



Sometimes, the healthier options aren't the most obvious. Make the wiser choice at every meal with this guide.

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FOOD FIGHT!

➤ Certain foods are clear winners when you pit them against one another (fried versus steamed fish? Come on...). But some battles aren't so clear-cut, especially when you're putting close competitors together – like pizza and pasta.

Making the right call at mealtimes often means weighing your own needs. If you're trying to lose a few kilos, you might go with the lower-calorie option. But, if that isn't your top concern, then the one with the most nutrients is your best bet. Still at a loss? We got nutrition experts to play referee in these diet dilemmas.

Fruit Jam VS Kaya VS Peanut Butter

WINNER: FRUIT JAM

Not only is fruit jam the lowest in calories (52kcal per tablespoon) compared to kaya – egg and coconut jam – and peanut butter (63kcal and 117kcal respectively), it's also free of fat and cholesterol. The others contain unhealthy saturated fat, says Jaclyn Reutens, dietitian and *Shape* advisory board member. Look for jam that's made of 100 per cent fruit with no added sugar, she adds. "But even if it has extra sugar, jam would still be the more heart-friendly choice."

Smoothie VS Cereal with Fruit

WINNER: CEREAL WITH FRUIT

Although both options are filled with antioxidants and other nutrients, our experts voted for cereal. "Many cereals are fortified with vitamins and minerals that women fall short on, such as iron, calcium, and folic acid," says dietitian Lisa Dorfman, director of sports nutrition and performance at the University of Miami. She recommends looking for a brand with wholegrains listed as the first ingredient. And make sure there's no more than 9g of sugar per serving. If you're a smoothie fan, make yours with whole fruit, non-fat Greek yogurt, and soya or non-fat milk instead of juice, which adds extra sugar.

French Fries VS Mashed Potatoes VS Coleslaw

WINNER: MASHED POTATOES

It's a tough call, but the mash wins by a hair. While it has a larger dose of sodium (49mg and 114mg more than coleslaw and fries respectively), it's the lowest in calories and fat. Each 100g serving of mashed potatoes contains 113kcal and 4.22g fat (the fries have 298kcal and 16.8g fat, while the coleslaw has 144kcal and 6.2g fat). "Plus, you can ask for the gravy to be served on the side of your mashed spuds so you can control the amount of grease that goes in," says Jaclyn.

French Toast VS Pancakes

WINNER: FRENCH TOAST

Go for the former, even though both competitors boast a similar nutritional profile: A single slice of French toast has about 150kcal and 7g of fat, while a six-inch pancake packs 175kcal and the same amount of fat. "However, the French toast's egg coating adds protein," says Tara Gidus, a nutritionist in Orlando. "[This] gives it more flavour and moisture than a pancake. That means you're less likely to drench the bread in syrup, which adds an additional 100kcal for two tablespoons."

Tomato Basil Pasta VS Pizza Magherita

WINNER: TOMATO BASIL PASTA

While both Italian dishes feature tomatoes prominently, pasta triumphs over pizza on various fronts. A 200g serving of pasta contains only 202kcal compared to 269kcal for a 125g slice of pizza. The fat and cholesterol contents are higher in the pizza too, adds Magdalin Cheong, chief dietitian at Changi General Hospital. At 725mg of sodium, the pizza has more than triple the amount in pasta.



Chicken Caesar Salad VS Grilled Chicken Sandwich

WINNER: GRILLED CHICKEN SANDWICH

Don't place your bets on Caesar. In fact, anything attached to that name is a disaster for your diet. With cheese, croutons and a creamy dressing, this seemingly healthy salad is four times higher in fat content than the sandwich. The salad weighs in at 490kcal with a whopping 32g of fat, compared to 340kcal and 7g of fat for the sandwich. While you do get some fibre with the fat infusion, a Caesar salad is usually made with romaine lettuce, which isn't as nutrient-rich as darker greens.

Chicken Thighs VS Pork Chop

WINNER: PORK CHOP

It's a landslide victory. Although chicken has a reputation for being the leanest meat of choice, it only holds true for skinless breasts. If you choose a lean cut of pork – like a loin or a trimmed chop – you'll get about 100kcal and 2g of fat per 85g serving. The same portion of chicken thighs weighs in at 177kcal and 9g of fat! The amount of protein is almost equal, so feel free to add pork to your dinner – just not in the form of greasy ribs or bacon!



Glazed Doughnut VS Bagel with Cream Cheese

WINNER: GLAZED DOUGHNUT

While both are made with nutrient-poor white flour, bagels tend to be much bigger. "One can be the calorie equivalent of five servings of bread," says Professor Kristine Clark, director of sports nutrition at Penn State University. Even a medium bagel contains 320kcal – and that's before the smear of cream cheese (150 kcal for two tablespoons). In comparison, a glazed doughnut has 260kcal. Opting for this confection also saves you 2g of fat.

Potato Chips VS Popcorn VS Nacho Chips

WINNER: POTATO CHIPS

Their calorie content per 30g portion is about the same (150–160kcal), says Magdalin. However, nacho chips pack the most sodium of the lot – so write it off immediately! Between the popcorn and potato chips, it's tough to say which is the lesser evil. The former may have more fibre, but it tends to have lots of artificial flavouring as well, says Pooja Vig, nutritional therapist and Shape advisory board member. Manufacturers have taken steps to make their potato chips healthier these days – some are even baked with just a sprinkle of salt! Those made with blue potatoes score antioxidant points too, says Pooja. Unless you're popping the corn yourself (where you can control the oil and salt that goes in), the movie snack is worse than potato chips.

Hot Dog (in bun) VS Hamburger

WINNER: HAMBURGER

They're both nutritional losers, but if you had to choose, pick the burger, says Magdalin. While hot dogs tend to have fewer calories (because they come in smaller portions), they're typically packed with more fat. In comparison, hamburgers have only half the amount of cholesterol (27mg) and a quarter less sodium (342mg).

Fried Rice VS Fried Bee Hoon

WINNER: FRIED RICE

The amount of calories you get from both carbohydrate dishes are similar, but fried rice may be a wiser choice. Typically, a standard portion (about 200g) of either food contains about 250 to 300kcal, says Magdalin. "But don't forget the side dishes you may pair with that plate of bee hoon." Not only do these fatty extras add sodium, they inflate the calorie count – a plate of vegetarian fried bee hoon with the usual deep-fried suspects contains 369kcal.



Orange Juice **VS** Apple Juice

WINNER: ORANGE JUICE

Between the two sweet sips, OJ is slightly better with 21.8g of sugar (about five teaspoons worth) per 250ml cup, compared to the 23.9g in the same amount of apple juice. OJ is also usually fortified with calcium, as the vitamin C in the drink helps with the body's absorption of the mineral, says Pooja. On the other hand, apple juice tends to come as is, so you're not getting any extra benefits.

Teh VS Kopi

WINNER: TEH

They start out as equals, at about 146kcal per cup, but teh soon stands out as the healthier option. "Teh only has 3g of fat per cup compared to the 7g in kopi, and it usually needs less of the fattening condensed milk to taste good," says Pooja. Both drinks have ticker-boosting antioxidants, but their positive effects are overshadowed by the fat you'll be downing with them. Order teh-o or kopi-o instead to halve your fat and calorie intake.

Frozen Yogurt VS Sorbet

WINNER: YOGURT

Well, it depends on your diet goals. If you're judging these cold treats based on nutritional values, yogurt is the better choice because it has healthy probiotics and the essential mineral, calcium. However, it's milk-based, so fat and cholesterol levels will definitely run higher than those of sorbet. It's heavier too, with 221kcal per 174g cup as compared to 169kcal for the same amount of sorbet. ■

