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gut check

Best Bests for Super Bowl Snacks

Posted on Jan 31st 2011 1:00PM by [Kyle Stack](#)

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Super Bowl Sunday isn't an official national holiday, yet people eat as if it is one. While the 4th of July, Halloween and Thanksgiving are notorious for overeating, the all-day empty calorie feast that happens around the Super Bowl make it a unique challenge for people watching their waistline.

The Calorie Control Council and Snack Food Association estimate 30 million pounds of snacks [will be consumed](#) on Super Bowl Sunday. Here is the breakdown of the [most popular snacks](#) in millions of pounds: potato chips (11.2), tortilla chips (8.2), pretzels (4.3), popcorn (3.8) and nuts (2.5).

There are ways to avoid eating junk food, whether you plan on watching the big game at a bar or at a friend's house. [Christine Avanti](#), a Los Angeles-based chef and nutritionist, advised preparing a meal before going out. "Eat a balanced meal so you're not going somewhere starving," Avanti said.

She also likes dessert-flavored gum. If you're wary about whether you can resist a dessert, take a pack of [Extra Dessert Delights](#) gum, which comes in three flavors, including what Avanti calls a "ridiculous" mint chocolate

chip ice cream flavor.

Here are some healthier food options to look for on the buffet table or bar menu, recommended by Avanti and Roberta Anding, a dietitian for the NFL's Houston Texans.

Turkey chili. This is a healthy alternative to regular chili or even a beef-infused dish such as [nachos](#). Anding said [turkey chili](#) is a low-fat option that still gives people plenty of flavor.

If going to a friend's house, recommend that turkey chili be served as a main dish or dip -- better yet, offer to bring some yourself. To add another protein-packed option, pick up [Greek yogurt](#), which can become a substitute for sour cream. Anding likes it as a topping for the turkey chili.

"Lean turkey and Greek yogurt makes this a high-protein powerhouse," Anding said.

Chicken tenders. Anding has a recommendation for chicken lovers: Go for a buffalo chicken strip, if available. You can make it at home by marinating chicken breasts in lime juice, grilling them, cutting them into strips and serving with buffalo sauce. "You have leaned-up chicken strips, which are a close cousin to fatty buffalo wings," Anding said. And of course, be sure to load up on the carrots and celery sticks that are served with the buffalo chicken.

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Salsa. Onion dip and other creamy toppings for chips are popular, but Avanti said you should always stick to salsa. While store-bought salsa is still high in [sodium](#), the mix of tomatoes, garlic and onions is a more palatable option for those looking to minimize their junk food intake. Pick up [organic](#) or baked tortilla chips at the grocery store before heading to a friend's place. They're much lower in sodium than potato chips or pretzels.

Even better, if you have time, make your own chips and salsa to really cut down on sodium.

Popcorn. Many bars will serve popcorn, which Avanti said is a better choice than other salty snacks such as pretzels or peanuts. "Popcorn is lower in calories," she said. Just make sure that the popcorn hasn't been slathered with extra butter before indulging.

If you find yourself at a swanky sports bar, look for chicken on a skewer, grilled chicken breast or shrimp cocktail. The protein can help you feel full and stabilize blood sugar, Avanti said -- and they can be paired with a beer, which can represent your carbohydrate calories.

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