Increasingly Indulgent Menus Entice Diners to Pig Out By JAYNE HURLEY & BONNIE LIEBMAN

hinking of eating out? Think of it as filling up...and filling out.

It's been more than a decade since we analyzed popular dishes from Chinese, Italian, and other restaurants. The numbers were shocking: the worst dishes had more than 1,000 calories, a day's worth of saturated fat, and a day's sodium.

Yet by today's standards, they appear almost tame. Restaurants now dish out even more calories, even more bad fat, and even more sodium.

How is that possible? Some items are bigger. Others are cheesier. Still others fuse two or more dishes into one megafood. Welcome to the land of the bacon-cheeseburger pizza, the buffalo-chicken quesadilla, and the peanut-butter-cookie-dough-chocolate cheesecake.

Here's a smattering of some of the most extreme restaurant dishes we could

find numbers for. (And you can bet we didn't find them listed on the menus, where they *should* be.)

For a little comic relief, keep in mind that most people should eat no more than 2,000 calories and 20 grams of bad fat—saturated plus trans—in an entire day. And you need to cap the sodium at 1,500 milligrams a day if you're middle-aged or older, or 2,300 mg if you're a younger adult.

The information for this article was compiled by Heather Jones.

A Colossal Mistake

Two huge hamburger patties, a threesection bun, and melted American and Monterey Jack cheese, all piled so high that it comes to the table with a steak knife plunged through the middle.

Meet the **Ruby Tuesday Colossal Burger**. Its 1,940 calories vacuum up
your 2,000-calorie daily target. And that
doesn't include the sauce or the fries that
come on the side.

The burger delivers 141 grams of fat. How much of it is the *bad* kind (saturated or trans)? The company won't say. (It's also mum about sodium.) But since most of the Colossal's fat comes from its beef and cheese, odds are that between 50 and 75 of its fat grams would make your heart shudder.

Are they kidding? Working through a Colossal Burger is like eating four or five McDonald's Quarter Pounders.

Ruby's other burgers are bad enough, with roughly 1,000 to 1,300 calories each. Even the Veggie Burger tops 900. But the Colossal seems like a dare: can you finish one without needing a paramedic?

UNO, Dos, Trash

From Buffalo

wings to fried moz-

zarella sticks to cheese fries to stuffed potato skins, appetizers are the most treacherous territory on a restaurant menu.

Gone are the shrimp cocktails and consommés of yesteryear. Diners now prepare for their entrées by plowing through massive platters that hold 1,000 to 3,000 calories' worth of fat-laden fare. Even if you share with two or three tablemates, you're essentially eating dinner *before* your dinner reaches the table.

Case in point: the geniuses at **UNO Chicago Grill** have created an appetizer that fuses pizza with the makings of stuffed potato skins.

"We start with our famous deep dish crust, add mozzarella and red bliss mashed potatoes, and top it off with crispy bacon, cheddar and sour cream," says the menu. Voilà! **Pizza Skins**.

Voilà! Some 2,050 calories that harbor 48 grams of saturated fat and 3,140 milligrams of sodium. ("We start with a Pizza Hut Personal Pan Pepperoni Pizza, add two more Personal Pan Pepperoni Pizzas, and top it off with three pats of butter," is how UNO should put it.) And under all that fat are the refined carbs from the pizza's white flour and the potatoes.

Ready for your entrée now?

Stacked Against You

Quesadillas are bad enough. At your typical Mexican restaurant, the two plate-sized (white) flour tortillas stuffed with melted cheese and with sour cream and guacamole on the side can run you 900 calories and 25 grams of saturated fat.

Some places add steak or chicken, bringing the damage to roughly 1,400 calories and 40+ grams of sat fat. It's like eating three grilled cheese sandwiches.

On The Border doesn't stop there.
Its Double-Stacked

Club Quesadillas pile

on the makings of a club sand-

wich. They're "stacked with fajita chicken, cheese, crumbled bacon, [and] fresh avocado," and come with sour cream and ranch dressing. Drum roll, please: 1,860 calories, 52 grams of sat fat, and 3,440 milligrams of sodium. That's worse than two orders of Cheese Nachos.

Order the Double-Stacked Club Quesadillas often enough and, someday, Double-Stacked may describe the state of your midsection.

Angioplasta

"Fresh, pulled white meat chicken, fresh steamed broccoli and penne pasta, tossed in parmesan cream sauce. Topped with Wisconsin cheddar cheese, then baked," says **Ruby Tuesday**'s menu. Some patrons may know that the cheese and cream in the **Fresh Chicken & Broccoli Pasta** add saturated fat, but how much harm could they do?

Enough to turn the dish into a 2,060-calorie megameal



with 128 grams of fat. Since the fat is mostly dairy, roughly 60 to 70 of those fat grams are probably the bad (saturated) kind. And that's without Ruby's garlic toast.

To hit 2,060 calories, you'd have to swallow two sirloin steak dinners—with Caesar salad and buttered baked potato.

The difference: after their "wholesome" chicken and broccoli, diners may assume that they deserve dessert.



Raunchiladas

Remember when an 8-oz. steak, a baked potato, and green beans were considered dinner? Don't be embarrassed. Many of us are old enough to remember those skimpy, "you-call-this-dinner?" meals.

At **On The Border**, the 8-oz. steak in the **Ranchiladas** comes smothered in ranchero sauce and cheese. Next to it sit two cheese enchiladas, chile con carne, rice, and either refried or black beans (both with cheese).

Now you're talking. To be precise, you're talking 1,870 calories, 46 grams of saturated fat, and 3,810 milligrams of sodium. (That's with the refried beans. The black beans shave off a bit here and there, but with totals like these, who's counting?)

Now *that's* a meal that should hold you until dessert.

And since you're at a Mexican restaurant, you don't have to sit at your table, practically *starving* while you wait for your order. You can munch on the all-you-can-eat tortilla chips and salsa... or order a 2,000-calorie appetizer like nachos with cheese, ground beef, guacamole, and sour cream to tide you over until your Ranchiladas arrive.

It's just too bad they can't offer you a snack to eat on your way in from the parking lot.

Stone Cold

Remember when it was a big deal to walk out of your local ice cream shoppe with a scoop of butter pecan or fudge ripple in your sugar cone with sprinkles on top? With half a day's saturated fat, it was a splurge. But at least you could get away with, say, 300 calories.

Then came waffle cones (160 calories) and chocolatedipped waffle cones (320 calories) that looked silly without at least two scoops of ice cream (600 calories). But 1,000 calories and a day's saturated fat soon seemed run-of-themill to some folks.

Enter **Cold Stone Creamery**, where you choose which combination of more than 30 candies, cookie pieces, and other morsels gets mixed into your ice cream and (for less than \$1 more) scooped into a chocolate-dipped waffle bowl.

Take a Gotta Have It **Founder's Favorite**. ("Gotta Have It" is Cold Stone-ese for a large. "Love It" is a medium, and

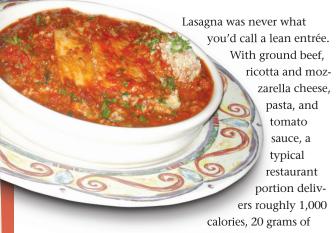
Into your waffle bowl goes not just a 14-ounce, softballsized mound of ice cream, but pecans, brownie pieces, fudge,

fat, and 4 grams of trans fat. That's roughly what you'd get if you polished off five single-scoop ice cream cones.

Gotta Have It now...Gotta Lose It next week.

"Like It" is a small.) and caramel. What? No Oreos, Reese's Pieces, or Gummi Bears? The tab: a startling 1,740 calories, 48 grams of saturated

Lasagna Overload



saturated fat, and 2,000 milligrams of sodium.

But some restaurants have beefed up the alreadyheavy dish. At Romano's Macaroni Grill, the result is Twice Baked Lasagna with Meatballs—"six layers of tender pasta stuffed with seasoned meatballs, three cheeses and Bolognese sauce."

Stuffed with 1,360 calories, 38 grams of sat fat, and 3,900 mg of sodium, that is. Never mind that the dish is worse than five pork chops. Or that the numbers don't include the bread that comes on the side.

Why stop there? Maybe next year, some enterprising Italian restaurant will offer up a LaFredo Pie—lasagna with meatballs on a bed of fettuccine alfredo, all sitting atop a sausage & pepperoni pizza.

Factory Reject

Back in the day, choosing a dessert from the menu was tough. Did you want, say, cake or pie or ice cream or cheesecake? Today, you don't have to bother picking one dessert over another. Restaurants simply pile one on top of the other for you.

Take The Cheesecake Factory Chris's Outrageous **Chocolate Cake**. The "Cheesecake Factory Original" has "layers of moist chocolate cake, chewy brownie, toasted coconut pecan filling, and creamy chocolate chip coconut cheesecake." And they're not thin layers, either. Each five-inch-high slice weighs three-quarters of a pound.

Speaking of pounds, that slice has 1,380 calories and 32 teaspoons of sugar—quite reasonable for four des-

exit, your arteries are the proud possessors of 33 grams of saturated fat and 5 grams of trans fat they didn't have when you walked in.

It's as though you had ordered two Quarter Pounders plus a large fries for dessert.

