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Foods Nutrition Experts Will Never Eat

By [KERI GANS](#)

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As a registered dietitian, many people are interested in what foods I eat, and just as often, what would never land on my plate. All foods fit, I say to them, and to my patients. Anything in moderation. But truth be told, there are foods that—barring a deserted-island situation—I wouldn't touch. White bread, Spam, [sugary breakfast cereals](#), soda, cheese doodles, and Doritos: Not for me. I avoid foods that offer very limited, if any, nutritional benefit. While I have a few exceptions, at this point, those kinds of foods don't even taste good to me.



Keri Gans

I asked my registered dietitian (RD) friends, with whom I've enjoyed good food and [cocktails](#), what foods they avoid:

Karen Ansel, MS, RD, CDN, spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and coauthor of *The Calendar Diet: A Month by Month Guide to Losing Weight While Living Your Life*

"As for what I wouldn't eat: hot dogs, without a doubt. Even if they're nitrate-free, they're still made up of too many parts and pieces, which is just unnatural."

Patricia Bannan, MS, RD, author of *Eat Right When Time is Tight*

"[Sugary soda](#). Not only does it taste overly-sweet, it's such a waste of calories. A 12-ounce can of soda has almost 40 grams of sugar, and research shows excess sugar can lead to excess pounds and a myriad of health issues. If you do love a soda, limit it to once or twice a month, and get used to other options like citrus-infused water or non-sugared iced tea."

[\[Beverage Face-Offs: Which One Is Best?\]](#)

Elisa Zied, MS, RD, CDN, author of *Nutrition at Your Fingertips* and fellow Eat + Run blogger

"I would not eat brains, frog legs, or bugs. Otherwise, no foods are off limits, as I think all foods can fit into a healthful and balanced diet. And when I want something that I don't think of as healthy—like a hot dog, pastrami, French fries, Doritos, or a Hostess cupcake—I have it, but keep the portion small."

Jackie Newgent, RD, culinary nutritionist and author of *1,000 Low-Calorie Recipes*

"I won't eat anything that's neon! Basically, if a food or beverage is a color that you can't find in nature—like electric blue or glow-in-the-dark orange—I won't go near it. It's one indicator of an artificial ingredient. I always keep it real."

Dawn Jackson Blatner, RD, author of *The Flexitarian Diet*

"Spray butter, whipped topping, and other similar 'diet foods.' My food philosophy is to eat real food with simple ingredient lists. I'd rather enjoy my food with smart amounts of real butter, oil, sea salt, or whipped cream rather than artificial flavors and chemicals."

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Bonnie Taub-Dix, MA, RD, CDN, author of *Read It Before You Eat It* and fellow Eat + Run blogger

"I don't like to eat anything that looks like it did when it was alive! Whether it's a cornish hen or a whole fish, I'd rather not see my food in that 'whole' state. I was a strict vegetarian for years, not eating any meat, fish, or poultry, and although I slowly added some of those foods back into my diet, certain animal products are still tough for me to swallow."

Cynthia Sass, MPH, RD, author of *S.A.S.! Yourself Slim: Conquer Cravings, Drop Pounds and Lose Inches*

"Diet soda. It doesn't offer any nutrients, and my rule of thumb is: If it's artificial, it's not going into my body. Also, some research has linked diet soda consumption to an increased risk of stroke, heart attack, and depression. Plus, one analysis found that, on average, diet soda drinkers weigh more than regular soda drinkers."

Rachel Begun, MS, RD, spokesperson for The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

"I avoid all foods that contain hydrogenated oils. There is absolutely no need for them in our diet, and nowadays, it's easy to find foods that don't contain them."

Andrea N. Giancoli, MPH, RD, spokesperson for The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

"By preference, I'm mostly [vegetarian](#). I wouldn't eat bacon, hot dogs, chicken, hamburgers, steak, soup made with animal broth, or anything cooked in lard."

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The consensus? Most of us focus on a "clean" diet. We like to know where our foods came from and to be able to pronounce all the ingredients on the label—if there even is a label. Even if there are foods my friends and I wouldn't eat, we try focusing more on what we *should* eat. By directing our choices toward the positive, maybe by default, we'll eat less of the negative.

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