

THE BETTER SPIKED SELTZERS NUTRITION GUIDE

Alcoholic sparkling waters, or "spiked seltzers," seemingly came out of left field a few years ago. Loved for their refreshing taste, lower calorie, sugar, and carb counts, they grew quickly in popularity. Most varieties are gluten free, contributing to their widespread appeal. Let's look at what's better (and what's not) when it comes to spiked seltzer and reaching your health goals powered by better nutrition.

Convenience.

Usually sold in cans, they're easy to transport to a picnic or a friend's house (as compared to a similar drink, the vodka and club soda). They don't require having another mixer, or even a glass of ice, at the ready.

Control.

The can is a single serving which makes it easier to control portions. Unlike a glass of wine which may vary in size depending on who pours and refills it, when you drink a can you know you've had one serving. A nice thing about seltzer makers is that they more commonly share nutrition information on the package, as compared to wine, beer, and liquor.

Calories.

Spiked seltzers are approximately 100 calories per 12 ounce serving, as compared to:

- Beer: ~150 calories per 12 ounce serving
- Wine: ~ 120 calories per 5 ounce serving
- Spirits: ~ 100 calories per 1.5 ounce serving, and commonly paired with a caloric mixer

NOTE: a few seltzers near 200 calories per 12 ounce serving, so check the label.

Enjoy a seltzer and enjoy less calories from alcohol and sugar. If there's a cocktail you're looking to find a lower-sugar substitute for, consider looking for seltzers that mimic those flavors. For example, a pineapple seltzer might be a good substitute for someone who loves Pina Coladas. Lime seltzer, perhaps poured over a few muddled mint leaves, can mimic a mojito.

Caution.

Some people choose seltzers for "easy drinking," because they are light, flavored and don't have a strong taste of alcohol. This isn't better if it keeps you from being aware of how much alcohol you are consuming. U.S. Dietary Guidelines currently recommend limiting alcohol consumption to 1 beverage daily for women and no more than 2 beverages daily for men.

Don't Double Down.

Hard seltzer is not a mixer. They already contain alcohol, so more could double your intake at every sip.

Digestive Woes.

Carbonated beverages don't sit right with everyone. If you're working with your practitioner on your digestion, taking supplements or medication to improve your digestion, talk to them first before trying bubbles of any kind including spiked seltzer. Likewise, if you notice digestive issues occurring when or after drinking spiked seltzers, revert back to something without bubbles or skip the booze for a week or two to see if things settle internally.



HOW TO SELECT A SPIKED SELTZER:

Most of the spiked seltzers on the market today hover around the same price range, calorie count, and serving size. Keep the following in mind when selecting a new favorite.

Choosing what's delicious to you will be more satisfying. What flavors do you generally like? There are many options.

Some varieties are sweetened with stevia. Stevia is a plant leaf. The stevia found in most beverages is an extract of only the compound ("reb a") that makes things taste sweet. It doesn't provide any nutritional value. Discuss your choice with your practitioner.

Too sweet? A handful of seltzer-like products are mixed with a good amount of fruit juice. This is important to be aware of to manage your overall sugar intake.

There may be a local business making spiked seltzer that you could support.

Fun Summer Idea: Blend your seltzer with frozen fruit, like watermelon or berries, in place of ice to get some extra sweetness, fiber and antioxidants. This will give you a larger serving to enjoy without piling on the alcohol.

Don't Be Fooled: Many people assume that spiked seltzer is hydrating because it contains water. It certainly can be refreshing, but it is not physiologically hydrating. Be sure to drink plenty of water before and while drinking alcohol. Remember that in all forms, alcohol is a diuretic. Especially in summertime, drink water alongside your hard seltzer, and focus on meeting your potassium needs to support better hydration.

The idea for this tool came from our Better Nutrition intern, Rachel Frankenfield, M.S. candidate at Tufts University Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy. Rachel's favorite type of spiked sparkling water is mango.

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And Thank You!