


Sorting through Fast Food Sides

While fast food dining isn't something to partake of on a daily basis, once in a while it's ok—because of a time crunch or just a craving—to belly up to the drive-thru. You may have decided on your entrée even before arriving, whether you're going the healthy path with a grilled chicken sandwich or succumbing to a juicy burger. But what side dish will you choose to go with your sandwich? Fries, and maybe onion rings, used to be the only options, but now there are green beans, baked potatoes, mozzarella sticks, and more.

You may think it's just a side dish, so it can't make that much difference. Actually it can... a huge difference. In searching for healthy choices, we reviewed the nutritionals on dozens of sides, looking at only the information for the small or regular size orders. Yet even for the smallest size available, some sides provide more than two-thirds of a day's worth of sodium or saturated fat, and as much fat as one-and-a-half super deluxe burgers! Just do the higher math if you bump your order up to a large. So, yes, your side dish choice can make a difference.

Helpful hints. When selecting something to go along with your fast food meal, just follow our tips to make the best choices.

- **Share the wealth.** If you're just dying for some deep-fried, salty fries, share an order—a small one—with a friend. You'll end up with a side of approximately 150 calories and 7 grams of fat—much closer to our recommended guidelines for our top picks.
- **Look for the produce.** More and more quick-service restaurants are offering fruits and vegetables. Sure, green beans don't really compare to chili cheese fries, but they're a great way to fit in a vegetable and help satisfy your appetite, while keeping calories and sodium to a minimum.
- **Pass on the cheese.** A plain baked potato or order of simple beans can be a good source of fiber and help fill you up. But skip the shredded cheese or cheese sauce to save calories, saturated fat and sodium. 

—Heidi McIndoo, M.S., R.D.

Fast Food Sides: A Nutrition Comparison

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



✓ = **EN's Picks.** Side picks contain no more than 270 calories (14% DV), 8 g of fat (12% DV), 2 g saturated fat (10% DV), and 260 mg sodium (11% DV).

Fast Food Sides	Serving Size (g)	Calories	Fat (g)	Sat Fat (g)	Sodium (mg)	Carb (g)	Fiber (g)	Sugar (g)	Pro (g)
FRENCH FRIES/ONION RINGS									
Arby's Curly Fries	Small (128)	400	22	3	900	47	5	0	5
Arby's Steakhouse Onion Rings	*(132)	410	20	3	1690	51	3	6	6
Burger King French Fries	Small (128)	130	15	2.5	480	49	4	0	4
Burger King Onion Rings	Small (91)	320	16	3	840	41	3	4	3
Carl's Jr. Chili Cheese Fries	*(317)	810	46	14	1690	79	9	1	20
Carl's Jr. Natural Cut French Fries	Small (104)	300	15	2.5	600	39	4	0	3
Carl's Jr. Sweet Potato Fries	Small (117)	360	17	3	590	47	6	19	3
Hardee's Beer Battered Onion Rings	*(122)	410	24	5	470	45	3	5	3
Hardee's Natural Cut French Fries	Kids (79)	330	11	2	560	30	3	0	3
Hardee's Natural Cut French Fries	Small (116)	340	16	3	670	43	4	0	4
Jack in the Box French Fries	Small (107)	333	15	1	609	45	3	0	4
Jack in the Box Seasoned Curly Fries	Small (84)	280	16	1	614	30	3	0	3
McDonald's French Fries	Small (71)	230	11	1.5	160	29	3	0	0
Popeye's Cajun Fries	Reg (85)	260	14	5	570	30	2	0	3
Wendy's Chili Cheese Fries	*(n/a)	570	30	11	1200	58	8	4	18
Wendy's Natural Cut Fries	Small (n/a)	320	16	3	350	42	4	0	4
OTHER SIDES									
Arby's Mozzarella Sticks	*(137)	420	21	9	1690	35	2	4	21
Arby's Potato Cakes	*(100)	230	14	2	460	25	3	0	2
✓ Burger King Apple Slices	*(57)	30	0	0	0	7	1	6	0
Burger King Mozzarella Sticks	*(88)	280	15	5	650	24	2	2	11
Carl's Jr. Fried Zucchini	*(139)	330	18	3	610	36	2	7	6
✓ Jack in the Box Apple Bites with Caramel Dipping Sauce	*(n/a)	70	0	0	55	17	2	13	0
Jack in the Box Hot Mess Wedges	*(n/a)	663	44	12	1034	57	5	2	13
KFC BBQ Baked Beans	*(138)	210	1.5	0	780	41	8	18	8
KFC Cole Slaw	*(114)	170	10	1.5	170	19	3	14	1
✓ KFC Corn on the Cob	*(71)	70	0.5	0	0	16	2	3	2
✓ KFC Green Beans	*(86)	25	0	0	260	4	2	1	1
KFC Mashed Potatoes without Gravy	*(102)	90	3	0.5	320	15	1	0	2
✓ McDonald's Fruit'n Yogurt Parfait	*(147)	150	2	1	70	30	1	23	4
Popeye's Cajun Rice	Reg (123)	170	5	2	530	25	1	4	7
Popeye's Green Beans	Reg (100)	40	1.5	0	420	6	2	1	2
Popeye's Macaroni & Cheese	Reg (156)	200	7	3.5	490	26	1	3	8
Popeye's Red Beans & Rice	Reg (146)	230	14	4	580	23	5	0	7
✓ Taco Bell Black Beans	*(62)	80	1.5	0	200	12	5	1	4
Taco Bell Black Beans & Rice	*(147)	200	4.5	0	470	33	5	1	6
Taco Bell Cheesy Fiesta Potatoes	*(135)	290	17	2.5	620	32	3	2	4
Taco Bell Chips & Corn Salsa	*(106)	280	12	1	230	38	6	5	4
Taco Bell Pintos 'n Cheese	*(128)	180	7	3	560	20	7	1	9
✓ Taco Bell Premium Latin Rice	*(85)	120	3	0	260	21	0	0	2
✓ Wendy's Apple Slices	*(n/a)	40	0	0	0	9	2	7	0
✓ Wendy's Plain Baked Potato	*(n/a)	270	0	0	25	61	7	3	7
Wendy's Small Chili	*(n/a)	210	6	2.5	880	21	6	6	17
Wendy's Sour Cream & Chives Baked Potato	*(n/a)	320	3.5	2	50	63	7	4	8

*Only one size available; n/a=information not available, 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.