



Beverage Breakdown

The summer heat can really kick our thirst into high gear. When you're thirsty, what do you reach for to help quench your thirst? There are so many beverages to choose from these days that plain old water just looks boring and inadequate, overshadowed by some of the outrageous claims that other beverages make. Read on as I help you filter out the impurities from the drink pool.

Enhanced waters

These bottled waters are enhanced with additives such as vitamins, electrolytes, caffeine, fruit flavors and even oxygen. Added flavors tend to mean added calories, which is not desirable if your weight or blood sugar are concerns, so always read the nutrition facts panel and the ingredient list to make sure that you're not getting any added sweeteners. In addition to often containing between 50 and 125 calories per 20-ounce bottle, these drinks sometimes contain large amounts of vitamins that are not necessarily healthful. For instance, excess vitamin C can cause diarrhea, kidney stones and other undesirable side effects. Also, some enhanced waters contain fat-soluble vitamins such as vitamins A and E, but do not contain fat with which you can absorb them (so you should eat something that contains fat, such as a handful of nuts with the water so you can absorb the nutrients). I like the concept of these waters and I think that you can use them on days when you don't eat as well as you usually do, but I don't think you should rely on them to meet your nutritional needs on a regular basis. **Bottom Line:** You should really be getting your nutrients from food, not enhanced beverages, but these waters are a better choice than soft drinks.

Soft drinks and sodas

People who drink caloric beverages, especially those that are sweetened, tend to weigh more than people who don't, for the simple reason that soft drinks add many calories to your diet. Researchers have found that on days when people drink sodas, they take in many more calories than on the days when they don't drink sodas. That's partly because they don't eat fewer calories when they consume additional liquid calories. Some people are even stimulated to eat more calories when they drink soft drinks, which puts them at even higher risk of being



Water should be your primary beverage choice for health and weight control, but try to minimize using plastic bottles and always recycle

overweight. A Harvard study has found that drinking just one sugar-sweetened soft drink a day increases women's (and probably men's) risk of diabetes by 83%. I can respect that you may need the boost that caffeine provides and I recommend a cup of green tea or a cup of brewed coffee in the morning for that purpose. **Bottom Line:** Soft drinks increase the risk of obesity, diabetes and osteoporosis and therefore should not be consumed regularly.

Diet soft drinks

Don't assume that diet sodas made with processed artificial sweeteners are a better alternative than regular soft drinks! They may be calorie-free, but they are not free from artificial sweeteners, colors, additives and preservatives—there's nothing healthful about those ingredients. Diet soda consumption is correlated with poor blood sugar control in people with diabetes as well as overweight in

children. Scientists speculate that the extremely sweet taste of diet sodas stimulates the pancreas to make insulin, even though there technically is no sugar in these beverages, and increased insulin levels are correlated with a higher risk of diabetes. There are also fortified diet sodas available now, but they don't really have health benefits. Processed, artificially sweetened beverages that have a few random vitamins and minerals added to them are not health drinks by any stretch of the imagination. **Bottom Line:** Diet sodas are not a healthier alternative to regular sweetened sodas, since they carry similar health risks.

Sports Drinks

Unless you exercise for more than 60 minutes, you do not need a sports drink or the calories they contain. These drinks are formulated to rehydrate people after strenuous or prolonged exercise, which means they contain sodium and sugar. They also contain unnecessary additives such as artificial colors. Chocolate milk has actually been shown to help people recover after exercise as well as, or better than, sports drinks. **Bottom Line:** These drinks were not developed as refreshments; they are a tool best used for recovery by the few select people who exercise vigorously or who have physically strenuous jobs.

Milk and milk alternatives

Milk can be a good way to meet your calcium requirements. Nonfat milk is low in calories and naturally contains important minerals for lowering blood pressure and building bones. I recommend nonfat organic milk, since we don't need the saturated fat that is found in non-skim milks and organic is a good way to ensure that no added hormone or antibiotic residues are in the milk. Not everyone can tolerate cow's milk, though, and soy milk can be a great alternative for several reasons: it is high in protein and soy protein, which are good for your heart and blood sugar, and it even contains some fiber; it's naturally low in fat (and the fat it does have is not unhealthy); and most unsweetened soy milks are low in carbohydrates and sugars. If you are using soy milk in place of cow's milk, look for one that is fortified to mimic the nutrients that are found in cow's milk: calcium,

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vitamins A and D. Soy milk naturally contains B vitamins, magnesium, potassium and phosphorus. Look for organic unsweetened soy milk, like *West Soy* organic unsweetened vanilla, that does not contain the thickener carageenan. **Bottom Line:** Milk and soy milk are good beverage choices since they can help you meet your requirements for certain nutrients, but aim for a limit of one to two servings a day, including what you add to cereal, coffee or other foods.

Coffee drinks

Drip brewed coffee is rich in fiber and antioxidants. In fact, it is the main source of antioxidants in the American diet! Coffee contains soluble fiber, the kind found in oats and barley that helps to lower cholesterol and control blood sugar. Coffee also contains caffeine, which boosts alertness. There are some drawbacks to coffee, however. Caffeine is addictive and can cause heartburn and anxiety, can temporarily raise blood pressure slightly in susceptible people, and can prevent you from having a good night's sleep. Also, adding sugars, syrups, artificial sweeteners, creamers, and cream to your coffee can make it high in calories and unhealthy. Drinking espresso drinks is a bad idea too, since the paper filter that usually traps impurities is not used. Unfiltered coffee tends to raise LDL (bad) cholesterol. Blended and flavored drinks are definitely not a good choice because they add lots of extra calories and undesirable ingredients to your drink. **Bottom Line:** One or two cups of brewed, filtered coffee each day is fine if you add a small amount of sugar or honey and a little nonfat or low fat milk or soy milk. Don't drink espresso drinks and blended drinks regularly.



Juices

I haven't previously recommended drinking juice, since it is a concentrated source of calories and does not offer all of the beneficial nutrients that you can get from eating the whole fruit. Any juice that is not 100% juice should be out of the question because it probably also contains high-fructose corn syrup and artificial flavors and colors. All that being said, I do think that a small amount of juice can be healthful, especially if you are at risk for specific diseases (but I don't recommend it for certain conditions such as diabetes, high triglycerides, insulin resistance, fatty liver disease or overweight). Pomegranate juice, for example, is shaping up to be an anti-inflammatory superjuice, full of antioxidants that are also found in tea, berries, grapes and soy. It has been shown to slow the growth of prostate tumors, so men who have prostate cancer or are at risk for it could benefit from a few ounces a day. It also has been shown to help prevent atherosclerosis and increase blood flow to the hearts of those with existing coronary heart disease, lower LDL (bad) cholesterol, and slow the rate of LDL oxidation. Cranberry juice is useful for preventing bladder infections, but be sure to use the 100% juice varieties. Grape juice has been shown to have weaker but similar heart-health benefits to red wine and pomegranate juice. If you want to include juice in your diet, take a look at your overall produce intake and determine which color category you need more of. If you don't get enough of the orange category, for instance, then consider an orange-carrot juice blend. If blue-purple is a problem, then pomegranate juice could help fill in that gap. **Bottom Line:** A serving of nutrient-packed 100% juice can be appropriate for certain people, but remember that a serving is six fluid ounces (or $\frac{3}{4}$ cup).

Teas

White, green, black and red teas come from the leaves of the tea plant,

which means that tea is naturally high in antioxidants and no special nutrients need to be added to make it healthful. Teas have been shown to have antioxidant, blood pressure lowering, bone strengthening, antiviral and anticancer properties. Brew tea yourself and then cool it and add ice to make iced tea, or try *Ito En Teas'* Tea for carefully brewed and bottled green and white teas. You can add a squeeze of lemon or orange to enhance the flavor if you like, but please try not to add sugar or artificial sweeteners to your tea as they will detract from the nutritional quality of the tea. Instead, find a tea with a flavor that you like. As a general rule, white tea has the mildest flavor and the most antioxidants, green tea has a slightly stronger flavor and slightly fewer antioxidants, red tea has a brisker flavor and even fewer antioxidants, while black tea, the type most commonly consumed around the world, has an astringent flavor and the fewest antioxidants. Although black and red teas are lower in antioxidants than green and white teas, they are still considered high in antioxidants. Americans drink an average of 132 cups of tea per person per year. According to the Tea Association, we drink mostly black tea, very little green tea, and 85% of the tea we consume is iced, not hot. To reap the most health benefits, though, we need to drink more than one cup a day. **Bottom Line:** Tea is an excellent calorie-free beverage if you add nothing but water. Aim for at least two cups of hot or iced green, white, red or black tea a day.

Tea is naturally high in antioxidants

Water

Water is wonderful and it is the ideal beverage. Water makes up between 50 and 75% of your body weight. It carries nutrients through your body and helps regulate body temperature, prevent dehydration, and keep energy and mental clarity at optimum levels. Perhaps most interesting to you is that water can actually help promote weight loss and suppress

appetite! If you're not drinking water, what are you drinking? There are so many beverages to choose from these days that plain old water doesn't seem like it has much to offer, but it actually is the least expensive and most efficient way to satisfy your thirst, even if it is ordinary. Both sparkling and flat waters are good choices, so it comes down to your own preference. Sparkling water is often useful for those trying to wean themselves off of carbonated soft drinks. One choice to consider is whether you will drink bottled or tap water. Tap water is considered clean and safe and you can use additional filters and purifiers at home. About 40% of bottled waters are actually filtered tap water anyhow, but the bigger issue with bottled water is the bottles themselves – producing them, transporting them, and disposing of them has huge environmental impacts. However, bottled water is convenient and, when you are away from home, it is often the best beverage choice. **Bottom Line:** Water should be your primary beverage choice for health and weight control, but try to minimize using plastic bottles and always recycle.

When it's hot outside or when humidity levels are low, we need to be extra vigilant about drinking enough fluids to prevent dehydration. There are many great ways to quench your thirst. Some drinks, such as water and tea, should be emphasized while other healthful drinks, such as juice, coffee, and milk, should be limited to one or two servings. Always keep in mind that your overall diet pattern is what impacts your health, so a blended coffee drink on a Saturday afternoon will probably not impact most of us too much. Now that you know more about many popular drinks, you can make better, more informed and healthful choices to satisfy your thirst.

Our registered dietitian has a Masters in Public Health. However, she is not a doctor and her nutritional recommendations are general in nature and not tailored to specific health problems. Talk to your physician or other qualified health care practitioners concerning particular health issues or before beginning any nutritional program.

Salad Nights

Yes, I know it's hot in your kitchen, but you can't eat out or order in every night. Preparing meals at home is an important key to health since you can control every aspect of what goes into your food, from the type of fat used to prepare it to the amount of vegetables included. Home cooking is also imperative for weight control, since the portions you prepare are smaller and have had less fat and salt added to them than they would have at a restaurant. Furthermore, if you have a nutrition-related health condition such as diabetes, high cholesterol or hypertension, then cooking for yourself is an essential part of disease management. So what is a healthy person to do on these hot August nights? Mix, don't cook! The following are some of my favorite one-dish meal recipes that mostly involve mixing (and only a little cooking) for when it's too hot outside to cook dinner inside.

Mediterranean Salad Serves 3

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| 1 | tablespoon plus 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice | 1 | pound heirloom tomatoes, diced |
| 4 | teaspoons <i>Napa Valley</i> organic olive oil | 1/4 | cup Italian parsley, minced |
| 1/8 | teaspoon kosher salt | 1 | cup fresh cooked and chilled edamame (from our salad bar) |
| 1/8 | teaspoon pepper | 1/2 | cup <i>Valbreso</i> Feta cheese, crumbled |
| 1 | clove <i>Melissa's</i> organic garlic, minced | 9 | <i>Garden of Eatin'</i> baked pita chips sea salt flavor, extra salt brushed off, chips broken into bite-sized pieces |
| 1/4 | teaspoon ground cumin | | |
| 4 | ounces organic baby arugula | | |
| 1 | box <i>Epic Roots</i> mâche | | |
| 4 | radishes, thinly sliced | | |

1. Combine the lemon juice, olive oil, salt, pepper, garlic and cumin. Whisk together and set aside.
2. In a salad bowl, combine the arugula, mâche, radishes, tomatoes, mint, parsley, edamame and cheese. Toss with the dressing and top with pita chip pieces just before serving.

Thai Beef Salad Serves 4

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| 2 | tablespoons fresh lime juice | 2 | tablespoons cilantro leaves, coarsely chopped, tightly packed |
| 1 | tablespoon <i>Thai Kitchen</i> fish sauce | 1 | small cucumber, peeled and thinly sliced |
| 1 | tablespoon <i>Nakano</i> rice vinegar | 1/2 | cup red onion, finely diced |
| 2 | teaspoons <i>Hain Organic</i> brown sugar | 1 | avocado, diced |
| 1 | teaspoon <i>Napa Valley</i> organic olive oil | 14 | ounces peppered beef tenderloin (from our service deli), sliced into thin strips |
| 1/8 | teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes | 3 | tablespoons <i>Planter's</i> dry roasted unsalted peanuts |
| 9 | ounces organic spring mix | | |
| 2 | tablespoons fresh mint leaves, chopped, loosely packed | | |

1. Combine the lime juice, fish sauce, rice vinegar, brown sugar, olive oil and red pepper flakes. Whisk together and set aside.
2. In a salad bowl, combine all of the remaining ingredients. Toss with the dressing and serve immediately.

Chopped Basil and Arugula Salad Serves 3

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| 2 | tablespoons fresh lemon juice | 2 | ears white corn, kernels cut off the cob |
| 5 | teaspoons <i>Napa Valley</i> organic olive oil | 1/4 | medium red onion, thinly sliced into half moons |
| 1/8 | teaspoon kosher salt | 1 | package <i>Del Cabo</i> organic sweet 100 tomatoes |
| 1/8 | teaspoon pepper | 9 | ounces cooked bay shrimp |
| 4 | ounces <i>Bon Appetit</i> fresh basil value pack, thick stems discarded, chopped | | |
| 4 | ounces organic baby arugula, chopped | | |

1. Combine the lemon juice, olive oil, salt and pepper. Mix together and set aside.
2. Combine the basil, arugula, corn, red onion, tomatoes and shrimp in a salad bowl. Toss the dressing with the salad and serve.

Low-Calorie Chinese Chicken Salad Serves 4

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| 1/4 | cup <i>Marukan</i> rice vinegar | 3 | cups <i>Mann's</i> broccoli cole slaw |
| 1 | tablespoon <i>Yamasa</i> less sodium soy sauce | 1 | small red bell pepper thinly sliced into 1-inch matchsticks |
| 2 | tablespoons fresh lemon juice | 1 | 8-ounce can <i>S&W</i> natural style mandarin orange sections, drained, 1 tablespoon juice reserved for dressing |
| 1 | tablespoon <i>Dynasty</i> hoisin sauce | 2 | scallions, green parts only, thinly sliced |
| 1 | tablespoon mandarin orange juice (from the mandarin oranges) | 1/4 | pound fresh China peas, cut into thirds |
| 2 | tablespoons canola oil | 1/4 | cup fresh cilantro, chopped |
| 1 1/2 | tablespoons fresh ginger, minced | 2 | tablespoons <i>Planter's</i> dry roasted unsalted peanuts, chopped |
| 1 | pound <i>Rosie Organic</i> boneless skinless chicken breasts | 1 | tablespoon <i>JFC</i> roasted sesame seeds |
| 1 | 8-ounce bag <i>Ready Pac</i> salad mix of shredded cabbage, red cabbage, and carrots | | |

1. Whisk together the rice vinegar, soy sauce, lemon juice, hoisin sauce, mandarin orange juice, canola oil and ginger in a measuring cup. Reserve 1/3 cup and use the remainder to marinate the chicken for 15 minutes.
2. Preheat broiler. Broil chicken five to six minutes on each side. Cool chicken in refrigerator while you prepare the salad. You can cook the chicken in the morning and use it for dinner.
3. In a large bowl, combine the cabbage mix, broccoli slaw, bell pepper, mandarins, scallions, snow peas and cilantro. Shred the chicken using two forks to pull the meat apart or use your fingers. Add the chicken to the salad. Rewhisk the dressing and toss everything together. Sprinkle the top of the salad with chopped peanuts and sesame seeds.

Gazpacho Soup Serves 4

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| 1 | red bell pepper, seeded and coarsely chopped | 2 | cloves garlic, coarsely chopped |
| 1 | green bell pepper, seeded and coarsely chopped | 8 | red cluster tomatoes, seeded and coarsely chopped |
| 1 | large red onion, peeled and coarsely chopped | 3 | 5.5-ounce cans <i>V8</i> low sodium vegetable juice (16.5 ounces total) |
| 1/3 | cup cilantro leaves, firmly packed | 1 | tablespoon <i>Napa Valley</i> organic olive oil |
| 2 | stalks celery, ends trimmed, coarsely chopped | 1/4 | cup red wine vinegar |
| 2 | green onions, coarsely chopped | 1/2 | teaspoon salt |
| 1 | cucumber, peeled, seeded and coarsely chopped | 1/4-1/2 | teaspoon <i>Cholula</i> hot sauce |
| | | 12 | ounces cooked shrimp |

1. Place the peppers in the bowl of a food processor and pulse a few seconds, until finely chopped, but not pureed. Transfer to a large pot. Repeat process with the onion and cilantro; the celery and green onion; the cucumber and garlic; and the tomatoes.
2. Mix the chopped vegetables well and transfer 2/3 of the mixture back to the food processor. Add the *V8* juice, olive oil, vinegar, salt and hot sauce. Puree the mixture and add it back to the pot. Mix with the finely chopped vegetables and chill at least 3 hours.
3. Taste and adjust hot sauce, salt and cilantro. Ladle into bowls and garnish each bowl with three ounces of shrimp.

Food of the Month

Avocados

Avocados became a produce pariah when we Americans went through our fat-free phase. Can you believe that we health nuts actually thought that it was healthier to eat a fat-free cookie than to add some avocado to our salads? I hope that avocados are back on

your shopping list because, as you are about to learn, they are an outstanding superfood that should no longer be considered a produce outcast.

If you worry about your cholesterol levels, avocado is an excellent addition to your diet. Like olive oil, it's full of monounsaturated fats, which help lower LDL (bad) cholesterol and raise HDL (good) cholesterol, making avocados a tasty way to lower your heart disease risk! Beta-sitosterol, a phytonutrient, helps to maintain optimal cholesterol levels by lowering LDL cholesterol in your GI tract. That green flesh means a lot, too. Like spinach, avocados are high in lutein, a carotenoid that helps prevent age-related macular degeneration, the leading cause of blindness in elderly adults. They're also an excellent source of heart-healthy folate, which helps to lower homocysteine levels in the blood that could otherwise lead to atherosclerosis. Their beta carotene content is higher than several other fruits, including apples and grapefruits, and they supply 60% more potassium than bananas on a per weight basis.

Since avocados are high in fat, they do tend to be higher in calories than other fruits and vegetables, but they are on the short list of "good"



fats that we need to include in our diets (along with olive oil, nuts and fatty fish). One third of a medium Hass avocado contains 90 calories, 8 grams of total fat, 5 grams monounsaturated fat, 1½ grams saturated fat, 5 grams of fiber and 7% of your daily requirement for vitamin E. I'd say that's a pretty good nutritional return for a modest investment of calories.

Avocados come in many varieties, but we at Gelson's always carry the best: California Hass avocados. You can buy them any time of the year at any stage of ripeness. Pick them soft (it should yield to gentle pressure, but not feel like it's filled with jelly) when you want to eat them right away, or select hard ones when you won't eat them for a few days. Choose avocados with a purplish black skin. Avocados are one of the few fruits that don't ripen on the tree (avocado growers actually store their inventory on the trees for up to 7 months!). They begin to ripen once they are picked. If you do buy a hard one, just leave it on the counter for a few days, until desired softness is achieved. If you're in a rush, seal avocados in a paper bag with a tomato, apple or banana to speed ripening. Store ripe avocados in the refrigerator for up to five days.

To prepare an avocado, use a sharp knife to cut around the fruit lengthwise. Twist the two halves apart and use a spoon to scoop out the pit. Do not cut the avocado until the last possible minute because it will turn brown when left exposed to the air, though combining it with an acid (like lemon or lime juice, tomato, fresh salsa or vinegar) should help prevent it from doing so. Scoop out the pit. Slice or dice the flesh while still in the skin, being careful not to cut all the way through, then press the skin in the center to flip it inside out and peel off the cut flesh. Use avocados raw in anything from salads to sandwiches, but don't try to cook them. This month, try my recipes for Turkey and Avocado Tostada Salad and Avocado Sandwich Spread.

Jessica's August Store Appearances: Service Deli Food Sampling

Jessica will be offering complimentary food samples and answering your questions about weight loss, food and nutrition.

Westlake Village
Monday August 20, Noon
Calabasas
Monday August 20, 3:30 pm
Century City
Friday August 24, Noon
Encino
Monday August 27, Noon

Valley Village/ North Hollywood
Monday August 27, 4:00 pm
Pasadena
Tuesday August 28, Noon
Silver Lake/Los Feliz
Tuesday August 28, 4:30 pm

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