

Simple Supermarket Side Dishes or Nutritional Landmines?

Supermarket Side Dishes Nutrition Comparison

As with all EN comparisons, this is only a sampling of what's available. Products are listed as prepared and alphabetically.

✓ = EN's Picks. Side dishes contain no more than 250 calories (13% DV), 6 g fat (11% DV), 2 g saturated fat (9% DV), 460 mg sodium (19% DV), and two or more chemicals or additives that you wouldn't buy for your own pantry.

Supermarket Side Dishes	Serving Size	Calories	Total Fat (g)	Sat. Fat (g)	Fiber (g)	Sodium (mg)
NOODLES						
Knorr Italian Sides Tomato Parmesan	1 c	280	8	3	3	820
Knorr Pasta Sides Stroganoff	1 c	260	7	2.5	2	680
Trader Ming's Ginger Peanut Noodle Salad	1 pkg	420	19	3	3	820
POTATOES						
Betty Crocker Potato Buds	2/3 c	140	6	1.5	1	440
Betty Crocker Scalloped Potatoes	1/2 c	150	5	1.5	1	610
Betty Crocker Sour Cream & Chive Mashed Potatoes	2/3 c	140	6	4	1	450
Hungry Jack Mashed Potatoes	1/2 c	150	6	2	1	360
Shedd's Country Crock Homestyle Mashed Potatoes	2/3 c	180	9	4	2	470
Simply Potatoes Homestyle Slices	2/3 c	90	0	0	2	75
Simply Potatoes Mashed Sweet Potatoes	1/2 c	140	1	0	2	100
RICE & GRAINS						
✓ Bird's Eye Steamfresh White Rice with Mixed Vegetables	1 c	190	0.5	0	2	15
Green Giant Cheesy Rice and Broccoli	1/2 c	100	2	0.5	<1	340
Knorr Rice Sides Cheddar & Broccoli	1 c	280	5.5	1.5	1	690
Knorr Rice Sides Creamy Chicken	1 c	280	6	1	1	590
✓ Lundberg Organic Florentine Risotto	1/2 c	140	0	0	1	410
Lundberg Organic Tuscan Risotto	1/2 c	140	0	0	1	735
✓ Minute Ready to Serve Brown & Wild Rice	1 c	230	4.5	0.5	5	135
✓ Near East Couscous Mix Toasted Pine Nut	1 c	230	6	1	2	460
Near East Creative Grains Mix Creamy Parmesan	1 c	280	7	4	3	740
Near East Rice Pilaf Original	1 c	220	4	2	1	810
Near East Whole Grain Blends Roasted Garlic	1 c	220	5	0.5	5	510
Rice a Roni Chicken Flavor Lower Sodium	1 c	270	5	1	2	670
Rice a Roni Whole Grain Blends Roasted Garlic Italiano	1 c	270	9	1.5	3	760
✓ Seeds of Change Quinoa & Whole Grain Brown Rice	1 c	240	3.5	0.5	3	400
✓ Tasty Bite 90 Second Multigrain Pilaf	1/2 pkg	170	4	0	3	380
✓ Tasty Bite 90 Second Thai Lime Rice	1/2 pkg	210	5	1.5	<1	300
✓ Trader Joe's Fully Cooked Fried Brown Rice with Mushrooms	1 c	250	5	1	2	200
✓ Trader Joe's Fully Cooked Thai Style Lime Pilaf	1/2 pkg	210	6	0	1	230
✓ Trader Joe's Fully Cooked Wild Rice	1 c	210	0.5	0	4	10
✓ Trader Joe's Tabbouli	1/3 c	70	3.5	0.5	1	100
Uncle Ben's Long Grain & Wild Rice Original	1 c	200	0.5	0	1	730
Uncle Ben's Ready Rice Creamy Four Cheese	1 c	230	3.5	1	2	900
✓ Uncle Ben's Ready Rice Whole Grain Brown	1 c	240	3	0	2	15
Uncle Ben's Whole Grain White Rice Broccoli Cheddar	1 c	200	2	0.5	4	600
STUFFING						
✓ Arnold Sage & Onion Premium Stuffing	3/4 c	100	1	0	1	440
Pepperidge Farm Cornbread Stuffing	3/4 c	170	2	0	2	480
✓ Pepperidge Farm Country Style Stuffing	3/4 c	140	1	0	2	380
Stove Top Stuffing Mix Savory Herbs	1/2 c	160	7	1.5	1	530
Stove Top Stuffing Mix Whole Wheat for Chicken	1/2 c	140	4.5	2.5	3	470

Note: g=gram, mg=milligram, Sat Fat=saturated fat, n/a=not available, DV=Daily Value, daily requirement based on 2,000 calorie/day diet. Source: food manufacturer labels and company websites.

Many evenings it's probably all you can do to get a nutritious entrée and some veggies on the table. Figuring out a healthy side dish to round out the meal is just one thing too many. Clearly, you're not alone, as is reflected in the proliferation of quick and easy side dishes lining your grocer's shelves. You can find bags, boxes and pouches to create a tempting starch course that will take you anywhere from 90 seconds to 15 minutes to make, and most with little to no work required on your part. But did you ever wonder if that convenience is costing you a bit on the nutritional side of things?

EN headed to the market to find out whether or not both ease and nutrition can really be combined in those little side dish packages that are so helpful at dinner time.

Helpful Hints

Noodles, potatoes and rice, oh my! There are healthy choices to be made with these quick supermarket side dishes, but check out these tips to be sure that you're making the most of your selections.

- **Check out the serving size.** For most of the items we surveyed, the serving size varied from one-half to one cup. Now, that's a big difference when you're scooping out a serving of rice, stuffing or noodles at the dinner table. Make yourself aware of the recommended serving on the package for side dishes so you know what you're really getting.
- **Alter preparation.** Many of these dishes require you to add butter or oil, and/or salt for preparation. By using fewer—or none—of these ingredients, you can improve the nutritional profile.
- **Keep calories in check.** A few of these side dishes are pushing 300 calories, with one providing more than 400. No need to avoid them completely, simply serve yourself a smaller amount than the label suggests, or serve them as part of a meal in which the entrée is very low in calories, such as baked, broiled or grilled seafood.

—Heidi McIndoo, M.S., R.D.