

Sample the spread with no regrets!

Test Your Cocktail Party Smarts

Which yummy cheese has the fewest calories? Which cocktails should you sip (and skip)? Take our quiz to see if you're up on how to feast without putting on pounds. *By KATE ROCKWOOD*

1 CHOOSE THE MORE FILLING SNACK.



Pretzels



Olives

ANSWER: Olives. The pretzels don't contain much fiber and are mostly empty calories, says Marissa Lippert, RD, author of *The Cheater's Diet*. But olives are nutrient-rich with good-for-you fats. Plus, they take longer to eat, and the pits left on your plate let you track how many you've had.

2 WHICH BITE-SIZE APPETIZER IS YOUR SAFEST BET?

- A Pigs in blankets
- B Spinach and goat cheese tartlets
- C Stuffed mushroom caps

ANSWER: C. All these hors d'oeuvres are high in fat and sodium. But anything with a pastry shell or crust can be extra trouble, thanks to refined carbs and sometimes trans fats. Even if the mushroom's stuffing includes cheese, it's still the most vegetable-centric option of the bunch. (Don't kid yourself that the tartlet's spinach amounts to much.) Each cap will set you back about 60 calories and has less saturated fat than the tartlets or mini hot dogs. Bonus: Mushrooms boost the effectiveness of white blood cells, the body's first defense against viruses and bacteria.

3 RANK THESE BEVERAGES FROM BEST TO WORST (FOR YOUR HEALTH).



A

Hot buttered rum



B

Champagne



C

Holiday punch



D

Red wine

ANSWER: D, B, C, A. Red wine wins because of its resveratrol, but champagne is actually the lowest-cal drink here, at about 75 calories per glass, compared with 250 or more in the punch (hello, sugar bomb!) and hot buttered rum (which is also loaded with saturated fat).

4 Which is the smartest strategy for mindful eating at a mixer?

- A Fill a small plate with veggies plus two favorites.
- B Hold a drink in one hand and hang by the crudités.
- C Exercise before the party.

ANSWER: A. Working out pre-party may make the siren song of mini quiches even harder to resist. Plus, it's too easy to overestimate your burn when you're trying to justify indulgences. In a 2010 study, people who took a brisk walk guessed that they had torched 825 calories (when they'd burned only 200) and overate by about 350 calories afterward. As for hobbling yourself with a drink, watch out for the double whammy of liquid calories and lower inhibitions. Research shows that a small plate will help you eat less and feel more sated. And choosing just two indulgences will nudge you to pick carefully, says Lippert, so you're more likely to be satisfied and less likely to grab seconds.



5 A GLASS OF EGGNOG OR A CUP OF COCOA?

ANSWER: Cocoa. "One cup of eggnog has more than a third of the saturated fat you should have in an entire day," says Liz Applegate, PhD, director of sports nutrition at the University of California, Davis. It also has about 60 more calories than a cup of skim cocoa, and the cocoa boasts heart-healthy flavonoids.

6 True or false: The cheese platter is the biggest diet wrecker at the party.

ANSWER: False. It is possible to make merry with this tempting display. Sample the soft cheeses, which tend to have a little less fat and fewer calories than hard cheeses, like Cheddar and Gruyère, advise Lyssie Lakatos, RD, and Tammy Lakatos Shames, RD, co-authors of *The Nutrition Twins' Veggie Cure*. Still, each serving of goat cheese or Brie (about the size of your thumb) has just under 100 calories. Try pairing them with apple slices rather than crackers, which can quickly add more calories and sodium.

7 PICK THE MOST NUTRITIOUS DIP.

- A Black bean dip
- B Salmon spread
- C Guacamole

ANSWER: A. "Black bean dip is a powerhouse of protein and fiber, so it will take the edge off your hunger," says Shames. Black beans are also a good source of iron, which helps keep your skin glowing and your immune system humming. Guacamole is a close second; it's a surprise dose of fiber and also offers monounsaturated fats, which can help lower cholesterol. The problem is you're more likely to scoop it with high-fat, high-sodium tortilla chips than carrot sticks. Salmon also has a ton of health perks: just know that the spread is usually made with artery-clogging cream cheese—to the tune of 150 calories per 2 tablespoons (compared with 50 calories in the same amount of black bean dip).

8 WHICH COOKIE WILL DO THE LEAST DAMAGE TO YOUR WAISTLINE?

- A Gingerbread
- B Snowball
- C Peanut butter thumbprint

ANSWER: Tie! Reality check: Cookies are basically

butter, sugar and white flour (yum), negating any health boost you might get from ginger, pecans or peanuts. A snowball will usually set you back fewer calories than the other two options. (The snowball's diminutive size offers built-in portion control.) But nutritionists say that the best choice is the cookie you're craving: "If you don't feel deprived, it's easier to be reasonable about savoring just a few bites," explains Applegate.

9 SELECT THE ROASTED VEGGIE THAT OFFERS THE BIGGEST BANG FOR YOUR BUCK.

- A Beets
- B Sweet potatoes
- C Brussels sprouts

ANSWER: C. "All vegetables contain phytonutrients, but Brussels sprouts are a killer source of vitamin C," points out Applegate. The antioxidant blocks cell damage caused by free radicals and can help you maintain a healthy immune system—key during cold season. "Cruciferous vegetables like Brussels sprouts also have compounds that are potent anticarcinogens. It's a standout," adds Applegate.



Cheese? Yes, please. Just aim for the Brie and chèvre.

10 Identify the size of a 100-calorie potato latke.



ANSWER: C. It's no surprise that Hanukkah (aka the festival of oil) is hardly a low-cal holiday. "A really big latke can have as many calories as a doughnut, and most people eat more than one," says Shames. But as long as you keep portions in check—and swap the rich sour cream for applesauce—it is possible to feel good about the latke's nutritional perks. Potatoes are a solid source of protein, fiber and iron, and they pack more potassium than bananas (really!).

SO HOW'D YOU DO?

IF YOU GOT...

1 TO 4 CORRECT: BAH HUMBUG!

No doubt, holiday indulgences can turn into one buttery, sugary blur. But don't give up (or give in): Learning to suss out your best options will help you avoid party pig-out.

5 TO 8 CORRECT: SEMI-SAINTLY

You can spot the worst offenders at the shindig, but there's still room for improvement. And boosting your holiday food IQ can mean the difference between regretting the night and savoring the memories.

9 TO 11 CORRECT: SEASONAL ALL-STAR

Drag that mistletoe to a mirror and give yourself a kiss: You know how to enjoy the season without letting your health (or waistline) suffer. Now put that knowledge into practice. And pass the cocoa.

11 Which slice is most likely to cause a food coma?



A Apple pie

B Pecan pie

C Pumpkin pie

ANSWER: B. Pecan pie takes the, um, cake, owing to its combo of corn syrup, sugar and high-fat nuts. One slice can contain a mind-boggling 500 calories and 27 grams of fat—that's about the same as a Big Mac. "The nuts are healthy, but by the end of the meal, you don't really need more calorie-dense energy," says Lippert. "Dessert is meant to be a sweet little bite." If you're torn between apple and pumpkin, opt for the pumpkin (a single crust means fewer calories and less fat).