



Restaurant Guide

Bowls of Joy

One-pot meals are so easy to prepare for a quick dinner—a bit of protein, some veggies, a grain, and a sauce. Restaurants have been jumping onto the all-in-one bandwagon too, with popular “bowl” meals. Many quick-service and sit-down restaurants have a variety of bowl choices on their menus. Others offer mix and match: You choose the components and they prepare it to your specifications. In theory, bowls can be the best of both worlds. In some instances, you control what goes in, but someone else does the work. What's not to love?

Bowls can easily fit into a healthy eating plan. However, you must take care when ordering bowls in which the restaurant determines what goes in it. The saturated fat and sodium content can top out at more than a day's worth. This often comes from the sauce or is related to how the protein or other ingredients are prepared. Choosing brown rice or alternative base ingredients such as quinoa contributes a good source of fiber and whole grain. It can also help boost the protein content a little, which can be beneficial in a veggie-based bowl.



Healthy bowls focus on whole grains, lean protein, and veggies.

Helpful Hints. Here are some hints to help you order the healthiest bowl you can.

- ▶ **You Pick 'em.** Choose lean proteins, whole grains, and several vegetables to maximize nutrient intake. Go easy on the high-fat extras and sauces to minimize saturated fat and sodium.
- ▶ **Downsize.** When given the option, choose the smallest size available. If only one size is available, consider taking half home for another time or sharing it with a friend.
- ▶ **Vocabulary Test.** Pay attention to the words used to describe the bowl's ingredients. “Fried” or “crispy” suggests the food is deep-fried and will contain extra fat. Choosing “steamed” or “grilled” results in a meal with much less fat.

—Heidi McIndoo, MS, RD

Restaurant Bowls Nutritional Comparison

✓ = **EN's Picks.** As with all EN comparisons, this is only a sampling of products. Picks contain no more than 650 calories (33% DV), 6 g saturated fat (30% DV), and 1030 mg sodium* (45% DV).

RESTAURANT BOWLS (1 serving)	Serving Size (oz)	Calories	Total Fat (g)	Sat Fat (g)	Carbs (g)	Sodium (mg)	Fiber (g)	Sugar (g)	Protein (g)
Applebee's Shrimp Wonton Stir-Fry	n/a	630	15	3	98	2560	5	22	25
Applebee's Sirloin Stir-Fry	n/a	770	23	6	97	2310	5	22	44
✓ Au Bon Pain Mayan Chicken Harvest Hot Bowl	18	600	16	6	81	800	7	5	33
Au Bon Pain Roasted Vegetarian Harvest Hot Bowl	17	770	40	7	83	1080	8	4	18
Baja Fresh Baja Bowl, Carnitas & Black Beans	20	680	18	4	92	2240	14	9	37
Baja Fresh Baja Bowl, Chicken & Pinto Beans	20	710	22	4	84	1790	14	8	43
Baja Fresh Baja Bowl, Shrimp & Pinto Beans	20	670	21	3.5	86	2730	14	8	36
Baja Fresh Baja Bowl, Veggie & Black Beans	20	540	14	2.5	90	1730	15	12	17
Boloco Bangkok Thai Burrito Big Bowl	n/a	770	33	11	107	910	8	29	19
✓ Boloco BBQ Memphis Burrito Small Bowl	n/a	300	10	1.5	46	650	4	6	7
✓ Boloco New England Harvest Small Bowl	n/a	310	18	4.5	29	410	3	3	10
Boloco Tikka Masala Burrito Big Bowl	n/a	870	39	20	118	900	10	5	16
Bonefish Grill Chicken Teriyaki Bowl	n/a	1060	25	4	127	2490	7	20	69
Bonefish Grill Spicy Tuna Bowl	n/a	940	30	3.5	132	2430	8	38	40
Cosi Adobo Chicken with Avocado Bowl	17	680	21	4	99	1090	12	7	27
Cosi Brazilian Steak Bowl	16	670	22	5	92	1680	9	9	11
Cosi Thai Curry Tofu Bowl	15	740	26	12	103	820	7	15	22
El Pollo Loco Double Bowl, Chicken	25	930	30	10	93	2270	13	4	70
✓ El Pollo Loco Original Pollo Bowl, Shrimp	18	630	18	2.5	88	580	11	2	27
✓ Noodles & Company Japanese Pan Noodles, Small	n/a	330	8	0.5	56	1000	2	11	7
Panera Southwest Chicken Tortilla Bowl	n/a	480	16	2	50	1680	6	10	19
Pei Wei Asian Diner Blazing Bangkok Peanut Noodles with Chicken (steamed), Regular Size	11	1260	55	16	129	3000	8	34	64
Pei Wei Asian Diner Chow Mein with Steak (steamed), Regular	11	940	32	7	117	3920	6	25	46
Pei Wei Asian Diner Dan Dan Noodles, Regular	11	990	40	8	111	4980	6	23	45
Pei Wei Asian Diner Original with Vegetables & Tofu Rice Bowl, Small	n/a	700	34	5	84	1250	8	64	28
Pei Wei Asian Diner Pad Thai with Chicken Noodle Bowl, Regular Size	11	1590	41	7	203	6120	15	25	79
Pei Wei Asian Diner Thai Coconut Curry Regular with Chicken Rice Bowl (Steamed), Regular	n/a	730	40	22	49	690	5	29	43
Rubio's Ahi Poke Bowl	11	500	13	2	68	1300	5	5	28
Rubio's California Bowl with Salsa Verde	14	560	22	4	80	1200	13	5	14
Rubio's Cilantro Lime Quinoa Bowl with Almonds	13	550	25	2	66	1200	13	5	17
✓ Samurai Sam's Chicken Breast Rice Bowl, Regular	14	520	4	1	82	570	2	15	37
Samurai Sam's Shrimp Yakisoba Bowl, Large	17	760	7	0.5	131	1790	6	28	39
✓ Samurai Sam's Steak Yakisoba Bowl, Regular	12	560	12	3	83	580	4	15	28
✓ Samurai Sam's Veggie Rice Bowl, Large (brown rice)	18	520	1	0	131	730	4	29	12
✓ Starbucks Chicken & Quinoa Protein Bowl with Black Beans and Greens	10	420	17	3	42	1030	9	11	27
✓ Starbucks Lentils & Vegetable Protein Bowl with Brown Rice	13	650	29	3.5	80	670	21	10	23
Taco Bell Power Menu Bowl, Chicken	n/a	500	20	6	53	1240	8	3	28
Taco Bell Power Menu Bowl, Steak	n/a	510	21	7	55	1260	8	3	27
✓ Taco Bell Power Menu Bowl, Veggie	n/a	480	18	5	64	980	13	3	16
Zoup! Dragonfire Noodle Bowl	8	35	0	0	6	1510	1	2	2

Note: g=gram, mg=milligram, sat fat=saturated fat, carb=carbohydrates, DV=Daily Value, Daily requirement based on 2,000 calorie/day diet. Source: restaurant websites. *EN Picks reflect sodium levels that are slightly higher than normally recommended, due to high sodium levels in the restaurants.