

# Nutrition *Action*

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HEALTH LETTER®  
CENTER FOR SCIENCE IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

## Headline Headaches

Are you getting the full story?



**SUGAR SUBSTITUTES**  
Which are safe?

Picking the best  
**CHEESES**

Added sugars  
**revealed**



# Say Cheese

## Pitfalls on the path to a better cheddar

BY LINDSAY MOYER & BONNIE LIEBMAN

**1 Size up servings.** Comparing cheese labels? Watch out for:

■ **Slice vs. block.** Cheeses that come sliced may look lower in calories, saturated fat, and sodium because their labels list a smaller serving (usually a ¾ oz. slice) than blocks or shredded cheese (1 oz.).

■ **Skinny slices.** It's not easy to tell whether *really* skinny slices like Kraft Slim Cut or Sargento Ultra Thin are better or worse than ordinary slices because the slims' and thins' labels show both a 1-slice (about ½ oz.) and a 3-slice (about 1 oz.) serving. Our chart shows 2 slices, which is closer to the weight of a typical slice.

**2 Look for sat fat steals.** Despite some man-bites-dog headlines, saturated fat still raises LDL ("bad") cholesterol and the risk of heart disease. Solution: eat less cheese... or look for our Best Bites, which have no more than 3 grams of sat fat per serving—roughly half what you'd get in full-fat cheese. They're usually labeled "lite," "2% milk," "50% less fat," "reduced fat," or "part-skim."

Bonus: our Best Bites are calorie bargains. An ounce of Cabot Sharp Light Cheddar, for example, supplies 8 grams of protein and 20 percent of a day's calcium for 70 calories. An ounce of the company's full-fat Vermont Sharp Cheddar (with roughly the same protein and calcium) will cost you 110 calories.

Why do most *fresh* mozzarellas meet our 3-gram sat fat limit even though they're full fat? It's because they contain more water than regular mozzarella (or most other cheeses).

**C**heese is on a roll. Since 1970, we've nearly tripled how much we eat. It's not just pizza and quesadillas. Cheese shows up on burgers, pasta, omelettes, burritos, sandwiches, salads, you name it.

Want a cheese that delivers the goods (flavor, protein, calcium) with the least bads (calories, saturated fat, salt)? Check out our 5 tips.

*The information for this article was compiled by Leah Ettman & Allison Pamper.*

**3 Have a salt strategy.** Looking for less sodium? Swiss (many have 40 to 60 milligrams of sodium per ounce) and fresh mozzarella (typically 80 to 100 mg) are naturally lower than other types. Our Best Bites have no more than 200 mg per serving. (See the photos below for our taste favorites.)

Tip: Skip Kraft fat-free shredded cheeses. Ounce for ounce, they have about 100 mg more sodium (280 mg) than shredded lower-fat Best Bites from Horizon Organic, Sargento, Trader Joe's, and Kraft's 2% Milk line.

**4 Dodge non-dairy deficits.** Most dairy-free (vegan) cheeses are nearly protein-free, with 0 or 1 gram per ounce instead of cheese's usual 5 to 8 grams. That's because they're mostly water, oil (coconut, canola, palm, or soybean), and starches.

Exception: Treeline Aged Treenut Cheeses get 5 grams of protein per ounce from cashews. And many non-vegan "cheese alternatives"—like Go Veggie Lactose Free or Trader Joe's Almond Mozzarella Style Shreds—add enough casein (a milk protein) to reach 6 grams of protein per ounce.

But only Go Veggie consistently adds calcium. Most Field Roast, Follow Your Heart, and Treeline have zip.

**5 Watch the claims.** You can ignore most of them. Almost all cheese is made with "simple" ingredients and has "no added sugar." Most hard cheeses are lactose-free—or close to it. (Lactose is milk sugar, so check the "Sugars" line on the Nutrition Facts label.) And *any* cheese that isn't processed (like Kraft Singles) can call itself "natural."



Lower-fat mozz that would do any pizza proud.



The best-tasting lower-fat swiss? Jarlsberg Lite. Period.



Trader Joe's rich, flavorful cheddar just missed a Best Bite.



Cabot Sharp Light isn't quite as sharp as Trader Joe's cheddar.



BelGioioso: a 70-calorie snack that makes us smile.



Try it with a handful of cherry tomatoes. M-m-m.



# Counting Curds

Best Bites (✓✓) have no more than 3 grams of saturated fat and 200 milligrams of sodium per serving. They also have at least 10 percent of the Daily Value for calcium and 5 grams of protein. Cheeses are ranked from least to most saturated fat, sodium, and calories, then most to least calcium. *Full-fat cheeses are in italics.*

	Calories	Sat Fat (g)	Sodium (mg)	Calcium (% DV)	Protein (g)
<b>Cheddar &amp; Mozzarella (1 oz.)</b>					
✓✓ Cabot Sharp Extra Light Cheddar	60	1.5	200	20	9
✓✓ <i>Galbani Marinated Mozzarella Fresca</i>	70	2.5	100	10	5
Trader O' Joe's Lite Sharp Celtic Cheddar	70	2.5	210	25	8
✓✓ <i>Galbani Autentica Mozzarella Fresca</i>	70	3	80	10	5
✓✓ <i>BelGioioso Fresh Mozzarella</i>	70	3	85	15	5
✓✓ <i>Boar's Head Fresh Mozzarella</i>	70	3	85	10	5
✓✓ Cabot Light Cheddar—Jalapeño or Sharp	70	3	170	20	8
Kerrygold Reduced Fat Dubliner	80	4	190	20	8
Cracker Barrel 2% Milk Extra Sharp Cheddar	90	4	240	20	7
Cabot Vermont Sharp Cheddar	110	6	180	20	7
<b>Cheddar, sliced (¾ oz., 1 slice unless noted)</b>					
✓✓ Sargento Reduced Fat Medium (¾ oz.)	60	2.5	125	15	6
✓✓ Trader Joe's Lite (1 oz.)	70	3	170	20	8
✓✓ Kraft Slim Cut Extra Sharp White (2 slices)	70	3	200	15	6
✓✓ Kraft Slim Cut Sharp (2 slices)	70	3	200	15	6
Alpine Lace 25% Reduced Fat	70	3.5	135	15	6
Sargento Ultra Thin—Mild or Sharp (2 slices)	90	4	140	15	5
<b>Swiss, sliced (¾ oz., 1 slice unless noted)</b>					
✓✓ Jarlsberg Lite	50	1.5	100	20	7
✓✓ Sargento Reduced Fat	60	2	30	25	7
✓✓ Sargento—regular or Aged (¾ oz.)	70	3	35	20	5
✓✓ Kraft Slim Cut (2 slices)	70	3	55	25	7
✓✓ Alpine Lace 25% Reduced Fat	70	3	90	20	6
Sargento Ultra Thin—regular or Baby (2 slices) <sup>1</sup>	80	3.5	40	20	6
Jarlsberg	70	3.5	100	20	5
Boar's Head Lacey (1 oz.)	90	4	35	25	9
<b>Other cheeses, sliced (¾ oz., 1 slice unless noted)</b>					
✓✓ Sargento Reduced Fat Provolone (¾ oz.)	50	2	130	15	5
Boar's Head 44% Lower Sodium Provolone (½ oz.)	50	2.5	70	10	4
✓✓ Sargento Reduced Fat Colby-Jack (¾ oz.)	50	2.5	120	15	5
✓✓ Kraft Slim Cut Mozzarella (2 slices)	70	2.5	120	15	6
✓✓ Trader Joe's Lite Provolone (1 oz.)	80	2.5	120	20	9
✓✓ Sargento Reduced Fat Pepper Jack (¾ oz.)	60	2.5	135	15	5
✓✓ Sargento Mozzarella	60	2.5	140	15	5
Cracker Barrel Asiago (¾ oz.)	70	3	120	10	4
✓✓ Sargento Provolone (¾ oz.)	70	3	135	15	5
Cracker Barrel Provolone (¾ oz.)	60	3	140	10	4
✓✓ Kraft Slim Cut Colby Jack (2 slices)	70	3	160	15	7
✓✓ Alpine Lace 25% Reduced Fat Provolone	60	3	170	15	6
✓✓ Trader Joe's Part Skim Mozzarella (1 oz.)	80	3	170	20	8
Trader Joe's Lite Havarti (1 oz.)	80	3	210	20	8
Alpine Lace 25% Reduced Sodium Muenster	80	4.5	105	15	5
Sargento Ultra Thin Colby-Jack (2 slices)	80	4.5	140	15	5

## Strings, Sticks, etc. (¾ oz., unless noted)

	Calories	Sat Fat (g)	Sodium (mg)	Calcium (% DV)	Protein (g)
✓✓ Weight Watchers String	50	1.5	140	20	6
✓✓ Sargento Light String	50	1.5	160	15	6
✓✓ Trader Joe's Light String (1 oz.)	60	1.5	180	20	6
✓✓ Weight Watchers Jalapeño String	50	1.5	200	20	6
✓✓ Kraft 2% Milk Twists	50	2	150	10	5
✓✓ Mini Babybel Light	50	2	160	15	6
✓✓ Kraft 2% Milk String	60	2	170	10	6
✓✓ Trader Joe's Lite Mild Cheddar Snack Sticks	70	2.5	115	20	7
✓✓ Sargento Reduced Fat Sticks <sup>1</sup>	60	2.5	135	15	5
✓✓ Kraft Twists	60	2.5	140	10	6
✓✓ Kraft Jalapeño String	70	2.5	150	15	6
✓✓ Mini Babybel Mozzarella Style	50	2.5	160	15	6
✓✓ Cracker Barrel 2% Milk Extra Sharp Cheddar	60	2.5	180	15	5
✓✓ <i>BelGioioso Fresh Mozzarella Snacking (1 oz.)</i>	70	3	85	15	5
✓✓ Mini Babybel Sharp Original	60	3	140	15	5
✓✓ Weight Watchers Sticks <sup>1</sup>	70	3	170	20	7
✓✓ Trader Joe's String (1 oz.)	80	3	170	20	8
✓✓ Galbani Reduced Fat String (1 oz.)	70	3	180	25	8
✓✓ Galbani Part Skim String (1 oz.)	80	3	190	20	7
<i>Galbani Fresh Mozzarella Snacks (1 oz.)</i>	70	3.5	110	10	6
<i>Mini Babybel Original</i>	70	4	160	15	5
<i>Sargento Reduced Sodium Colby-Jack Sticks</i>	80	4.5	105	15	5
<i>Old Croc Sharp Cheddar Croc Bites</i>	90	5	135	15	5
<i>Sargento Snack Bites (7 bites, 1 oz.)<sup>1</sup></i>	110	6	200	20	7

## Shredded (1 oz.—about ¼ cup)

	Calories	Sat Fat (g)	Sodium (mg)	Calcium (% DV)	Protein (g)
Kraft Fat Free—Cheddar or Mozzarella	45	0	280	25	9
✓✓ Trader Joe's Lite Mozzarella	45	1	190	20	5
✓✓ Kraft 2% Milk Mozzarella	80	2.5	190	25	8
✓✓ Sargento Reduced Fat Sharp Cheddar	90	3	180	25	8
✓✓ Horizon Organic Mozzarella	80	3	190	20	7
Kraft Mozzarella	90	3.5	150	20	7
Sargento Reduced Fat—except Sharp Cheddar <sup>1</sup>	80	3.5	190	25	8
Kraft 2% Milk—except Mozzarella <sup>1</sup>	90	3.5	230	20	7
Sargento Whole Milk Mozzarella	90	4.5	190	15	6

## Vegan & Alternatives (1 oz. piece or slice, unless noted)

Trader Joe's Almond Mozzarella Style Shreds (¼ cup)	50	0	230	20	6
Go Veggie Lactose Free Shreds (¼ cup) <sup>1</sup>	70	0	390	30	6
Go Veggie Vegan Shreds (¼ cup) <sup>1</sup>	90	0.5	280	30	0
Follow Your Heart Vegan Gourmet <sup>1</sup>	70	1.5	150	0	1
Treeline Aged Treenut Cheese <sup>1</sup>	140	2	135	0	5
Daiya Shreds (¼ cup) <sup>1</sup>	90	2.5	260	6	1
Field Roast Chao Slices (¾ oz.)	60	4	180	0	0
Follow Your Heart Slices (¾ oz.)	60	4	180	0	0
Daiya Farmhouse Block <sup>1</sup>	80	4	190	10	1
Daiya Slices (¾ oz.) <sup>1</sup>	70	4.5	170	10	1

✓✓ Best Bite. <sup>1</sup> Average. Note: Best Bite refers to numbers, not taste.

**Daily Limits** (for a 2,000-calorie diet): **Saturated Fat:** 20 grams. **Sodium:** 2,300 milligrams.

**Calcium Daily Value (DV):** 1,000 milligrams. **Protein Daily Target:** 75 grams. Source: company information. The use of information from this article for commercial purposes is strictly prohibited without written permission from CSPI.