

Shopper's Guide

Dark Chocolate Sans Guilt

Of all of the nutritional advice and information that's come out in the last several years, the fact that chocolate is good for us is probably one of the most appreciated. Dark chocolate contains flavanols, compounds that act as powerful antioxidants. That may be why consuming chocolate has been shown to help improve blood flow, lower risk of heart disease, and lower blood pressure levels.

Cacao beans straight off the plant are bitter—nothing like the velvety, sweet chocolate we've come to know. Cacao is combined with sugar and cocoa butter to make dark chocolate—the higher the percentage of cacao in the mix, the lower the sugar content, higher the flavanol content, and greater the health benefits. Standard milk chocolate bars are much lower in flavanols and much higher in sugar. Keep in mind that dark chocolate is a source of saturated fat found naturally in cacao and cocoa butter, however it's in the form of stearic acid, which does not appear to have the same negative heart health impact as do other saturated fats. Watch out for chocolate extras, like caramel, sweetened coconut, and peppermint candy, as they may increase the sugar and saturated fat content.



Helpful hints. Keep these tips in mind when enjoying dark chocolate.

- ▶ **Don't pig out.** Even though dark chocolate offers a variety of health benefits, it's still a high-fat, calorie-dense food. When enjoying it, limit yourself to no more than 1½-ounces a day.
- ▶ **Pay attention to percentage.** Look for higher percentages of cacao as a signal that the chocolate has greater levels of flavanols and lower levels of sugar, but know that these bars are a bit higher in fat.
- ▶ **Look for Fair Trade.** Because cacao plants grow primarily in developing countries, the Fair Trade stamp on products lets you know the people who worked to create the chocolate were fairly compensated for their work, and that they used more sustainable practices (see *EN* "In Search of Sustainable Chocolate," December 2015). **EN**

—Heidi McIndoo, MS, RD



Dark Chocolate Nutritional Comparison

✓ = *EN*'s Picks. As with all *EN* comparisons, this is only a sampling of products. Picks for 70–80% cacao contain no more than 245 calories (12% DV), 19 g fat (29% DV), and 12 g sugar; 81% or more cacao contain no more than 265 calories (13% DV), 23 g (35% DV) fat, and 8 g sugar.



DARK CHOCOLATE (1 ½ OUNCES, 43 G)	Calories	Total Fat (g)	Sat Fat (g)	Carbs (g)	Sodium (mg)	Sugar (g)	Fiber (g)	Protein (g)
70 TO 80% CACAO								
Brix Extra Dark Chocolate 70%	246	17	11	22	38	15	5	3
✓ Chocolove Strong Dark 70%	244	17	11	19	0	11	6	3
Chocolove Extra Strong Dark 77%	258	20	13	17	0	9	4	3
Divine Intensely Rich 70%	256	19	12	19	0	11	5	3
✓ Endangered Species Dark Chocolate 72%	210	19	11	21	0	12	5	3
Equal Exchange Extra Dark Chocolate 80%	256	21	13	16	0	8	6	5
✓ Equal Exchange Very Dark 71%	244	19	12	19	0	12	5	3
✓ Ghiradelli Twilight Delight 72%	226	19	11	19	0	11	5	2
Godiva Dark Chocolate 72%	247	18	12	18	0	12	5	3
Jelina Chocolatier Noir Dark 72%	256	17	11	21	0	12	5	4
Lake Champlain Peruvian Dark 70%	260	18	11	20	0	12	4	4
Lindt Excellence Smooth Dark 70%	269	20	13	18	11	13	3	3
✓ Madecasse 70%	245	19	12	17	10	12	3	3
Pascha Organic Dark Chocolate 70%	256	17	11	19	10	13	3	4
Perugina Bittersweet 70%	237	17	10	17	0	13	5	3
Taza Stone Ground Chocolate Organic Dominican Dark 70%	256	17	11	21	0	13	4	4
Taza Stone Ground Chocolate Organic Belizean Dark 77%	246	15	10	22	0	10	9	5
✓ TCHO Dark Chocolate 70%	240	17	11	20	0	12	5	5
Valrhona Andoa 70%	282	20	12	25	49	15	5	4
Valrhona Araguani 72%	295	21	14	22	0	15	6	4
✓ Vanini Dark Chocolate with Cocoa Nibs 74%	200	15	9	10	0	9	4	3
Vivani Dark Chocolate 71%	256	19	12	19	0	11	5	3
Whole Foods Dark Chocolate 71%	260	18	11	20	6	11	5	3
✓ World Market Dark Chocolate 72%	220	19	11	20	0	11	6	3
81% OR MORE CACAO								
✓ Alter Ego Dark Blackout 85%	258	23	14	15	3	5	6	3
✓ Endangered Species Dark Chocolate 88%	210	20	11	17	0	5	6	4
Ghiradelli Intense Dark Midnight Reverie 86%	239	24	14	14	0	5	5	3
✓ Giddy Yo Yo Wild Ecuadorian Chocolate Xtra Dark 89%	264	19	11	15	0	4	1	5
Green & Black's Organic Dark 85%	280	23	14	15	22	5	5	4
Lindt Excellence Supreme Dark 90%	258	24	14	13	11	3	5	4
Moser Roth Dark Cocoa 85%	284	22	13	15	56	6	5	6
Pascha Organic Dark Chocolate 85%	267	19	12	16	0	7	4	5
✓ Scharffen Berger Extra Dark Chocolate Bar 82%	210	19	12	17	0	8	6	5
Sweet Riot Pure Dark Chocolate Deliciousness 85%	274	21	13	16	0	5	5	5
Taza Stone Ground Chocolate Organic Bolivian Dark 87%	276	20	14	15	0	5	4	4
✓ Theo Pure Dark 85%	215	19	11	17	0	7	5	4
Valrhona Abinao 85%	307	23	15	17	0	6	7	6
✓ Vanini Dark Chocolate 86%	261	21	13	10	0	8	5	5
Vivani Dark Chocolate 85%	266	23	14	15	0	6	6	3
World Market Dark Chocolate 99%	210	22	14	14	0	1	7	5

Note: g=gram, mg=milligram, sat fat=saturated fat, carb=carbohydrates, DV=Daily Value, Daily requirement based on 2,000 calorie/day diet. Source: Food Labels and company websites. All serving sizes are for 1.5 ounces.