

## 70 Most Popular Sodas Ranked by How Toxic They Are

Source: *MSN Lifestyle*



Although we call them “beer bellies,” new science says we ought to call our bloated midsections what they really are: soda bellies. In a study of about 1,000 adults over the course of six years, people who drank soda or other sugar-sweetened beverages gained an extra 1.8 pounds of visceral fat—the fat that sits inside your gut, damaging your internal organs and pushing your belly out into a King of the Hill–style slouch. To put that in perspective, 1.8 pounds is about how much a fetus weighs at 24 weeks. This means you can go from your lean, slim self to looking like you’re in your second trimester just by drinking a daily soda, sweetened iced tea, or fruit punch. (Talk about a punch to the gut!) But instead of carrying a bundle of joy, you’re carrying a bundle of toxic fat; Visceral fat has been shown to increase your risk of heart disease, stroke and diabetes, among other ills.

Why is soda so good at making us look bad? It’s the sugar. The USDA issued new guidelines in early 2016, recommending no more than 180 sugar calories per day for women (and 200 for men). This is the equivalent of approximately 45 grams of sugar—an amount that many sodas and other sweetened beverages exceed in just one can. And if it’s not sugar, then it’s artificial sweetener, which is 180 times sweeter than sugar and just as damaging to your waistline.

Here, we’ve ranked the 70 most popular sodas: Category 1 has 32 regular (non-diet) sodas, and Category 2 has 38 diet sodas. Click through to see where your favorites fall—and then find out what else is on the list of 50 Little Things Making You Fatter and Fatter.

## Category 1: Regular Sodas—Ranked!

Eat This, Not That! took the most popular sodas on the market into our Food Lab. First, we ordered them by calories, carbs and sugar. Then, we examined each can's ingredients and gave demerits to sodas with more chemicals and additives than those that were nutritionally similar. We also did a major analysis of top diet sodas, which are in Category 2. Here in category 1 are regular sodas ranked from worst-to-best. (Although, "best" still doesn't mean healthy!)

### 32. Fanta Grape

12 fl oz, 180 calories, 48 g carbs, 48 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Natural Flavors, Tartaric Acid, Potassium Sorbate and Sodium Benzoate (to Protect Taste), Citric Acid, Red 40, Blue 1

Liquefy a bag of Skittles and you'd still have to add 6 grams of sugar to equal the sweetness of this can of corn syrup, citric acid and artificial colors. In fact, that bag of Skittles has the exact same ingredients, including Red 40, which Canadian researchers found to be contaminated with known carcinogens. Even without its unsettling origin story—the Coca-Cola company created Fanta to profit in Germany when Nazis forbid the importation of USA-made Coke—this would still be the absolute worst soda in America!

### 31. Stewart's Black Cherry Wishniak

12 fl oz, 190 calories, 46 g carbs, 46 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Natural and Artificial Flavor, Citric Acid, Sodium Benzoate, Caramel Color, Red 40, Blue 1

With more sugar than seven Chewy Chips Ahoy cookies, Stewart's Black Cherry would be a "Not That!" because of the sweetness alone—it's the most caloric on this list. And, like many of the soda on this list, it also contains caramel coloring. This additive wouldn't be dangerous if you made it the old-fashioned way—with water and sugar, on top of a stove. But the food industry follows a different recipe: They treat sugar with ammonia, which can produce some nasty carcinogens. A Center for Science in the Public Interest report asserted that the high levels of caramel color found in soda account for roughly 15,000 cancers in the U.S. annually.

### 30. Dr. Brown's Black Cherry

12 fl oz, 180 calories, 45 g carbs, 45 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Cherry And Other Natural Flavors, Citric Acid, Caramel Color, Sodium Benzoate (Preservative), and Artificial Color (Red 40)

With just one less gram of sugar than Stewart's Black Cherry, Dr. Brown's Black Cherry would horrify most doctors—and not just because of the sugar. Like Stewart's—and many of the

colored sodas here—this one has the artificial color Red 40, which is it ranks lower than our next entry, despite having less sugar. Don't get down with Brown.

## 29. A&W Cream Soda

12 fl oz, 180 calories, 48 g carbs, 48 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup and/or Sugar, Sodium Benzoate (preservative), Natural and Artificial Flavors, Caramel Color, Citric Acid, Flavored with Vanilla Extract, Caffeine.

A&W traffics heavily in the nostalgia of the roadside restaurant—the company created the nation's first chain of them in 1923. But their cream soda is a car crash of HFCS and artificial colors and flavors. This is not your grandparent's soda, in the worst way possible.

## 28. Mug Cream Soda

12 fl oz, 180 calories, 47 g carbs, 47 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Natural and Artificial Flavors, Sodium Benzoate (Preserves Freshness), Citric Acid, Caramel Color, Calcium Disodium EDTA (to protect flavor)

Speaking of cream, you'd have to down 12 servings of Redi-Whip to equal the calorie count of Mug Cream Soda (distributed by Pepsi)—and would still need to eat 12 Hershey's Kisses on top of that to equal the sugar count.

## 27. A&W Root Beer

12 fl oz, 180 calories, 46 g carbs, 46 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup and/or Sugar, Caramel Color, Sodium Benzoate (preservative), Natural and Artificial Flavors

You gotta love that ingredients list: This American classic might have sugar and HFCS. Throw in two scoops of vanilla ice cream to make a Root Beer float and you have more than two day's worth of sugar in one chilled mug.

## 26. Mountain Dew—tie

12 fl oz, 170 calories, 46 g carbs, 46 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Concentrated Orange Juice, Citric Acid, Natural Flavor, Sodium Benzoate (Preserves Freshness), Caffeine, Sodium Citrate, Erythorbic Acid (Preserves Freshness), Gum Arabic, Calcium Disodium EDTA (To Protect Flavor), Brominated Vegetable Oil, Yellow 5

There's flame retardant in your Mountain Dew. That soda with the lime-green hue (and other citrus-flavored bubbly pops) won't keep your insides fireproof, but it does contain brominated vegetable oil, a patented flame retardant for plastics that has been banned in foods throughout Europe and in Japan. Brominated vegetable oil, or BVO, which acts as an emulsifier in citrus-flavored soda drinks, is found in about 10 percent of sodas sold in the U.S. "After a few extreme soda binges - not too far from what many [video] gamers regularly consume - a few patients have needed medical attention for skin lesions, memory loss and nerve disorders, all symptoms of overexposure to bromine," according to an article in Environmental News.

## **26. Mountain Dew Code Red—tie**

12 fl oz, 170 calories, 46 g carbs, 46 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Orange Juice Concentrate, Citric Acid, Sodium Hexametaphosphate, Sodium Benzoate, Natural Flavor, Caffeine, Sodium Citrate, Gum Arabic, Calcium Disodium EDTA, Red 40, Brominated Vegetable Oil, Yellow 5, Blue 1

As we said, Europe and Japan have already banned the flame retardant brominated vegetable oil (BVO) out of their bubbly beverages. Code Red!

## **25. Dr. Brown's Cream Soda**

12 fl oz, 180 calories, 44 g carbs, 44 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Natural And Artificial Flavors, Sodium Benzoate (Preservative), Citric Acid, Caramel Color.

With more calories than a Mountain Dew (though with less artificial colors, thus its better ranking), this Cream would make even Prince blush.

## **24. Dr. Brown's Root Beer**

12 fl oz, 170 calories, 42 g carbs, 42 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Caramel Color, Natural And Artificial Flavors, Sodium Benzoate (Preservative), Gum Acacia, Citric Acid, Caffeine Free  
You know when you add some Mentos to a two-liter Diet Coke and the whole thing explodes? (Don't try that at home.) That's thanks to the Gum Acacia in the candy, which also in this soda—it's a natural emulsifier. Despite its weird name, is probably this most natural ingredient in this sugar juice.

## **23. Surge**

12 fl oz, 172 calories, 46.5 g carbs, 42 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Maltodextrin, Citric Acid, Natural Flavors, Orange Juice Concentrate, Potassium Benzoate (To Protect Taste), Potassium Citrate, Caffeine, Calcium Disodium Edta (To Protect Taste), Yellow 5, Yellow 6, Carob Bean Gum, Blue 1

It's not uncommon for "sodium and potassium benzoate are added to some diet soft drinks and fruit drinks," Leslie Bonci, R.D. tells Eat This, Not That! Unfortunately—especially because Surge contains OJ—"they can form benzene, which is a carcinogen when combined with vitamin C, the ascorbic acid in juice or soda," she says.

## 22. Mello-Yello

12 fl oz, 170 calories, 47 g carbs, 47 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Concentrated Orange Juice, Citric Acid, Natural Flavors, Sodium Benzoate And Edta (To Protect Taste), Potassium Citrate, Caffeine, Yellow 5, Carob Bean Gum

In addition to sky-high sugar and calorie counts, this citrus soda is laced with the preservative sodium benzoate. Though studies show that when consumed in small amounts the chemical poses no risk, when combined with vitamin C (as it is in Mello-Yello) it can form benzene, a cancer-causing substance. Don't let your Yello Mello.

## 21. Sunkist

12 fl oz, 162 calories, 44.4 g carbs, 43.2 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Citric Acid, Sodium Benzoate (preservative), Modified Corn Starch, Natural Flavors, Caffeine, Ester Gum, Yellow 6, Red 40

What do you get when you combine carbonated water with High Fructose Corn Syrup and a host of hard-to-pronounce chemicals? This citrus-inspired sip. It gets its alluring orange color from Yellow 5 and Red 40. A Journal of Pediatrics study linked Yellow 5 to hyperactivity in children and Canadian researchers found Red 40 to be contaminated with known carcinogens.

## 20. Barq's Root Beer

12 fl oz, 160 calories, 45 g carbs, 45 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Caramel Color, Sodium Benzoate (To Protect Taste), Citric Acid, Caffeine, Artificial And Natural Flavors, Acacia.

Barq's Root Beer falls toward the middle of the pack regarding carbs, sugar and has a slightly less horrifying chemical profile than its competition. It's better than A+W Root Beer but slightly worse than Mug.

## 19. Fanta Orange

12 fl oz, 160 calories, 45 g carbs, 44 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Citric Acid, Sodium Benzoate (To Protect Taste), Natural Flavors, Modified Food Starch, Sodium Polyphosphates, Glycerol Ester Of Rosin, Yellow 6, Red 40

I don't know about you, but after a long day of hard work and play, I like to sit back and relax and crack open a can of Glycerol Ester Of Rosin. The wood resin is added to many fruit sodas to help the fruit-flavored oils mix better with the water. While it's not necessarily harmful, let us repeat: you're drinking oil and water, sold to you by Coke.

## 18. Orange Crush

12 fl oz, 160 calories, 43 g carbs, 43 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Citric Acid, Sodium Benzoate (Preservative), Acacia Gum, Natural Flavors, Ester Gum, Yellow 6, Brominated Soybean Oil, Red 40 Orange Crush has the same nutritionals as our next soda, Mug's Root Beer, but we're docking it points for the Brominated Soybean Oil, which, as we've said, is crushing stuff.

## 17. Mug's Root Beer

12 fl oz, 160 calories, 43 g carbs, 43 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Caramel Color, Sodium Benzoate (preserves freshness), Citric Acid, Natural and Artificial Flavors, Modified Food Starch, Calcium Disodium EDTA (to protect flavor), Quillaia Extract

Quillaia extract? The best (and worst) part of researching these sodas in the Eat This, Not That! Food Lab is coming across the weird ingredients soda manufacturers (in this case, Pepsi) add to their concoctions. Quillaia is another tree bark, and it helps your root beer foam up. Be more scared of the sugar here—you're basically drinking four root beer-flavored Dum Dums mixed with additives.

## 16. Wild Cherry Pepsi

12 fl oz, 160 calories, 42 g carbs, 42 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Caramel Color, Phosphoric Acid, Natural Flavor, Caffeine, Citric Acid

Nothing wild here—just the same ingredients as most sodas, and as much sugar as more than three cups of cherries (without containing any cherries).

## 15. Crush Grapefruit

12 fl oz, 160 calories, 42 g carbs, 41 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Citric Acid, Natural Flavors, Sodium Benzoate (preservative), Acacia Gum, Ester Gum, Calcium Disodium EDTA (to protect flavor)

Our childhood nostalgia is crushed: This kid favorite-brand has no actual grapefruit. On the bright side, it has no BVO.!

## 14. Stewart's Root Beer

12 fl oz, 160 calories, 41 g carbs, 41 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Caramel Color, Natural and Artificial Flavors, Sodium Benzoate (preservative), Citric Acid, Quillaia Extract, Gum Acacia, Yucca Extract

If you wouldn't eat three and half bowls of Apple Jacks then you should stay away from this root beer. That's the sugar equivalent of what's in a 12-ounce can.

## 13. Cherry Coca-Cola

12 fl oz, 150 calories, 42 g carbs, 42 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Caramel Color, Phosphoric Acid, Natural Flavors, Caffeine

As we near the top ten, you'll notice the oils and artificial flavors disappearing and see some of the most popular sodas for what they really are: carbonated water, HSFC, some acids and little else. This classic—once made with real cherry juice—is, unfortunately, a variation on a common blend. It's like finding out your cool dad worked in accounting all along.

## 12. Pepsi-Cola

12 fl oz, 150 calories, 41 g carbs, 41 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Caramel Color, Sugar, Phosphoric Acid, Caffeine, Citric Acid, Natural Flavor

The perennial #2 in the cola wars carries 5 grams more sugar than a 3 Musketeers bar and 1 gram more carbs. Let that sink in: One of America's most popular sodas has that much sugar.

## 11. Pepsi Real Sugar

12 fl oz, 150 calories, 40 g carbs, 40 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, Sugar, Caramel Color, Phosphoric Acid, Caffeine, Natural Flavor

Sugar is the master of disguise. Maltodextrin, brown rice syrup, dextrose, sucrose—it's got more alter egos than the Avengers. But it's most well-known costume, as you know after reading this far, is High Fructose Corn Syrup. Pepsi's hoping you forget it's all the same sweet stuff, heavily marketing this new brand formulated with sugar and no HFCS. But in a 2014 review of five studies comparing the effects of sugar and HFCS, there was no difference found in changes in blood glucose levels, lipid levels, or appetite between table sugar consumption and HFCS consumption. In other words, your body can't tell one from the other—they're both just sugar.

## 10. Pibb Xtra

12 fl oz, 140 calories, 39 g carbs, 39 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Caramel Color, Phosphoric Acid, Potassium Sorbate And Potassium Benzoate (To Protect Taste), Artificial And Natural Flavors, Caffeine, Monosodium Phosphate, Lactic Acid, Polyethylene Glycol.

A “spicy” cherry soda found mostly in the South—or in Coke Freestyle machines—Pibb Xtra contains propylene glycol, a preservative, thickening agent, and stabilizer, also used as antifreeze to de-ice airplanes, as a plasticizer to make polyester resins, and found in electronic cigarettes. The soda ranks well because of its calorie count, but we can't recommend you drink it!

## 9. 7Up Cherry

12 fl oz, 140 calories, 39 g carbs, 38 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Citric Acid, Filtered Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Natural Flavors, Potassium Benzoate (preservative), Red 40

No caramel color—ranking goes up! Red 40—ranking goes down.

## 8. Coca-Cola Classic

12 fl oz, 140 calories, 39 g carbs, 39 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Caramel Color, Phosphoric Acid, Natural Flavors, Caffeine.

Eat This, Not That! has been after Coca-Cola since our inception, because the company itself is responsible for the HFCS-filled Sprite, Barq's, Fanta, Dr. Pepper, Fuze Tea, Powerade, Monster



energy drinks and more—not to mention the sugary “VitaminWater.” Yet the company’s flagship drink is less harmful than most of the soda’s on this list. That doesn’t mean you should drink it. It means you shouldn’t drink soda. For a healthier buzz without the preservatives, drink tea.

## 7. 7Up

12 fl oz, 140 calories, 39 g carbs, 38 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Filtered Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Citric Acid, Potassium Citrate, Natural Flavors, Calcium Disodium EDTA (to protect flavor)

Best part of clear sodas: no caramel color. Worst part: They’re still sodas, and otherwise contain the same ingredients as the rest. This classic, now distributed by the Dr. Pepper Snapple Group, has lost market share since its 80s heyday, but remains a crisp drink that’s not much better than a Coke.

## 6. Sprite

12 fl oz, 140 calories, 38 g carbs, 38 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Citric Acid, Natural Flavors, Sodium Citrate, Sodium Benzoate (To Protect Taste).

Promoted by the coolest athletes, Sprite has the marketing down—and a calorie count slightly lower than the other citric sodas on this list. But we can’t imagine LeBron and friends guzzling a can of carbonated corn syrup before a game.

## 5. Canada Dry Ginger Ale

12 fl oz, 140 calories, 36 g carbs, 35 g sugar

**Ingredients:** \*Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Citric Acid, Sodium Benzoate (Preservative), Natural Flavors, Caramel Color

Our moms used to give this to us when we had a tummy ache. Now as adults, we get a tummy ache looking at it. Blame Canada. Their tagline is “Real Ginger, Real Taste” but the main ingredients here are carbonated water and HSFC. But with lower calories than the rest, it ranks well on this ignominious list.

## 4. Dr. Brown's Cel Ray

12 fl oz, 140 calories, 34 g carbs, 34 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Citric Acid, Extract of Celery Seed with other Natural Flavors, Sodium Benzoate (Preservative) and Caramel Color.

The healthiest-sounding soda on this list nearly is. But unfortunately for the fans of Jewish delis everywhere, Cel Ray blends actual celery seed extract with HFCS.

### 3. Schweppes Ginger Ale

12 fl oz, 120 calories, 33 g carbs, 32 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Citric Acid, Sodium Benzoate (preservative), Quinine, Natural Flavors

Don't worry about the quinine—commonly associated with treating malaria, it's also the main ingredient in harmless tonic water. No, instead fear this drinks common mixer. Despite being near the top of this list, it still has as much HFCS-derived sugar as 10 croissants. At least there are any artificial flavors (nor ginger, unfortunately).

### 2. Seagram's Ginger Ale

12 fl oz, 100 calories, 26 g carbs, 26 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Citric Acid, Natural Flavors, Potassium Sorbate (To Protect Taste), Caramel Color, Sodium Benzoate (To Protect Taste), Sucralose

This is the #2 least-worst soda, with a big caveat: Lisa Moskovitz, R.D., founder of The NY Nutrition Group, says "...high fructose corn syrup, which has been shown to increase appetite and, over time, lead to health problems such as obesity and diabetes." Yeah, yeah, you knew it was bad, but hear us again: HFCS is bad! Still, Seagram's Ginger Ale has a lower calorie count than most, thanks to the artificial sweetener sucralose.

### And coming in at #1. Sierra Mist

12 fl oz, 120 calories, 30 g carbs, 29 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, Sugar, Citric Acid, Natural Flavor, Potassium Sorbate (preserves freshness), Purified Stevia Leaf Extract

In a contest of sugar waters filled with additives, there is no winner. Sierra Mist has as many calories as a pack of Now and Laters, and only 7 grams less sugar. Still, it comes in at #1 on this list because it contains no artificial flavors, and uses the sweetener Stevia Leaf Extract, which, although still under review, comes from plants, and could prove key to solving America's obesity epidemic by satisfying our sweet tooth without adding calories.

### Category 2: Diet Sodas—Ranked!

Diet soda isn't really any better than regular because their artificial sweeteners are sweeter than sugar, resulting in a host of health issues (and weight gain). Diet sodas also harm the immune

system because their acidity causes havoc with our gut bacteria. And the caramel coloring in many sodas contains an artificial form of phosphorous that's been shown to leach calcium from our bones.

But while every diet soda is bad for you, some are clearly worse than others. The team at Eat This, Not That! took 38 brands into our Food Lab, and pored over the ingredients of the most popular diet sodas in America. Read on to discover where your favorite cola landed—and discover our surprising #1 pick, which might become your new go-to.

How we ranked them: First, we measured the amount of artificial sweetener in each soda, paying special attention to aspartame, the most pervasive sweetener. The low-calorie sugar alternative, made by joining two amino acids with an alcohol, is 180 times sweeter than sugar—and the subject of controversy. Some researchers claim to have linked aspartame to brain tumors and lymphoma, but the FDA insists the sweetener is safe(ish) for humans. We gave demerits to diet sodas with high aspartame counts. We also docked points for high levels of ingredients you wouldn't expect in your beverage—like vegetable oils and tree bark—and gave high marks to new brands with more natural blends.

These are the top 38 diet sodas—ranked!—from worst to best.

### **38. Diet Mountain Dew**

12 fl oz, 0 calories, 50 mg sodium

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, Concentrated Orange Juice, Citric Acid, Natural Flavors, Citrus Pectin, Potassium Benzoate (Preserves Freshness), Aspartame, Potassium Citrate, Caffeine, Sodium Citrate, Acesulfame Potassium, Sucralose, Gum Arabic, Sodium Benzoate (Preserves Freshness), Calcium Disodium EDTA (to Protect Flavor), Brominated Vegetable Oil, Yellow 5.

There's flame retardant in your Mountain Dew. That soda with the lime-green hue (and other citrus-flavored bubbly pops) won't keep your insides fireproof, but it does contain brominated vegetable oil, a patented flame retardant for plastics that has been banned in foods throughout Europe and in Japan. Brominated vegetable oil, or BVO, which acts as an emulsifier in citrus-flavored soda drinks, is found in about 10 percent of sodas sold in the U.S. “After a few extreme soda binges - not too far from what many [video] gamers regularly consume - a few patients have needed medical attention for skin lesions, memory loss and nerve disorders, all symptoms of overexposure to bromine,” according to an article in Environmental News. Don't do the Dew: It's the Worst Diet Soda in the World!

### **37. Tab**

12 fl oz, 0 calories, 0 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, Caramel Color, Natural Flavors, Phosphoric Acid, Calcium Saccharin, Potassium Benzoate (To Protect Taste), Caffeine, Aspartame.

Introduced in 1963—for people keeping “tabs” on their weight—TaB was Coke’s first calorie-free soda and the first to draw outcry because of its artificial sweetener. Between 1997 and 2000, the FDA mandated that saccharin-containing products carry a label warning consumers about the risk of cancer, due largely to the development of bladder tumors in saccharin-consuming rats. Saccharin still isn’t in the clear. One recent study funded by Purdue and the National Institute of Health showed that rats with a saccharin-rich diet gained more weight than those with high-sugar diets. Eat This, Not That!’s official stance? Avoid.

### 36. Fresca Original Citrus

12 fl oz, 0 calories, 0 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, Citric Acid, Concentrated Grapefruit Juice, Potassium Citrate, Potassium Sorbate, Potassium Benzoate and EDTA (to Protect Taste), Aspartame, Acesulfame Potassium, Acacia, Natural Flavors, Glycerol Ester of Rosin, Brominated Vegetable Oil, Carob Bean Gum.

I don’t know about you, but after a long day of hard work and play, I like to sit back and relax and crack open a can of Glycerol Ester Of Rosin. The wood resin is added to many fruit sodas to help the fruit-flavored oils mix better with the water. While it’s not necessarily harmful, let us repeat: you’re drinking oil and water, sold to you by Coke. Plus, this one has BVO.

### 35. Coca-Cola Life

12 fl oz, 90 calories, 24 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, Cane Sugar, Caramel Color, Natural Flavors, Phosphoric Acid, Potassium Benzoate (To Protect Taste), Caffeine, Stevia Leaf Extract.

If you think you’re doing yourself a favor by opting for Coca-Cola’s sugar- and stevia-sweetened beverage, Coke Life, over the traditional red can, you might want to take a closer look at the nutrition label. Its natural packaging is there to distract you from the cold, hard facts: A 12-ounce can of the stuff contains 24 grams of sugar, which is especially troubling given the recent World Health Organization recommendation to reduce our daily sugar intake to about 25 grams a day to most effectively ward off obesity, heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. (A regular can of Coke has 39g.) In fact, the green can packs in as much sugar as you’ll get from downing three Apple n Spice Donuts from Dunkin’ Donuts!

### 34. Pepsi True

12 fl oz., 60 calories, 16 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, Sugar, Caramel Color, Phosphoric Acid, Natural Flavor, Caffeine, Purified Stevia Leaf Extract

Pepsi's answer to Coca-Cola Life—also made with pure sugar and Stevia Leaf extract—says it's "all the fun you love about Pepsi with 30% less sugar than regular Pepsi." They forgot to add it also has 100% more sugar than you should be drinking out of a can. (Although, hey, at least it has 8 grams less than Life.)

### **33. Pepsi Next**

12 fl oz, 60 calories, 15 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Caramel Color, Sugar, Phosphoric Acid, Sodium Citrate, Natural Flavor, Potassium Sorbate (preserves freshness), Caffeine, Sucralose, Citric Acid, Acesulfame Potassium.

If you love Pepsi True—but wish it had more High Fructose Corn Syrup—this is the soda for you!

### **32. RC Ten**

12 fl oz, 10 calories, 3 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Caramel Color, Phosphoric Acid, Potassium Citrate, Aspartame, Natural and Artificial Flavors, Potassium Benzoate (protects Flavor), Caffeine, Citric Acid, Acesulfame Potassium, Acacia Gum, Sucralose

Only the soda companies could blend two evils—High Fructose Corn Syrup and artificial sweeteners—and market it as a healthier choice. The Ten line does just that. "Both Ten and a zero-calorie brand are bad," Isabel Smith, MS, RD, CDN, registered dietitian, tells Eat This, Not That!, "but for the sake of fewer bad ingredients, the zero-calorie is better." Especially when it comes to RC: This one has more sugar than the other Tens—and caramel color is the third ingredient.

### **31. Dr. Pepper Ten**

12 fl oz, 12 calories, 2.4 g sugar

**\*\*Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Caramel Color, Phosphoric Acid, Aspartame, Sodium Benzoate (preservative), Caffeine, Natural and Artificial Flavors, Acesulfame Potassium, Sodium Phosphate.

Shocker: This Ten has more than ten calories!

### **30. Sunkist Ten**

12 fl oz, 10 calories, 2 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Citric Acid, Sodium Citrate, Malic Acid, Sodium Benzoate (preservative), Aspartame, Modified Food Starch, Natural Flavors, Acesulfame Potassium, Caffeine, Ester Gum, Yellow 6, Red 40

The artificial colors alone sunk this Sunkist. But you're also drinking modified food starch—a catch-all term describing starches (derived from corn, wheat, potato or rice) that are modified to change their response to heat or cold and improve their texture. The starches themselves appear safe, but the nondisclosure of the chemicals used in processing causes some nutritionists to question their effects on health.

## 29. A&W Ten

12 fl oz, 10 calories, 2 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Caramel Color, Sodium Benzoate (preservative), Natural and Artificial Flavors, Aspartame, Acesulfame Potassium, Malic Acid, Quillaia Extract

Quillaia extract? The best (and worst) part of researching these sodas in the Eat This, Not That! Food Lab is coming across the weird ingredients soda manufacturers (in this case, Pepsi) add to their concoctions. Quillaia is a tree bark, and it helps your root beer foam up.

## 28. Canada Dry Ten

12 fl oz, 10 calories, 2 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Filtered Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Citric Acid, Sodium Citrate, Malic Acid, Sodium Benzoate (preservative), Aspartame, Natural Flavors, Acesulfame Potassium, Caramel Color.

Our moms used to give us Canada Dry Ginger Ale when we had a tummy ache. Now as adults, we get a tummy ache looking at it. Blame Canada. Their tagline is “Real Ginger, Real Taste” but the main ingredients here are carbonated water and artificial sweeteners.

## 27. 7-Up Ten

12 fl oz, 10 calories, 2 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Filtered Carbonated Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Citric Acid, Potassium Citrate, Potassium Benzoate (preservative), Natural Flavors, Aspartame, Acesulfame Potassium, Calcium Disodium EDTA (to protect flavor)

Of the Tens, at least this one has no caramel color.

## 26. Pepsi Max

12 fl oz, 0 calories, 0 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, Caramel Color, Phosphoric Acid, Aspartame, Potassium Benzoate (preserves freshness), Caffeine, Natural Flavor, Acesulfame Potassium, Citric Acid, Calcium Disodium EDTA (to protect flavor), Panax Ginseng Root Extract

Your 7-11 sold of Coke Zero, bro? Try this wannabe, which adds extra caffeine ginseng to fool dudes into thinking this is an all-natural energy drink.

## 25. Mello Yello Zero

12 fl oz, 0 calories, 0 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, Citric Acid, Aspartame, Sodium Benzoate And EDTA (to Protect Taste), Acacia, Potassium Citrate, Acesulfame Potassium, Caffeine, Sucrose Acetate Isobutyrate, Natural Flavors, Coconut Oil, Yellow 5.

You know when you add some Mentos to a two-liter Diet Coke and the whole thing explodes? (Don't try that at home.) That's thanks to the Gum Acacia in the candy, which is also in this soda—it's a natural emulsifier. Despite it's weird name, is probably this most natural ingredient in this artificially-colored Zero.

## 24. Fanta Zero

12 fl oz, 0 calories, 0 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, Citric Acid, Potassium Citrate, Aspartame, Natural Flavors, Potassium Benzoate (To Protect Taste), Modified Food Starch, Acesulfame Potassium, Yellow 6, Glycerol Ester Of Rosin, Coconut Oil, Red 40.

Just like its full-calorie cousin, Fanta Zero is an unsavory blend of oils and artificial colors. Even without its unsettling origin story about Coca-Cola creating Fanta to profit in Germany when Nazis forbid USA-made Coke—this would still be gross.

## 23. Diet Sunkist

12 fl oz, 0 calories, 0 sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, Citric Acid, Sodium Citrate, Sodium Benzoate (preservative), Aspartame, Malic Acid, Modified Food Starch, Natural Flavors, Caffeine, Ester Gum, Acesulfame Potassium, Yellow 6, Red 40

What do you get when you combine carbonated water with aspartame and a host of hard-to-pronounce chemicals? This citrus-inspired sip. It gets its alluring orange color from Yellow 65

and Red 40. A Journal of Pediatrics study linked Yellow 5 to hyperactivity in children and Canadian researchers found Red 40 to be contaminated with known carcinogens.

## 22. Pibb Zero

12 fl oz, 0 calories, 0 sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, Caramel Color, Phosphoric Acid, Aspartame, Potassium Sorbate and Potassium Benzoate (to protect taste), Artificial and Natural Flavors, Acesulfame Potassium, Caffeine, Monosodium Phosphate, Lactic Acid, Polyethylene Glycol.

A “spicy” cherry soda found mostly in the South—or in Coke Freestyle machines—Pibb Zero contains propylene glycol, a preservative, thickening agent, and stabilizer, also used as antifreeze to de-ice airplanes, as a plasticizer to make polyester resins, and found in electronic cigarettes. A nutritional zero.

## 21. Diet Barq's Root Beer

12 fl oz, 0 calories, 0 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, Caramel Color, Potassium Sorbate And Sodium Benzoate (To Protect Taste), Aspartame, Citric Acid, Acesulfame Potassium, Artificial And Natural Flavors, Acacia, Potassium Chloride.

As with aspartame, Eat This, Not That! also recommends you limit Acesulfame Potassium—aka Ace K—a zero-calorie sweetener that often appears with sucralose or aspartame to create a flavor closer to sugar (it’s 200 times sweeter). Although the FDA does not recognize it as a carcinogen, some experts disagree, and large doses have been shown to cause problems in the thyroid glands of rats, rabbits and dogs. It’s used here to sweeten the root beer, but you’ll also find it in Diet Pepsi, Fresca, and Coke’s Zero line.

## 20. Diet Mug Root Beer

12 fl oz, 0 calories, 0 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, Caramel Color, Sodium Benzoate (preserves freshness), Aspartame, Citric Acid, Natural and Artificial Flavor, Quillaia Extract, Calcium Disodium EDTA (to protect flavor)

As with the A&W root beer, the ingredient to worry about here is not the Quillaia tree bark, but rather the caramel color and aspartame.

## 19. Diet Dr. Pepper Cherry

12 fl oz, 0 calories, 0 g sugar



**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, Caramel Color, Natural and Artificial Flavors, Aspartame, Sodium Benzoate (preservative), Citric Acid, Phosphoric Acid, Caffeine, Malic Acid, Sodium Phosphate, Red 40

The Cherry version of Diet Dr. Pepper is worse than the original because of the artificial color Red 40, which Canadian researchers found to be contaminated with known carcinogens.

## 18. Diet Dr. Pepper Cherry Vanilla

0 calories, 0 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, Caramel Color, Natural and Artificial Flavors, Aspartame, Sodium Benzoate (preservative), Citric Acid, Phosphoric Acid, Caffeine, Malic Acid, Red 40

Like old school Cherry, the Vanilla also has Red 40—and no actual vanilla.

## 17. Dr. Brown's Diet Black Cherry

12 fl oz, 0 calories, 0 sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, Cherry and Other Natural Flavors, Malic Acid, Aspartame, Sodium Benzoate, Sodium Citrate, Caramel Color and Artificial Color (red #40)

Another “doctor” prescribing Red 40. If Dr. Brown had a diploma, it’d be from the University of American Samoa.

## 16. Diet Dr. Pepper

12 fl oz, 0 calories, 0 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, Caramel Color, Aspartame, Phosphoric Acid, Artificial and Natural Flavors, Sodium Benzoate, Caffeine.

Eat This, Not That! researchers found the aspartame count, in milligrams, of a Diet Dr. Pepper was 123 mg—the highest of all major sodas outside of Diet Coke.

## 15. Diet Mug Cream Soda

12 fl oz, 0 calories, 0 sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, Natural and Artificial Flavor, Sodium Benzoate (preserves freshness), Aspartame, Citric Acid, Caramel Color, Yucca Mohave Extract, Calcium Disodium EDTA (to protect flavor)

Don’t worry too much about the Yucca Mohave Extract—it just makes your artificially-sweetened carbonated water foamy. Instead, wonder: Where’s the cream?

## 14. Coke Zero

12 fl oz, 0 calories, 0 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, Caramel Color, Phosphoric Acid, Aspartame, Potassium Benzoate (To Protect Taste), Natural Flavors, Potassium Citrate, Acesulfame Potassium, Caffeine.

After years of growth, sales are flatlining for this once-cool new brand, originally marketed as a masculine alternative to girly Diet Coke. But the key to Coke's Zero's meteoric rise wasn't dudes, it was the unique blend of aspartame (58 mg) and acesulfame potassium (31 mg). Suddenly, a diet drink tasted like real Coke! But it could make you fat like one, too. "Even though diet drinks are calorie-free, they cause insulin to be released in your gut because their artificial sweeteners are sweet like sugar, and that actually prevents weight loss," says Miriam Jacobson, RD, CDN. "Insulin is your body's primary fat-storage hormone, so it will have the body hold on to any extra fat," she explains, adding, "Trying to lose weight by trading a Coke for this is doing the body just as much harm, if not more, because of all the chemicals in the calorie-free version."

## 13. Diet Coke Cherry

12 fl oz, 0 calories, 0 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, Caramel Color, Phosphoric Acid, Potassium Benzoate (to protect taste), Aspartame, Natural Flavors, Acesulfame Potassium, Caffeine

To make this even sweeter than old-school Diet Coke, they've added acesulfame potassium to the mix. As for actual cherry.....nope.

## 12. Diet Coke with Lime

12 fl oz, 0 calories, 0 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, Caramel Color, Phosphoric Acid, Potassium Benzoate (to protect taste), Aspartame, Citric Acid, Acesulfame Potassium, Caffeine

As with the Diet Coke with Cherry, this one's made sweeter with Ace-K—and has citric acid, for the tang. Our question: Why not enjoy a Diet Coke with real lime?

## 11. Diet Coke

12 fl oz, 0 calories, 0 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, Caramel Color, Aspartame, Phosphoric Acid, Potassium Benzoate (to protect taste), Natural Flavors, Citric Acid, Caffeine.

The best-selling diet soda in the world has been losing market share to healthier alternatives, dropping from \$4.4 billion in sales in 2005 to \$3.2 last year. Meanwhile, tea sales are soaring. That's because a study published in the journal *Nutrition and Metabolism* showed that white tea can simultaneously boost lipolysis (the breakdown of fat) and block adipogenesis (the formation of fat cells). The tea's combination of caffeine and epigallocatechin-3-gallate (EGCG) seems to set fat cells up for defeat.

## 10. Diet Coke with Splenda

12 fl oz, 0 calories, 0 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, Caramel Color, Natural Flavors, Phosphoric Acid, Potassium Benzoate (to protect taste), Sucralose, Acesulfame Potassium, Caffeine, Citric Acid.

After reviewing more than 110 animal and human studies, the FDA decided in 1999 to approve sucralose, aka Splenda, for use in all foods. Sucralose opponents argue that the amount of human research is inadequate, but even groups like the Center for Science in the Public Interest have deemed it safe. Too bad this one's a bit hard to find.

## 9. Diet Pepsi

12 fl oz, 0 calories, 0 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, Caramel Color, Phosphoric Acid, Potassium Benzoate (preserves freshness), Sucralose, Acesulfame Potassium, Caffeine, Natural Flavor, Citric Acid

12 fl oz, 0 calories, 0 g sugar

The soda giant claimed consumer demand—not science—was behind its headline-making decision to remove aspartame from its classic cola earlier this year. They replaced it with sucralose, aka Splenda and acesulfame potassium, aka Ace K. We're applauding the move—but with one hand only. The other's reaching for an all-natural beverage, like our #1 and #2 picks. (And we're not alone: Sales of Diet Pepsi dropped 35 percent in the last 10 years.)

## 8. Caffeine Free Diet Coke

12 fl oz, 0 calories, 0 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, Caramel Color, Aspartame, Phosphoric Acid, Potassium Benzoate (to protect taste), Natural Flavors, Citric Acid

Although *Eat This, Not That!* isn't against caffeine—it's proven to boost metabolism and aid weight loss—excessive caffeine screws with your sleep schedule and suppresses functions of key immune agents. And insufficient sleep opens the door to colds, upper respiratory infections, and other ills. So if you're on your third can of DC for the day, switch to this, if you must.

## 7. Diet Rite

12 fl oz, 0 calories, 0 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, Caramel Color, Phosphoric Acid, Sucralose, Citric Acid, Potassium Benzoate (preservative), Acesulfame Potassium, Natural Flavors, Acacia Gum, Potassium Citrate

The also-ran in the soda wars—usually a few cents cheaper—surprises us with this formula. It has zero aspartame (yay!) but also zero caffeine, which leaves us wondering, why would anyone drink this. Amirite?

## 6. Caffeine Free Diet Pepsi

12 fl oz, 0 calories, 0 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, Caramel Color, Phosphoric Acid, Potassium Benzoate (preserves freshness), Sucralose, Acesulfame Potassium, Natural Flavor, Citric Acid

As we've said, we're into caffeine, as long as you don't overdo it. But why drink a can of chemicals if you're not even benefiting from the buzz?

## 5. Diet 7-Up

12 fl oz, 0 calories, 0 g sugar

**\*\*Ingredients:** Filtered Carbonated Water, Citric Acid, Potassium Citrate, Potassium Benzoate (Preservative), Natural Flavors, Aspartame, Acesulfame Potassium, Calcium Disodium EDTA (to protect flavor)

What separates this from all the rest? No artificial coloring. But it's still filled with artificial sweetener.

## 4. Sprite Zero

12 fl oz, 0 calories, 0 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, Citric Acid, Potassium Citrate, Natural Flavors, Potassium Benzoate (To Protect Taste), Aspartame, Acesulfame Potassium

As with the Diet 7-Up, the Sprite Zero has no artificial colors. But why settle for artificial flavors?

## 3. Zevia Ginger Root Beer

12 fl oz, 0 calories, 0 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Carbonated Water, Erythritol, Reb A (Stevia Extract), Natural Flavors, Citric Acid, Monk Fruit Extract

This small company, founded by soda-loving parents who wanted something healthier for their children, distributes a variety of classic flavors, from cola to ginger ale to grape, without using artificial sweeteners or artificial colors. Instead, they're sweetened with the sugar alcohol Erythritol. "The upside is that sugar alcohols are not as artificial as some of their counterparts in the low/zero calorie sugar industry," says Smith, "but they can cause gastrointestinal upset like gas and diarrhea when consumed in excess—although some say that erythritol may be better tolerated than other sugar alcohols. The other plus," she continues, "is that unlike other sweeteners—specifically artificial sweeteners—they are not thousands of times sweeter than sugar, so they may cause less metabolic confusion in terms of sweetness as compared to caloric delivery, although more research still needed." Brilliantly, this root beer tastes like the real thing—and is clear, because there's no caramel color.

## 2. Hint Kick

16 fl oz, 0 calories, 0 g sugar

**Ingredients in the Black Raspberry flavor, for example:** Purified Water, Black Raspberry, Other Natural Flavors from non-GMO Plants and Natural Caffeine from Coffee Beans

OK, we're totally cheating here. Hint Water isn't carbonated, cola-flavored or sold in 64-ounce Big Gulps. But these new flavored bottled waters do have 60 milligrams of caffeine, derived from coffee beans. That's more than you'll find in Diet Dr. Pepper (41 mg), Diet Coke (47 mg) or even Mountain Dew (54 mg). So you get all of the pop, with none of the calories—and each flavor is sweetened not with aspartame, but with fruit juice or spice. Try the Lemon Cayenne Hint Kick (and don't overdo it, since caffeine can dehydrate you), and you'll never go back to Diet Coke again.

## Bai5 Bubbles!

11.5 fl oz of the Bolivia Black Cherry flavor: 5 calories, 1 g sugar

**Ingredients:** Filtered Carbonated Water, Bai® Proprietary Sweetener Blend™ (Erythritol, Stevia Extract), Natural Flavors, Cherry Juice Concentrate, Malic Acid, Citric Acid, Fruit and Vegetable Juice (for color), Coffeefruit Extract, White Tea Extract, Ascorbic Acid, Sodium Citrate.

Founded by coffee guru Ben Weiss in his Princeton basement, Bai5, a new line of all-natural fruity drinks with exotic flavors, is forecast to rack up \$125 million in sales this year. We can see why: Their Bubbles line—with flavors like Guatemala Guava, Jamaica Blood Orange and Bolivia Black Cherry—are the definitive Drink This on this list of Not That!s. Sweetened with fruit juice, erythritol and stevia (not aspartame) and powered by 45 mg of caffeine, thanks to the tea and coffeefruit, they're delicious enjoyed straight-up or as a mixer. Interestingly, rather than

beat Bai5, one soda titan joined them: the Dr. Pepper Snapple Group, who once only distributed the product, bought a stake in the company this past April. Meet the Best Diet Soda in America!

**SPONSORED:** She lost 6 pounds and 4 inches off her waist in one week!

Contrary to popular belief, you CAN lose weight fast and keep it off without starving yourself. June C., 55, did just that by switching from a diet of highly processed foods to a healthier plan of whole fruits, vegetables and satisfying proteins. “I am never hungry. And the weight just keeps coming off!” she says.