

## Best and Worst Mexican Food

### Which Mexican restaurant dishes are the most fattening, and which have the fewest calories?

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WebMD Expert Column

Mexican cuisine has become as ubiquitous in America as the hamburger - maybe more so. On just one freeway exit near my home, there are no less than five Mexican restaurants: Del Taco, El Pollo Loco, Chipotle, Taco Bell, and Baja Fresh. And Taco Bell, with more than 5,800 restaurants nationwide, consistently makes *Entrepreneur Magazine's* top 10 list of fast food franchises.

With that in mind, WebMD scrutinized the menus of some favorite chain Mexican and Tex-Mex restaurants to determine which of their menu choices are the best and worst, calorie-wise. In case your favorite restaurant isn't included below, I've also compiled some suggestions below for making healthier Mexican food choices.

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#### Extreme Eats: The Worst Restaurant Meals

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#### Best Mexican Food Choices

The following menu items have less than 500 calories and less than 6 grams of saturated fat (most have 4 grams or less), and most also total under 1,300 milligrams of sodium. Most give you at least 6 grams of fiber; some even feature grilled fish, a rich source of heart-healthy omega-3s.

1. **Baja Fresh Ensalada with Chicken or Shrimp** (with Cotija cheese, pico de gallo and tortilla strips). Calories: 230-310. Total fat: 6-7 grams. Saturated fat: 2 grams. Sodium: 840 milligrams. Fiber: 6-7 grams.
2. **On The Border Mexican Grill & Cantina Citrus Chipotle Chicken Salad with Mango Citrus Vinaigrette**. Calories: 290. Total fat: 4 g. Saturated fat: 2 g. Sodium: 840 mg. Fiber 11 g.
3. **Taco Bell Fresco Soft Tacos, Ranchero Chicken or Grilled Steak** (two tacos). Calories: 320-340. Total fat: 8-9 g. Saturated fat: 3 g. Sodium: 1,200-1,480 mg. Fiber: 4 g.
4. **Taco Bell Fresco Burrito Supreme with Chicken or Steak**. Calories: 330-340. Total fat: 8 g. Saturated fat: 2.5-3 g. Sodium: 1,340-1,410 mg. Fiber: 8 g.
5. **Taco Bell Fresco Bean Burrito**. Calories: 340. Total fat: 8 g. Saturated fat: 2.5 g. Sodium: 1,290 mg. Fiber: 11 g.
6. **Baja Fresh Original Baja Taco with Chicken or Shrimp** (two tacos). Calories: 400-420. Total fat: 10 g. Saturated fat: 2 g. Sodium: 460-560 mg. Fiber: 4 g.
7. **Moe's Southwest Grill Joey Junior** (with steak, black beans, rice, cheese, and pico de gallo). Calories: 410. Total fat: 13 g. Saturated fat: 5.3 g. Sodium: 1,085 mg. Fiber: 11 g.
8. **Moe's Southwest Grill Close Talker Salad** (with fish, beans, cheese, lettuce, pico de gallo, olives, cucumbers; without the crispy shell and chipotle ranch sauce). Calories: 430. Total fat: 17 g. Saturated fat: 5 g. Sodium: 1,015 mg. Fiber: 17 g.
9. **Del Taco Half Pound Red or Green Burrito**. Calories: 430-450. Total fat: 10 g. Saturated fat: 5 g. Sodium: 1,160-1,190 mg. Fiber: 12-13 g.
10. **El Pollo Loco BRC Burrito**. Calories: 440. Total fat: 12 g. Saturated fat: 4.5 g. Sodium: 1,000 mg. Fiber: 6 g.
11. **Chipotle Chicken or Steak Burrito Bowl**. Calories: 470. Total fat: 10.5 g. Saturated fat: 2.5 g. Sodium: 1,325 mg. Fiber: 11 g.
12. **Rubios Grilled Mahi Mahi or Blackened Mahi Mahi Tacos** (two tacos; with creamy chipotle sauce in a stone-ground corn tortilla). Calories: 480-500. Total fat: 18-22 g. Saturated fat: 4 g. Sodium: 300-960 mg. Fiber: 8 g.

#### Worst Mexican Food Choices

The following menu items have over 1,500 calories per serving and plenty of saturated fat, total fat, and sodium. (Most were pretty high in fiber, however.)

1. **On the Border Mexican Grill & Cantina Dos XX Fish Tacos w/ Creamy Red Chile Sauce**. Calories: 2,250. Total fat: 152 g. Saturated fat: 32 g. Sodium: 4,030 mg. Fiber: 4g.

2. **Baja Fresh Nachos: Steak, chicken, pork, shrimp, breaded fish, or mahi-mahi** (with beans, cheese, guacamole, pico de gallo and sour cream). Calories: 2,000-2,120. Total fat: 110-118 g. Saturated fat: 41-44 g. Sodium: 2,680-3,120 mg. Fiber: 31-32 g.
3. **On the Border Firecracker Stuffed Jalapenos w/ Original Queso.** Calories: 1,950. Total fat: 134 g. Saturated Fat: 36 g. Sodium: 6,540 mg. Fiber: 3 g.
4. **Chevy's Crab & Shrimp Quesadilla.** Calories: 1,790. Total fat: 126 g. Saturated fat: 63 g. Sodium: 3,440 mg. Fiber: 3g.
5. **On the Border Big Chicken or Steak Bordurrito** (with side salad, not including dressing). Calories: 1,770-1,780. Total fat: 86-96 g. Saturated fat: 18-28 g. Sodium: 3,280-4,900 mg. Fiber: 13-18 g.
6. **Don Pablo's Taco Beef Nachos.** Calories: 1,625. Total fat: 113 g. Saturated fat: 55 g. Sodium: 3,308 mg. Fiber: 14 g.
7. **On the Border Grande Taco Salad with Ground Beef** (with ranch dressing): Calories: 1,610. Total fat: 118 g. Saturated fat: 37 g. Sodium: 2,640 mg. Fiber: 14 g.
8. **On the Border Tres Enchiladas Dinner, Cheese & Onion** (with chile con carne). Calories: 1,600. Total fat: 95g. Saturated fat: 47 g. Sodium: 4140 mg. Fiber: 6g.
9. **Don Pablo's Large Cheese or Mesquite Grilled Steak Quesadilla.** Calories: 1,561-1,597. Total fat: 91-99 g. Saturated fat: 44-53 g. Sodium: 2,723-3,381 mg. Fiber: 4 g.
10. **Chevy's Tostada Salad.** Calories: 1,547-1,682. Total fat: 94-115 g. Saturated fat: 37-45 g. Sodium: 2,213-2,536 mg. Fiber: 18g.
11. **Baja Fresh Burrito Ultimo (Steak or Carnitas), Enchilado Style** (served with nachos, pico de gallo and sour cream). Calories: 1,550-1,580. Total fat: 84 g. Saturated fat: 40 g. Sodium: 3,760-3,789 mg. Fiber: 15-16 g.
12. **On the Border Steak Grande Fajita Nachos.** Calories: 1,530. Total fat: 95g. Saturated fat: 48 g. Sodium: 3,560 mg. Fiber: 21 g.

### Mexican Food: Making Healthier Choices

Here are some tips for making healthier choices when eating at a Mexican restaurant:

**Fish first.** Fish (when it's not fried) is often the lowest in fat and saturated fat of the meat choices. Chicken is usually next, followed by steak -- if the restaurant uses a leaner cut and doesn't add extra fat.

**Stick with soft tortillas.** Most restaurants offer the choice of soft or crispy, corn or flour tortillas. Generally, soft tortillas -- whether corn or flour -- are lower in calories and fat than the deep-fried, crispy option. And soft corn tortillas can be healthier than flour ones. At Rubios, for example, choosing a stone-ground corn tortilla instead of a flour tortilla will save you 50 calories, 4 grams of fat, 1.5 grams of saturated fat, and 340 mg sodium (while giving you 1 extra gram of fiber).

**Skip the sour cream.** This saves you 120 calories, 10 grams fat, and 7 g saturated fat for a 2-ounce serving. Some Mexican restaurant salads and entrees also come with creamy dressings, like ranch sauce. Leaving this off can shave 240 calories, 27 grams of fat, 4 grams saturated fat and 240 milligrams of sodium.

**No cheese, please.** Leaving the cheese off your grilled meat or fish burrito will usually shave off about 110 calories, 9 grams of fat, and 5 grams of saturated fat.

**Guacamole is good for you.** While a big side of guacamole (3.5 ounces) adds considerable calories (about 150) and fat (about 13 grams), guacamole made mostly with avocados is low in saturated fat (about 2 grams), high in fiber (6 grams), and most of its fat is the healthy monounsaturated type.

**Go for grilled.** Instead of fried fish, meats, or veggies, choose grilled shrimp, charbroiled chicken, and grilled vegetables. They'll have less fat and still taste great.

**Add fajita veggies.** A flavorful and easy way to boost your daily veggie intake is to add "fajita vegetables" to your burrito or burrito bowl. For just about 20 calories and 0.5 grams of fat, a 2.5 ounce serving of fajita vegetables will add a gram of fiber, about 30% of the Daily Value for [vitamin C](#), powerful phytochemicals, and tons of flavor.

**Skip the chips.** OK, just steal a few from your tablemate! Half an order of tortilla chips from Chipotle (2 ounces), for example, adds 285 calories and 13.5 grams of fat to your meal total, along with 210 milligrams of sodium.