

The Healthiest Whole Food Nutrition Bars

In a perfect world, we would enjoy a well-balanced, home-cooked meal every time we eat. In the real world, mealtimes sometimes occurs while driving from one appointment to the next, during a 15-minute break between classes, or in a rush before a last-minute work meeting. For occasions when it's a challenge to enjoy a nutritious, satisfying meal, nutrition bars might be your best option. Many of the original nutrition bars were made with refined ingredients combined to create a balance of protein, carbs, and fat. We now know it's not just about nutrients—our bodies need “real” food. Fortunately, bars made from whole foods are trending high right now, offering many new products packed with real, whole food ingredients, including nuts, seeds, beans, grains, and dried fruits.



Whole foods ingredients offer a healthy boost to bars.

One of the biggest bonuses of eating more whole foods is that you gain important nutrients—fiber, vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals. While refined ingredients aren't “poison,” they simply aren't as nutritious as their unrefined counterparts. White rice, for example, is not harmful; it just lacks the extra fiber and nutrients that are removed in the refining process. In addition, many whole food bars are made with fruits and nuts, which are nutrient-rich foods many of us don't get enough of.

Helpful Hints. Pay attention to these factors when selecting the best nutrition bar.

- ▶ **Added Sugar.** Even though these bars contain a good deal of wholesome foods, like fruit, some still contain added sugars. The new Nutrition Facts panel (some companies have already adopted it) will list added sugars, but until these new labels are regulated, scan the ingredients list for forms of sugar, including malt syrup, dextrose, and fruit juice concentrates.
- ▶ **Calorie Check.** Some of these bars contain 300 or more calories. If used as a meal-replacement that's fine. But for a snack, stick to those with 200 or fewer calories.
- ▶ **Fiber Facts.** To boost the fiber content, some manufacturers add chicory root, or other fiber supplements, which can cause gas and bloating in some. Check the ingredients list so you know what you're getting.

—Heidi McIndoo, MS, RD

Whole Food Nutrition Bars Nutritional Comparison

✓ = EN's Picks. As with all EN comparisons, this is only a sampling of products. Picks contain no more than 200 calories (10% DV), 2 g saturated fat (10% DV), and at least 3 g fiber (11% DV).



NUTRITION/PROTEIN BARS (1 BAR)	Serving Size* (g)	Calories	Total Fat (g)	Sat Fat (g)	Carbs (g)	Sodium (mg)	Fiber (g)	Sugar (g)	Protein (g)
✓ Go Macro Sunny Uplift, GF	56	200	4	0	38	15	3	16	4
Go Macro Sweet Awakening, GF	65	270	10	2	36	35	3	13	10
Go Macro Sweet Rejuvenation, GF	57	240	10	1.5	34	25	1	9	4
Kind Almond Coconut Cashew Chai, GF	40	200	14	4.5	18	15	3	7	4
Kind Caramel Almond & Sea Salt Bar, GF	40	200	16	3	15	125	7	5	6
Kind Dark Chocolate, Nuts, & Sea Salt Bar, GF	40	200	15	3	16	140	7	5	6
Kind Peanut Butter & Dark Chocolate Bar, GF	40	200	13	3.5	16	40	3	9	8
Larabar Banana Bread, GF	51	230	11	1	30	0	5	20	6
✓ Larabar Chocolate Chip Brownie, GF	45	200	9	2	31	30	4	23	4
Larabar Key Lime Pie, GF	51	220	11	3.5	28	10	5	19	4
Larabar Nut & Seed Crunchy Bar Maple Cinnamon, GF	35	200	16	3	12	50	4	6	5
Nii Bar Peanut Butter, GF	50	200	13	3	16	40	4	8	8
Nii Bar Almond Chocolate Chip, GF	50	210	14	2	17	5	4	12	8
Nii Bar Cherry Coconut GF	50	200	13	4.5	16	10	3	9	8
Perfect Bar Blueberry Cashew, GF	65	300	17	3	29	65	2	18	12
Perfect Bar Coconut Peanut Butter, GF	71	340	21	6	25	55	4	19	16
Perfect Bar Dark Chocolate Almond, GF	62	310	18	3	23	50	4	17	12
Phyter Beets & Cocoa, GF	60	240	9	1	32	20	7	13	7
Phyter Cranberry & Strawberry, GF	60	250	12	1.5	31	15	6	13	7
Phyter Sweet Potatoes & Coconut, GF	60	230	7	1.5	35	20	5	13	7
RxBAR Chocolate Chip	52	220	10	2	22	170	5	12	12
RxBAR Chocolate Sea Salt	52	210	9	2	24	240	5	13	12
RxBAR Mixed Berry	52	210	7	1	25	115	5	14	12
✓ Sheffa Everything Savory Bar, GF	36	150	6	1	23	100	7	<1	4
✓ Sheffa Sesame Savory Bar, GF	36	150	6	1	23	105	7	<1	4
Simple Squares Organic Chili Pepper Protein Bar, GF	45	230	17	5	17	95	3	10	6
Simple Squares Organic Cho-Coco Protein Bar, GF	45	230	17	6	17	95	3	10	6
Simple Squares Organic Cinnamon Clove Protein Bar, GF	45	230	17	5	17	75	3	10	6
✓ Skout Oregon Blueberry Almond Organic Bar, GF	41	150	6	1	24	10	3	19	3
✓ Skout Peruvian Chocolate Organic Bar, GF	37	110	4	1	20	50	3	10	3
✓ Skout Washington Apple Cinnamon Organic Bar, GF	41	150	7	1	24	10	4	19	3
✓ That's It Apple & Blueberries, GF	35	100	0	0	26	25	4	19	1
✓ That's It Apple & Cherries, GF	35	100	0	0	26	20	3	22	1
✓ That's It Beans & Carrots, GF	35	90	0	0	20	30	4	7	4
The GoodOnYa bar, Breakfast, GF	57	287	19	3	23	152	7	13	8
The GoodOnYa bar, Peanut Butter Chocolate, GF	50	251	16	2.5	21	170	4	13	7
The GoodOnYa bar, Peanut Butter Honey, GF	50	250	18	3	17	260	4	10	10
✓ Thunderbird Real Food Bars Cashew Fig Carrot, GF	48	150	3	0.5	29	204	3	26	4
✓ Thunderbird Real Food Bars Hazelnut Coffee Maca, GF	48	148	8	2	14	58	3	9	5
✓ Thunderbird Real Food Bars Pineapple Mango Papaya, GF	48	145	0	0	30	125	3	22	3

Note: g=gram, mg=milligram, sat fat=saturated fat, carb=carbohydrates, DV=Daily Value, GF=Gluten Free. Daily requirement based on 2,000 calories/day diet. Source: product labels and company websites. Note: Bars contain only unrefined, whole foods ingredients.