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Anza Fit Center News

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Liquids: Nectar of the Gods

Spirit, Liquid Courage, Cold One, Two Buck Chuck

Alcohol, in its various incarnations, has been around since the dawn of known civilization. Even the more primitive societies usually have a form of fermented beverage. Over the years, the sheer variety of alcohol has expanded due to the breaking down of perceived cultural and social stereotypes and the accessibility for the fledgling entrepreneur. We live in a time where some of the finest whiskey (whisky) is produced in countries like Japan and South Korea. Award winning

Gourmet and craft beers are being concocted in the garages and small local breweries all across North America. There are many more countries that are assimilating the uniqueness of another nation's historic drink and adapting it to their own. However, what have hardly changed over the years are the alcohol types: Beer, Wine, and Liquor. These three have several sub categories, but in the end, they all fall under these three designators. So, for the sake of simplicity, we will evaluate the pros and cons of these three categories in the broad spectrum. And in all honesty, the benefits and hazards are all very similar; which, in turn, is interesting in by itself.

Huzzah!

Of the three choices, beer is the most consumed in the United States followed by wine and liquor. When we are referencing quantity in regards to drinks, beer is defined as 12 oz., 5 oz. for wine, and 1.5 oz. for liquor. The daily recommended intake is two drinks for males under the age of 65. One drink is considered moderate for those over 65 in age. Women are allowed only one drink no matter the age.

There are A LOT of studies floating around referencing alcohol's benefits and hazards and it ebbs and flows like the tides. However, the general consensus is that the benefits of alcohol do walk a fine line, teetering on the negative if one drinks beyond moderation.

Darker is Better

You might have heard this simple rule of thumb regarding beer: the darker the beer, the more beneficial it is. There is a moniker of truth to this because darker beers tend to be less refined, which in turn means fewer nutrients are being processed out. However, the extraction tends to be negligible and in return there is a higher caloric count. In addition, beers marketed as low calorie are deceptive. There is no correlation between lower calories with reduction in the negative effects of alcohol. So with that being said, if you're going to drink beer, I suggest you drink one that you're going to enjoy drinking and not worry too much about how it's going to affect your waist.

Starting with the potential health benefits, most beers have the same level of antioxidants as wine; slight variances due to the ingredients: grapes vs. grains and hops. Beer also has a surprising medley of vitamins and minerals. Due to the density of nutrients, the potential is there to lower rates of cardiovascular disease and kidney stones. The soluble fiber can help reduce bad cholesterol (LDL) and the silicon content may help strengthen bones.

Xanthohumol, a chemical in hops, has shown promise in improving cognitive functions by protecting brain cells.

On the flip side of beer (and not excluding wine and liquor), the negatives will far outweigh the positives. There is an increased chance for cancer, mainly in areas of the throat, stomach, liver, and breasts for women. Increased blood pressure could lead to heart failure and strokes. And we all know that alcohol impairs our motor functions which could inadvertently lead to additional complications.

Grapes of Wrath

Wine, in comparison to beer and liquor, has had the most studies conducted on the validity of the health benefits. One could argue why so many studies have been conducted and the reasonable conclusion would probably narrow down to one element: Marketing. It's easier to sell a product of this nature if you could overshadow the negative connotations of alcohol as a whole. Reports and studies for other alcohol types generally never tout the benefits of drinking their brand, but wine is always the exception; especially red wine. Even with negative coverage, wine remains un-phased because frankly, people are going to drink what they want regardless now aren't they?

By the numbers, red wine edges out white wine when it comes to the potential advantages. Both have similar levels of antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals, but red grapes have the added benefit of a compound called resveratrol. Studies suggest that it helps boost in several areas in regards to cardiovascular and mental health. The potential is there to lower the possibility of stroke, certain cancers, and dementia to list a few. In addition, red in particular, it seems to enhance omega-3 fatty acids that are currently residing in your cells (wine pairing with fish anyone?). Researchers looking to help reduce the risk of type-2 diabetes, believe that ethanol in wine helps metabolize glucose levels.

Circling back to the initial introduction of wine, referencing the marketing of the "beneficial" studies, you'll find an equal for the adverse. Detrimental effects are mirrored with the added bonus of potential weight gain. Wine contains twice the amount of calories compared to most beers and **soft drinks**.

"Top Me Off (Input Typical Bartender Name)!"

And make it a double! Nothing says old school class like a gin martini or whiskey neat.

Liquor is the most versatile of alcohols. It runs the gamut in variety due to the fusion of ingredients resulting in the chosen desired end result. That final outcome has to fall under the categories of vodka, gin, rum, tequila, whiskey or whisky, and true moonshine. We will omit the latter because any level of consumption of that particular item does not bode well.

Interestingly, all liquor types with their separate blending of primary components have similar risks and rewards. Gin and tequila are the most beneficial due to the juniper berry and agave plant respectfully. Vodka tends to come in third with Rum and Whiskey (Whisky) ends up last.

Gin tops the list in the liquor category. The primary ingredient is juniper with the additional benefits of a host of botanicals like citrus, coriander, and rosemary to name a few. If you add tonic, which is a popular mixer, you have a pretty potent brew. It's so potent that it's been used to cure malaria and other illnesses back in the day. Gin is also a *digestif* and a diuretic. It assists in the digestive process, acts as an anti-inflammatory, and assists in flushing harmful bacteria from the body in conjunction with proper medication. Research is ongoing, but the bitters or botanicals have the capacity

to reduce liver and heart disease.

Tequila, made with the blue agave plant, comes in second on our list. The agavins, the sugar derived from agave, are non-digestible, which is a boon for those with type-2 diabetes. It could even possibly lower glucose levels and the production of insulin could increase. Diseases like Crohn's and IBS (irritable bowel syndrome), can be better managed thanks to the fructans found in agave. They assist in the delivery process of medication. A little known fact, but tequila is a probiotic thanks to those same fructans. Mainly in Mexico, similar to gin in respect to medicinal use, it has been prescribed by doctors to help fight colds and related symptoms.

Vodka, the universal alcohol mixer, comes in at a close third. A product usually derived from cereal grains in addition to corn and potato is the most consumed of all of the liquors. Benefiting from its mild flavor profile, it is easily masked behind many non alcoholic beverages. Throughout history, vodka has been used for virtually every ailment under the sun. Commonly used for its astringent properties, it has been used as an antiseptic and disinfectant for ages. In addition, vodka has proven to be a good anti-inflammatory and a reducer of hypertension. Studies have also shown that

it helps develops collateral vessels improving blood flow which in turn assists in mitigating heart related illnesses.

Rum generally comes in the light and dark variety. The lighter format is created from sugar cane and the darker version is from the by-product of the sugar cane in the form of molasses. The light rum is generally blended with mild fruits like coconut while the dark rum is infused with botanicals. During the times of older warfare, rum was part of the rationing to help soldiers (mainly European) deal with illnesses and physical ailments in austere conditions. It was presumed to strengthen bone by increasing the mineral density. Like vodka, rum acts like a blood thinner, increasing the good cholesterol HDL which can help alleviate peripheral artery diseases. Because it doesn't contain any carbohydrates or fats, it is beneficial for those on a limited diet.

Last but not least, there is whiskey (whisky). Any connoisseur should be able to tell you the history regarding the difference in spelling, but they might not be so apt in defining the benefits or cons for that matter. The reasoning behind this could be due to the fact that there really isn't a whole lot to tell. Whiskey (whisky) comes in all blends and depending on where the 51% majority sits for the main

The Trainer's Corner!

Nutritional Tips When Going Out to Eat:



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Ask for your food to be cooked with no oil or butter!

More often than not, the foods we consume when dining out are saturated with high calorie oils like vegetable or corn oil. Although there is nothing inherently bad about these seemingly necessary cooking items, they can tend to add almost 150-300 calories more into your meals! Woah! So, if you're looking to cut down on calories, asking for your meals to not be cooked in oil or butter can be a big help!

Ask for normal seasonings like salt, pepper, cayenne, cumin, garlic or paprika.

Sometimes, the seasonings added in restaurants can have additional calories in them. Asking for zero calorie seasonings can help cut down on these sneaky add-ins!

Get the dressing on the side.

We all love our Ranch, Italian and Blue Cheese dressing but... they do tend to have a good amount of extra calories in them. Instead of having the dressing on the salad, try putting it on the side and just lightly dipping your fork into the dressing with each bite you take. Again, these dressings aren't bad, but if you want to save some calories, look for ways to limit your caloric intake. However, if you know you are going to want that 150 calorie dressing later, just eat a little less during the day and save those calories for the yummy dressings!

Take off the croutons and the cheese.

Croutons and cheese, though delicious, can add almost 200 calories to a healthy, fibrous salad. Either ask for none or put these options on the side. Again, if you want to enjoy your cheese and croutons, just eat 200 calories less for breakfast or lunch and *viola!* — you are still on track for your calories for the day; you are just eating them at a later time!

Go bun-less!

Bread is NOT BAD FOR YOU, but it isn't as nutritionally dense as its counterparts like veggies or meat. "Less Nutrient Dense" simply means that there aren't as many vitamins, micronutrients (like fiber) and minerals in a certain food group causing it to be less filling and less beneficial to the body when consumed.

Get high protein meals like chicken or steak.

Meals that contain chicken and steak can help keep you full for longer. These food choices are high in protein which actually takes the body longer to break down comparative to carbohydrates and fats! This longer break down process keeps you full for longer and can help curb those cravings.

Choose high fibrous and micronutrient dense sides like green leafy veggies or brown rice.

Just like the high protein meals above, choosing more fibrous foods like veggies and brown rice can help tame your appetite. Fiber is a nutrient that can aid in slowing down the digestion process causing you to feel full for a longer period of time. It can also help speed up digestion; keeping you regular and healthy!

