it's good for you. Words like "Grand" and "Big" and "Double" are all tip-offs: Steer clear of this Frankenfood at all costs. This ginormous breakfast sandwich comes with a day and a half worth of sodium, as much saturated fat as you'll find in 42 strips of bacon, and the caloric equivalent of four and a half cheeseburgers from McDonald's.



#2: Worst Pancakes

Friendly's Apple Caramel Walnut Pancakes

1,540 calories

30 g fat (11 g saturated)

2,290 mg sodium

Friendly's has one of the worst breakfast menus of any restaurant we've seen—we had to customize the "Eat This Instead" order below to make it even worth considering. Quick tip: When eating at Friendly's, never order anything sweet or pastry-like, like these pancakes. No matter what you've ordered, you're guaranteed at least 900 calories. And that's *before* you get to the sides. For the best breakfast meal, choose protein-rich foods, like eggs, and skip all sugar- and carbohydrate-laden sides, like toast, muffins, or pancakes.



#1: The Worst Breakfast in America

Cheesecake Factory French Toast Napoleon

2,460 calories

61 g saturated fat

1,769 mg sodium

246 g carbohydrates

The Cheesecake Factory never fails to amaze us. This outrageous restaurant consistently earns the title of "Worst" on nearly every list we create. Their French Toast Napoleon is no exception—it contains well

over a day's worth of calories (that's about the equivalent of 19 bowls of Cinnamon Toast Crunch cereal, to give you some idea). It also has 61 grams of saturated fat (three times your daily limit). The only saving grace here is that not all of Cheesecake's breakfast items are inedible. You'll be safe if you stick to the healthy (and healthy sounding) scramble, below.