

Party Foods Doctors Won't Touch

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Doctors like to have fun just like everybody else, but at social gatherings, they tend to watch what they consume

Labor Day is approaching, and so is the parade of end-of-summer barbecues and **backyard cookouts**. Party favorites like grilled burgers, **creative dips**, and hot dogs will be your go-tos, but you may want to reconsider your menu. Not that these foods are distasteful to serve, but they may not be a great choice if you're expecting health-conscious guests. We asked medical doctors (and a dentist) from around the world to share

To start with, make sure you're not ruining everyone's diet with **overindulgent condiments**. "Flavored dipping sauces, such as ranch, cheese, and buffalo sauces, are full of unhealthy preservatives, sugars, and huge amounts of fat," Dr. David Greuner, top cardiovascular surgeon at NYC Surgical Center says. "Much healthier options include hummus or yogurt-based sauces."

Before planning the menu for your next party, take a few of these tips into consideration. Find creative ways to make **hummus**, replace the dessert bar with a fresh-fruit bar, and serve sparkling water instead of sodas. Those minor changes will not only cut calories, but also preserve that summer body you've worked so hard to keep in tip-top shape.

From aged cheese to commercial baked goods, here are a few party foods doctors will not touch.

Pastries



"Baked goods generally have no nutritional value and often contain hidden saturated fat and hydrogenated shortenings, which may raise LDL (bad cholesterol.) The added sugar is high in fructose, which can overload your liver and can cause insulin resistance; this may lead to metabolic disorders, including **Type 2 diabetes**. Is that custard-filled éclair really worth the risks (or the extra hours at CrossFit)?" — Dr. Adam Splaver, board-certified in cardiology and internal medicine

Breads



"Breads are carbohydrates, and these particular carbohydrates can quickly add to your abdominal fat! **Breads** have a high glycemic index, meaning they cause your blood sugar to spike quickly and then crash, leaving you initially very satisfied but very hungry an hour later. This can result in overeating and obesity." — Dr. Kevin R. Campbell, MD, FACC, specialist in cardiovascular disease and heart rhythm disorders

Aged Cheese



"**Aged cheeses** and **cured meats** contain an amino acid called tyramine. This amino acid, when ingested, increases the release of a hormone called norepinephrine. Norepinephrine is a wakefulness-promoting hormone that is part of the fight-or-flight sympathetic nervous system. I would definitely avoid it close to bedtime if you have problems with sleep." — Dr. Robert S. Rosenberg, board-certified sleep medicine physician and author of the book *Sleep Soundly Every Night, Feel Fantastic Every Day*

Bacon Cheese Burger Sliders

"I will not eat bacon cheese sliders. The foundation of the slider is a **hamburger** patty. Red meat is high in saturated fats, pro-inflammatory, and increases colon cancer risk. Cheese and bacon may add deliciousness, but also increase saturated fat intake. **Bacon** is particularly high in sodium, which can lead to high blood pressure and nitrates that convert to nitrosamine (a potential cancer-causing agent) when heated. Buns are high in carbohydrates, which are broken down quickly in the digestive tract. Those two pieces of bread holding everything together cause blood sugars to spike, increasing your risk for developing diabetes. And we haven't even discussed condiments. Still want that slider?" — Dr. James Pinckney, a board-certified physician and founder and CEO of Diamond Physicians in Dallas, Texas



Commercial Baked Goods



I won't touch commercial baked goods (doughnuts, cookies, cakes), potato chips, deep-fried foods, or **frozen pizza**. Why did I lump these into one category? These all contain trans-fats. Trans-fats are a partially hydrogenated oil. What's that? **Vegetable oil** that has gone through an industrial process to add hydrogen to it, making it more solid and giving it a longer shelf life. Good for manufacturers, bad for you. In a nutshell, trans-fats have been shown to increase your LDL cholesterol (bad cholesterol) and lower your HDL cholesterol (good cholesterol), thereby increasing your risk of heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. Check your food labels and avoid

anything with hydrogenated oils or partially hydrogenated vegetable oils." — Dr. Joos Meyer, CEO of PRYMD, a nutritional supplement and lifestyle company

Energy-Boosting Cocktails



"The food I would never touch is **Red Bull** and other energy drinks — especially mixed energy drinks like Red Bull and **vodka**. They're terrible in terms of their acidity and extremely full of sugar, which is bad for the teeth, but also very low in nutritional value. They contain many additives, such as caffeine and taurine." — Gregory Cumberland, DDS, GPR

Pig-in-a-Blanket



"Perhaps the most quintessential party food you'll encounter is **pigs in a blanket**. A favorite just about everywhere it's served, it carries a whopping 460 calories per serving. That's about six or so "pigs" (who can eat just one?). I do my waistline a favor by avoiding the temptation. For a better alternative that will prove just as popular, serve **turkey meatballs**." — Dr. Joe Alton, co-author of *The Survival Medicine Handbook*

Potato Chips



"**Potato chips** are an inexpensive, tasty, and easily available snack that take an immense toll on your body. Chips are high in fat and calories; a serving of 15 chips will have in excess of 150 calories. On top of this, they are low on nutrition and tend to displace things in the diet that are higher in nutrients. The high sodium content in chips can result in high blood pressure, which can lead to a stroke, heart failure, and kidney diseases. Frequent consumption of chips can also cause **high cholesterol levels**. Most chips are deep-fried, a process that creates trans-fats, which are also dangerous. Things get even worse when you add dips such as chili cheese or

spinach and artichoke to the equation." — Dr. Khurram Shafiq Khan, MD and PhD, Sheikh Zaid Hospital in Lahore, Pakistan

Sodas



"**Soft drinks** are absolutely one of the most awful things that you can consume. They are full of calories and have zero nutritional value. They promote **obesity** and a sedentary lifestyle." — **Dr Kevin R. Campbell**

Spinach Artichoke Dip



"Spinach and artichoke **dip** sounds healthy, but is made with mozzarella, **Parmigiano-Reggiano**, and cream cheese. It's high in fat and calories." — Dr. Debra Jaliman, board-certified New York City dermatologist and author of *Skin Rules: Trade Secrets From a Top New York Dermatologist*

Vienna Sausages



"**Vienna sausages** are full of processed meats and meat byproducts, as well as nitrites and other known carcinogens. These bite-size snacks still pack a powerful punch when it comes to health risks. A much healthier option is an antipasto **skewer** with lean ham, turkey, and natural cheeses." — Dr. David Greuner