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CBS Evening News

## Nutritional Information on Menus

• By Lisa Drayer, MA, RD

Mar 15, 2004 10:55 am US/Eastern

**NEW YORK (CBS)** When you go out to eat, do you wonder how many calories are on your plate? Well, at least one chain is about to take the guesswork out of dining out.

Ruby Tuesday announced last week that it plans to include nutrition information for its food items on its menus.

Ruby Tuesday is the first chain restaurant to announce such a change. The decision compliments other healthful changes the chain has already made, such as frying its food in trans-free canola oil. (Trans are a type of "bad" fat). Ruby's also plans to add more healthful foods to its menus, as part of this effort.

"I commend Ruby Tuesday Inc. for its decision to display nutritional information about all of its meals directly on its menu" said Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), in a press release. Harkin introduced the Menu Education and Labeling (MEAL) Act of 2004 in the Senate last month, which would require restaurants operating with 20 or more locations under the same trade name to disclose on menus:

- Number of Calories
- Grams of Saturated Fat
- Grams of Trans Fat
- Milligrams of Sodium

"I hope more companies will display nutritional information on their menus and menu boards and create innovative initiatives to address the obesity epidemic," Harkin said.

The Center for Science in the Public Interest agrees. "Tuesday's announcement is a historic first, and we urge Applebee's, Chili's, Outback, and other large chains to follow suit," said CSPI nutrition policy director Margo G. Wootan in a statement issued last week.

### CSPI Investigates Restaurant Foods

Last month, the Center for Science in the Public Interest took a look at what popular restaurant chains were serving to kids, and they did their own laboratory analysis.

Here's what they found:

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[Ruby Tuesday to put nutritional information on menus, Lisa Drayer reports.](#)

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- **Outback Steakhouse:** The **Boomerang Cheese Burger** with Fries has 840 calories and 31 grams of saturated-plus-trans fat—the fats that promote heart disease (Outback deep-fries in a beef tallow blend). To get an Outback meal that bad an adult would have to order a sirloin steak, a filet mignon, and three pats of butter, according to CSPI. Outback's **Spotted Dog Sundae** with chocolate sauce adds another 730 calories and 27 grams of bad fat, making it the worst kids' menu item CSPI analyzed. Any kid eating a cheeseburger, fries, Coke, and sundae at Outback will consume a stunning 1,700 calories and 58 grams of bad fat— three-and-a-half days' worth.
- **Applebee's:** It's **Grilled Cheese Sandwich** alone has 520 calories and 14 grams of bad fat. With fries, the meal has 900 calories and more than a day's worth of bad fat—the equivalent of three pork chops.
- **Chili's:** The **Little Chicken Crispers** have 360 calories and 8 grams of bad fat. Add fries and the meal supplies 710 calories and 15 grams of saturated-plus-trans fat—the equivalent of two McDonald's Quarter Pounders.

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