

Labels, Labels, Labels: What Ontario Is Doing To Help You Eat Right

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Many Ontarians who resolved to eat healthier this year may have found it slightly easier to stick to their New Year's resolution thanks to the *Healthy Menu Act, 2015*. Effective as of January 1, 2017, the act requires restaurants with 20 or more locations to label each item on the menu with their calories. The Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care implemented this act in hope to help consumers make more effective and healthy eating choices (1).



Calories (Cal) are a unit used to describe the amount of energy nutrients from food ultimately provide to the body. Excessive calorie intake can lead to weight gain. Recommended calorie intake depends on many factors, including age and sex. For instance, Health Canada recommend adult males between 19 and 30 to consume 2500 calories per day and women of that age group to consume 1900 calories/ day (2). While these only apply to the average person in each group described, they serve as a good general guideline for consumers to follow when choosing what to eat. With menu labelling in effect, making healthier decisions at restaurants is easier than ever before.

While some menu-labelling simply reaffirms widely accepted ideas of food, such as Burger King's 630 Cal Whopper being high in calories, it also unveils the truth behind seemingly lower-calorie food items, such as Boston Pizza's Chicken Caesar Salad which is also 630 Cal (3,4). With such transparency, consumers can effectively make choices to stay within their calorie guidelines.

However, it is important to note that calories do not provide a holistic picture of the nutritious quality of a particular food. Many high calorie simple foods, such as a single avocado which has 322 Cal and ½ a cup of roasted almonds which has 484 Cal, are high in nutrients including fiber, folate, and potassium, and manganese, Vitamin E, and riboflavin respectively (5, 6, 7). Thus, when considering such high calorie foods, the key is to eat smaller proportions versus avoiding the foods all together.

To find out more about your recommended caloric intake and making nutrition nutritious decisions, contact your dietitian today! For more information on the *Healthy Menu Act, 2015*, click on the link below!

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/15h07>

Reference:

- (1) http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/news/bulletin/2016/hb_20160308.aspx
- (2) http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/basics-base/1_1_1-eng.php
- (3) (<https://www.bk.com/pdfs/nutrition.pdf>
- (4) <https://bostonpizza.com/en/nutrition/information/salads>).
- (5) http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/fiche-nutri-data/nutrient_value-valeurs_nutritives-tc-tm-eng.php
- (6) <https://www.avocadocentral.com/nutrition/nutrients-in-avocado>,
- (7) <http://nutritiondata.self.com/facts/nut-and-seed-products/3085/2>