

Sipping Slim

The Skinny on Low-Cal Cocktails



SUMMER COCKTAILS CAN BE LIGHT ON CALORIES AND DELICIOUS WITH THE RIGHT INGREDIENTS

By Bill Burke

It's been a long time coming, but summer has finally arrived in the Green Mountain State. Shorts and t-shirts have replaced bulky coats — which means we may want to keep a closer eye on what we're sipping.

With garden parties, barbecues and picnics filling up our calendars, there will likely be plenty of opportunities to sample some great cocktails. And while it's true that alcohol can be rather calorie-dense, there are options that will allow even the most calorie-conscious cookout attendee to partake.

A typical 80-proof spirit, like rum or vodka, contains about 96 calories for every 1.5 ounce

serving — about the size of a shot. But here's where things get complicated: Calories in mixed drinks can add up quickly thanks to a number of elements, including the proof of the alcohol and the size of the drink. The higher the alcohol content, the higher it will likely be in calories. While a 1.5 ounce serving of 80-proof liquor can have 96 calories, a 90-proof serving can contain 110 calories and the same size serving at 100-proof can contain 124 calories.

Also, watch what goes into that cocktail. Mixers alone (and chasers) can turn a moderately sweet drink into a sugar-bomb. Common

Continued on page 10



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1.5 oz Rebel Yell Root Beer®
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PLEASE ENJOY RESPONSIBLY. ©2016 Rebel Yell® Root Beer Whiskey, 35% Alc./Vol. (70 proof), Bottled by Rebel Yell Distillery, Louisville, KY, Luxco Inc., St. Louis, MO.

MIXOLOGY: THE SKINNY ON LOW-CAL COCKTAILS

cocktail additions range from a low calorie count of soda water — which is not the same as tonic water, because it contains quinine and sweeteners — to mixers on the higher end like cranberry juice and energy drinks.

- Diet soda – 0 calories
- Coffee – 0 calories
- Soda water – 0 calories
- Lemon (or lime) juice(½ ounce) – 4 calories
- Tonic water (eight ounces) – 77 calories
- Cola (eight ounces) – 92 calories
- Orange juice (eight ounces) – 103 calories
- Energy drink (eight ounces) – 104 calories
- Cranberry juice (eight ounces) – 105 calories

Keep It Simple

A common question, then, is 'what is the best cocktail I can drink while I'm on a diet?' In some cases, simplicity works. A vodka and soda will contain just 96 calories, thanks solely to the vodka. Just fill a glass with ice, add vodka and top with soda water. Including a bit of fresh lime juice will add four calories, but also a bit of flavor.

Likewise, a rum and diet cola will get all of its 96 calories from the rum. Combine the ingredients and serve over ice. (Squeeze in a little lime juice to transform it into a Cuba libre.)

On the other hand, there are spirits that, while tasty and provide the opportunity to indulge in exotic or unusual flavors, bring with them higher calorie counts. According to delish.com, Everclear grain alcohol can have as much as 285 calories per 1.5 ounce shot, partly due to its high alcohol content. Likewise, Bacardi 151 can have 185 calories per shot. It's not a simple rule, however. Though it's only 30-proof, schnapps can have 195 calories in a single shot because of its high sugar content. Similarly, liqueurs tend to have higher calorie counts because they're typically higher in sugar. As for cocktails, drinks like the mojito (approximately 220 calories and 25 grams of sugar) and the margarita (approximately 275 calories) fall into the high calorie category — depending, of course, on how they're prepared and what the ingredients are.

Luckily, distillers have produced ready-to-drink options that cut the calories while keeping the flavor. While the regular margarita may challenge your healthy-sipping efforts, the Chi-Chi's Skinny Margarita is a convenient, ready-to-drink and easy-to-serve option. The tequila and triple sec are already mixed-in, and the sugar is substituted with agave nectar



ON THE COVER
Vodka Watermelon
Citrus Cooler *Makes 6-8 servings*
Courtesy joyfulhealthyeats.com

The perfect refreshing drink to sip on this summer! Easy, light and made with four ingredients you're gonna love this party cocktail. Only 136 calories a serving.

- 8 cups chilled watermelon
- 12 ounces coconut water
- 4 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 1 cup vodka citron (citrus-flavored vodka)
- Fresh lime peel, mint sprig or watermelon wedges for garnish

To a blender add watermelon, coconut water and fresh lime juice. Blend until smooth. Pour mixture into a large pitcher. Add Vodka and stir. Serve over ice. Garnish and enjoy. (Option: serve in a stevia and salt-rimmed glass for a sweet and sour kick.)

for an all-natural, lower calorie sipper. Bonus: There's no bitter aftertaste — something often associated with artificial sweeteners. The Chi-Chi's Skinny Margarita contains 95 calories per four-ounce serving, which is considerably less than the traditional margarita, which can have as many as 254 calories.

Skinnygirl White Cranberry Cosmo is a lower calorie take on a classic. This ready-to-drink cocktail combines hints of orange essence, a subtle lime flavor, berry fruit notes and cranberry with agave sweetness. It's an easy mixer — just pour into a martini glass, garnish with a few cranberries on a toothpick and serve. According to Fatsecret.com — a site dedicated to healthy eating — the Skinnygirl White Cranberry Cosmo has 34 calories in a single serving, with 2.3 grams of carbs.

Skinnygirl, developed by TV personality Bethenny Frankel, also produces a White Peach

Always drink in moderation.

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MIXOLOGY: THE SKINNY ON LOW-CAL COCKTAILS

Margarita made with tequila, agave sweetener, triple sec and white peach flavors, with 105 calories per four-ounce serving.

Here are a few simple tips to lower the calories in your drink:

- Skip the mixer and sip your favorite sipper on the rocks: no sugary mixers or chasers means no added calories.
- Consider mixer alternatives, such as water, low calorie fruit juice, vegetable juices, sugar-free syrups and artificial sweeteners.
- Substitute soda water for tonic water.
- Keep an eye on portion sizes.
- Order drinks with lower-proof alcohol for (typically) lower calorie counts.

Here are a few light versions of some favorites. Start with a handy addition to many drinks — a sugar-free simple syrup.

Sugar-Free Simple Syrup

courtesy thedaily meal.com

Boil a cup of water in a small saucepan. Add two tablespoons of powdered stevia. Continue to boil the water until the stevia dissolves completely. Once it's dissolved, transfer your water mixture into a small cup and add mint leaves. Place the cup in the refrigerator for 20 minutes. For a stronger mint flavor, chill it longer.

Light Mojito

Use that hand-crafted simple syrup in your mojito for a skinnier version of the classic:

Fill a glass halfway with ice, mix one part rum with two parts of your sugar-free simple syrup. Add a few squeezes of lime juice and fill the rest of the glass with soda water. Garnish with a few mint leaves or a wedge of lime. The cocktail, according to thedaily meal.com, comes in at fewer than 100 calories.

For those counting carbs, there are also options:

Low Carb Mojito

courtesy stepawayfromthecarbs.com

Muddle the mint leaves in the base of a glass. In

2 fresh mint leaves	1 teaspoon low carb sweetener
1 ounce light rum	Ice cubes
1 teaspoon lime juice	Club soda

a cocktail shaker, add lime juice, rum, sweetener and ice. Shake well until mixed. Pour into a glass and top with soda water.

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Counting Cocktail Calories

- Vodka – 80 proof, 96 calories
- Gin – 80 proof, 96 calories
- Rum – 80 proof, 96 calories
- Tequila – 80 proof, 104 calories
- Scotch – 80 proof, 105 calories
- Whiskey – 80 proof, 105 calories
- Cinnamon whiskey – 66 proof, 108 calories
- Brandy – 80 proof, 115 calories
- Coffee liqueur – 40 proof, 137 calories

What you choose to mix your favorite spirit with can make a big difference. Here's a look at some common mixers found in a number of classic cocktails.

- Vodka and soda – 96 calories
- Gin and tonic – 161 calories
- Mojito – 169 calories
- Rum and Coke – 173 calories
- Manhattan – 200 calories
- Cosmopolitan – 211 calories
- Martini – 215 calories
- Whiskey sour – 240 calories
- Piña Colada – 242 calories
- Margarita – 254 calories

Light Gin And Tonic

A typical gin and tonic can have as many as 164 calories and 17 grams of sugar, thanks to the tonic water. Cut back by substituting the tonic water for club soda, and ask your mixologist to use an 80-proof gin.

Skinny Lime Margarita

courtesy peanutbutterandpeppers.com

- ½ cup lime juice
- ¼ cup tequila
- ¼ cup orange juice
- 1 teaspoon stevia
- 2 cups ice

Add all ingredients to a blender and process until smooth. This recipe comes in at a lightweight 93 calories, eight grams of carbohydrates and four grams of sugar. ☑



Always drink in moderation.

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- 2 parts Jose Cuervo Especial® Silver
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- 1 part triple sec
- Ice
- Lime for garnish
- Salt for rim

over ice, in a salt-rimmed glass. Garnish with a lime wedge.

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