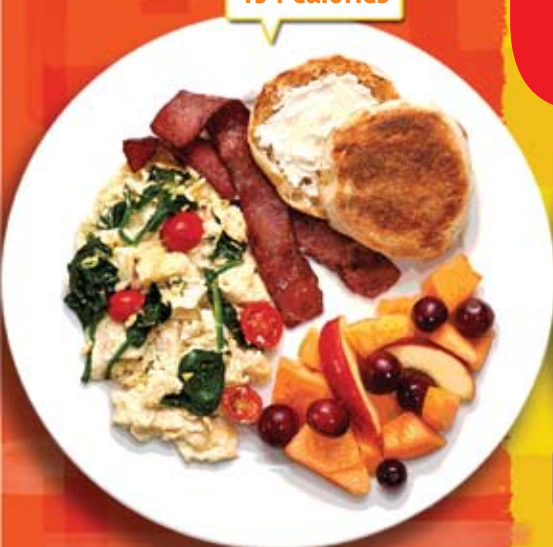


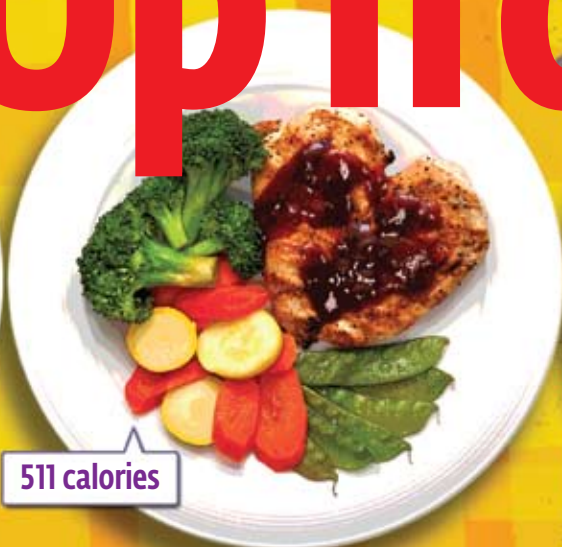
Up front

494 calories



Denny's

511 calories



OUTBACK STEAKHOUSE

585 calories



Olive Garden

Do these dishes tell the truth?

“TASTE THE LIGHTER SIDE of delicious when you go Olive Garden,” an ad says. But when we analyzed one of the restaurant’s new Lighter Fare dishes, it had more calories and fat than claimed in the company’s online stats.

Now that calories and fat content are widely listed on websites (and calories are listed on many menus), we chose 17 items from 12 casual restaurants and fast-food chains and compared their claimed nutrition with reality. And we weighed each serving. We tested the same items from three restaurants in each chain.

The good news is that most dishes told the truth. Olive Garden’s Lasagna Primavera with Grilled Chicken was one of only two dishes with calories or fat content higher than the restaurant’s website said at all three locations. The claim: 420 calories and 15 grams of fat. The reality: 508 to 585 calories and 25 to 32 grams of fat.

Another item with more fat in our tests than advertised online was Outback’s Chicken on the Barbie. Other dishes were

either on target (on average) or had fewer calories or less fat than claimed.

Still, nutrition varied widely at some locations. Case in point: Denny’s Fit Slam, claimed to have 390 calories and 12 grams of fat. We found those approximate levels in two restaurants. At a third, the Fit Slam had 494 calories and 19 grams of fat.

That’s because serving sizes ran the gamut. In three Olive Garden restaurants, Fettuccine Alfredo weighed roughly 14 to

22 ounces. Portion sizes also varied widely at Applebee’s, Denny’s, and Red Lobster.

Bottom line. Nutrition numbers from chain restaurants were generally accurate in our tests. But watch out: The Cheesecake Factory’s 36-ounce (more than 2 pounds) meatloaf dinner had up to 2,016 calories (the maximum number most people should have in a day) and up to 132 grams of fat (about twice as much). And that’s before any cheesecake.

Calorie check What they said vs. what we found

In alphabetical order, within types.

| | WEBSITE CLAIM | | WHAT WE FOUND | |
|--|---------------|---------|---------------|---------|
| | Calories | Fat (g) | Calories | Fat (g) |
| Applebee's Fiesta Lime Chicken | 1,200 | 66 | 847-1,111 | 38-45 |
| Denny's Fit Slam | 390 | 12 | 384-494 | 11-19 |
| IHOP Rooty Tooty Fresh 'N Fruity | 840 | 48 | 711-851 | 38-48 |
| Olive Garden Fettuccine Alfredo | 1,220 | 75 | 879-1,179 | 54-72 |
| Olive Garden Lasagna Primavera w/Grilled Chicken | 420 | 15 | 508-585 | 25-32 |
| On the Border Grande Taco Salad w/Ground Beef | 1,280 | 85 | 1,191-1,302 | 83-90 |
| Outback Bloomin' Onion w/Spicy Sauce (serves 6) | 1,959 | 161 | 1,418-2,099 | 114-160 |
| Outback Grilled Chicken on the Barbie | 401 | 7 | 391-511 | 10-13 |
| Red Lobster Walt's Favorite Shrimp | 1,300 | 88 | 1,128-1,368 | 64-78 |
| T.G.I. Friday's Chocolate Peanut Butter Pie | 770 | 52 | 716-754 | 51-55 |
| The Cheesecake Factory Meatloaf Dinner | 1,950 | NA | 1,643-2,016 | 109-132 |
| Burger King Whopper w/Cheese | 710 | 42 | 678-707 | 40-41 |
| McDonald's Big Mac | 550 | 29 | 520-528 | 29-30 |
| Wendy's Dave's Hot 'N Juicy ¼ lb. Single | 580 | 33 | 573-584 | 32-34 |
| Burger King small fries | 340 | 15 | 295-338 | 13-15 |
| McDonald's small fries | 230 | 11 | 213-252 | 10-12 |
| Wendy's small fries | 320 | 16 | 297-328 | 14-16 |

HOW TO CHOOSE WISELY—AND NOT

Use your smart phone to download the RedLaser or ShopSavvy app and scan the code for the video.





CLAIM CHECK

Edge of Glory

The claim. Edge of Glory, two tungsten carbide teeth set in a plastic base, is claimed to be “The World’s Best Knife Sharpener!” A video boasts of its skills, including the ability to sharpen a credit card, which is then used to slice a tomato. We paid \$11 plus \$7 shipping and handling.

The check. We took pairs of chef, santoku, and serrated knives that were equally sharp, dulled one of each pair, used Edge of Glory to sharpen the dulled knife, then compared its cutting skill with that of its twin. We cut ham, dried sausage, tomatoes, carrots, onions, and celery. And we sharpened a credit card and did battle with a tomato.

Bottom line. Try Edge of Glory if you need to slice a tomato with a credit card. That trick worked. Otherwise, the device is not so sharp. It’s worth using only if:

- The knife is not too dull. (The four quick swipes shown in an ad work only if the knife is already fairly sharp.)
- The knife is not of hard metal. (That makes it tougher for the device to work.)
- The serrations aren’t small. (They can catch on Edge of Glory’s teeth.)
- You don’t need a knife edge that’s super-smooth. (The sharpener left a fairly rough edge.)
- You don’t care that the knife is sharpened from one side only. (One of the device’s teeth sharpens while the other holds the blade; knives can get an asymmetric or “chiseled” edge.)



WE PUT THE EDGE TO THE TEST

Use your smart phone to download the RedLaser or ShopSavvy app and scan the code for the video.



Quirky cleaners

We recruited staffers to take these devices home and compare them with their usual cleaning products. None was a home run for home cleaning. (The costs below don’t factor in any shipping and handling.)

Fuzzy Wuzzy Microfiber Mitt \$6

The claim. “Can be used on virtually any surface. Used dry it is a dust magnet.”

Bottom line. Fuzzy Wuzzy’s flat side was effective on smooth surfaces, and its fuzzy side worked in nooks. But staffers said it wasn’t much better than their usual cleaning products.



Squeegee \$15

The claim. “A window washer and wiper in 1.”

Bottom line. It requires perfect positioning to work well. The microfiber cloth was harder than regular cloth to wring when used with lots of water. And the squeegee and cloth interfered with each other while cleaning corners and edges.



Relaxation drinks: An anti-frazzle fizzle?

Beverages to help you chill out are popping up in supermarkets, drugstores, and even gas stations. But labels we examined didn’t usually list the amounts of their de-stressing agents. And our analysis of eight widely sold drinks showed that many didn’t have enough of those ingredients purported to help you unwind.

What we found. Only iChill Relaxation Shot, Relax Drank Extreme Relaxation, and ViB (Vacation in a Bottle) listed amounts of relaxation ingredients; the rest just named them or listed a blend of ingredients. (We tested all products within the past year; some have since been reformulated.)

Three drinks listed GABA, a chemical that may help regulate stress and anxiety, but even

DID YOU KNOW?

Beverage vs. supplement

Seven of the eight drinks we tested were labeled dietary supplements. The exception, ViB, bore a nutrition-facts label indicating that it was a conventional beverage. (The new Marley’s label bears a nutrition-facts label, but the samples we tested were labeled dietary supplements.) Dietary ingredients in supplements require no FDA preapproval; in conventional beverages, the same ingredients must be FDA-approved as food additives or termed “generally recognized as safe.”

at their maximum recommended daily doses, two drinks—Dream Water 0-Calorie Sleep and Relaxation Shot and RelaxZen Night—contained far lower amounts than the daily dose of GABA used in a published study. The third, RelaxZen Day, had far higher amounts.

Dream Water, Marley’s Mellow Mood, and RelaxZen Night labels listed unspecified amounts of melatonin, a hormone with mixed results in treating insomnia. They had less than the typical 0.3-milligram to 5-milligram dose used in clinical trials to treat insomnia. Relax Drank and iChill listed amounts per serving (1 and 5 milligrams, respectively) but averaged less than claimed (0.02 and 0.3 milligrams).

Four products listed L-theanine, an amino acid in green tea leaves that some evidence shows might help with relaxation and sleep. Three of the four listed L-threonine, an amino acid in proteins, but we found no evidence that the amino acid aids mental relaxation. Of the four products, only ViB specified the amounts of both amino acids on its label, and those levels varied widely.

Dream Water listed 5-hydroxytryptophan, a supplement that might help raise serotonin levels and have a positive effect on anxiety and sleep. But the average level we found was much lower than those used to treat sleep disorders in published studies.

Five drinks listed one or more botanicals. RelaxZen Day had significant levels of a compound that indicates the presence of

The Original Smart Mop \$15

The claim. "Cuts your cleaning time in half... no vacuuming or sweeping."

Bottom line. It's fine at cleaning floors, but wringing the mop can loosen a screw attaching the mop head, which can then drop off. Wringing can also cause the three-part handle to come apart. And it has no hard bar to help press the mop onto the floor—only the nub of the mop handle.



Deluxe Hi-Reach Cleaning Kit \$37

The claim. "Allows you to reach hard-to-reach places with ease."

Bottom line. Its 8-foot telescoping pole duster does reach high, but the duster is very bendable, so staffers had a hard time applying pressure; and it tended to bend at a weak point. In one of our samples, it broke from repeated bends.

And two grout cleaners

The claims. Rub the spongelike Groutinator, \$10 online for two sponges of different sizes, along a grouted joint and it "instantly restores grout to original color." The Grout Bully, also \$10 online, is like paint and is claimed to "clean mold & eliminate mildew." It's available in five colors and comes with two sponges to remove excess product.

The check. We used Groutinator (at right) and Grout Bully on dirty floor tiles at our headquarters and on a staffer's mildewed bathroom tiles.

Bottom line. Groutinator removed soil, but we had to sand it periodically to maintain an edge that fit into grouted joints. It also took elbow grease. It doesn't prevent future soiling, so consider sealing your grout after cleaning.

Grout Bully goes on easily, but removing excess "paint" is hard and can cause smearing. Although the package shows the Bully being used on dirty grout, the directions say to apply it to a clean surface—which defeats the purpose. When we tried it, it hid mildew at first but didn't keep it from returning.



passion-flower extract; levels of compounds in the rest suggest low or trace amounts of claimed botanicals.

Health concerns. Some labels noted that the drink may cause drowsiness and shouldn't be used when driving. Many indicated that pregnant or nursing women and children shouldn't drink it. Yet our mystery shoppers sometimes found relaxation drinks in refrigerator cases near sodas and juices.

The Food and Drug Administration said it has received six adverse-event reports. (Such reports don't prove that a product caused a problem.) In the reports, a 12-year old boy became "symptomatic" Nov. 30, 2012, after drinking Marley's Mellow Mood. He was "shaking and twitching," but symptoms

abated, according to the reports. Five other children complained of vomiting, headache, nausea, chills, and fatigue.

A Marley's spokesman said that "packaging clearly states that Marley's Mellow Mood is not intended for consumption by children," that Marley's "cooperated fully with the FDA," and that the company found "no issues with product quality or package integrity." (Samples of Marley's we tested didn't have a child warning.) An FDA spokeswoman said the reports were being investigated.

Bottom line. An occasional relaxation drink is probably fine for healthy adults. But read the labels and consult with a health-care provider about possible interactions. Check our chart for price, calories, and more.

Drinks we tested

We bought the drinks between October 2011 and August 2012. For each product we tested at least one sample from each of three batches, choosing one flavor (usually fruit).

| Product | Can/bottle size (fl. oz.) | Cost | Calories | Sugars (g) |
|---|---------------------------|--------|----------|------------|
| Dream Water 0-Calorie Sleep and Relaxation Shot | 2.5 | \$3.00 | 0 | 0 |
| iChill Relaxation Shot | 2.0 | 2.25 | 0 | 0 |
| Just Chill | 8.4 | 2.00 | 50 | 12 |
| Marley's Mellow Mood* | 12.0 | 1.75 | 173 | 44 |
| Relax Drank Extreme Relaxation | 16.0 | 2.25 | 220 | 54 |
| RelaxZen Day Formula* | 2.5 | 2.50 | 0 | 0 |
| RelaxZen Night* | 2.5 | 2.50 | 0 | 0 |
| ViB (Vacation in a Bottle) | 12.0 | 2.00 | 60 | 15 |

*Now sold under new names and/or formulations, or other label info has changed.



Cracker crunch-off



DOES A HEALTHFUL cracker have to taste like sawdust? Not according to our latest tests. Of five fairly new crackers that earned Good or Very Good scores for nutrition, three also tasted very good.

Our experts also compared the taste and nutrition of four iconic crackers (think saltines and Triscuit) with store-brand and reduced-fat counterparts. Our nutrition ratings take into account calories, fat, sodium, iron, sugars, and fiber per serving.

What we found. Of the five new crackers, Kashi Pita Crisps scored the best for nutrition and are tasty, with a definite crunch. Crunchmaster and Jingos scored Good for nutrition and Very Good for taste

(see the descriptions below). Serving sizes for most are similar in terms of weight, but the number of crackers per serving ranges from six (Nabisco Triscuit Original) to 24 (Kellogg's Special K Multi-Grain).

In our taste-off, most store brands held their own against big brands. The exception: 365 Everyday Value Organic Wheat Squares (Whole Foods), which couldn't pass for Wheat Thins. Surprisingly, reduced-fat crackers tasted similar to their full-fat siblings. And as we've found in many tests, store brands usually cost less than the name brands. Be aware that the reduced-fat crackers also came in reduced package sizes.

We crunched nutrition numbers for

25 other crackers and found that some healthy-sounding types—Milton's Original Multigrain and Keebler Club Multi Grain among them—scored just Fair for nutrition and have no fiber at all.

Bottom line. For a nutritious cracker that's crunchy and tastes a bit different, try Kashi Original 7 Grain Sea Salt Pita Crisps. Don't hesitate to try reduced-fat or store-brand versions of oldies but goodies.

In order of nutrition score.



▶ Kashi Original 7 Grain Sea Salt Pita Crisps

COST 46 cents
CALORIES 120
FAT 3 grams
SODIUM 180 mg
FIBER 5 grams

TASTE Very good
Crunchy, slightly hard, toasted-wheat crackers, mild seasoning.



▶ Sensible Portions Pita Bites Original Sea Salt

COST 60 cents
CALORIES 120
FAT 3.5 grams
SODIUM 220 mg
FIBER 1 gram

TASTE Good
Mild, lightly toasted white-flour crackers. A bit dry and hard. Needs a topping.



▶ Mediterranean Snacks Lentil Sea Salt

COST 67 cents
CALORIES 110
FAT 3 grams
SODIUM 200 mg
FIBER 1 gram

TASTE Good
Crunchy little squares with a bit of salt. Moderately toasted, mild grain flavor.



▶ Crunchmaster Multi-Seed Original

COST 88 cents
CALORIES 140
FAT 5 grams
SODIUM 110 mg
FIBER 2 grams

TASTE Very good
Toasted sesame-flavored crispy rice crackers with salt and a variety of seeds.



▶ Pepperidge Farm Jingos! Lime & Sweet Chili

COST 44 cents
CALORIES 130
FAT 4 grams
SODIUM 220 mg
FIBER 1 gram

TASTE Very good
Spicy little crackers with garlic, onion, lime, and cayenne. Flavorful enough to eat alone.

Four icons take on the competition

THE ICON Nabisco Ritz, 11 cents per serving

THE COMPETITION Nabisco Ritz Reduced Fat, 15 cents; Nice Golden Rounds (Walgreens), 20 cents.

THE VERDICT: SIMILAR. Nabisco Ritz are crispy, flaky, buttery, salty, and slightly sweet. Reduced Fat (2 grams of fat vs. 4.5 grams) and Walgreens are similar to the original but a little less buttery and tender. All scored Fair for nutrition. A serving of Nice has 380 milligrams of sodium, more than all others in our taste-off.

THE ICON Nabisco Triscuit Original, 39 cents per serving

THE COMPETITION Nabisco Triscuit Reduced Fat, 44 cents; Market Pantry Woven Wheats Whole Grain (Target), 25 cents.

THE VERDICT: SIMILAR. Triscuit Original are crunchy squares with a big toasted-wheat flavor and a touch of saltiness. Reduced Fat and Market Pantry versions taste very similar to Original. Reduced Fat (2.5 grams of fat vs. 4 grams in Original) scored Very Good for nutrition; the others, Good.

THE ICON Nabisco Wheat Thins Original, 44 cents per serving

THE COMPETITION Nabisco Wheat Thins Reduced Fat, 44 cents; 365 Everyday Value Organic Wheat Squares (Whole Foods), 38 cents.

THE VERDICT: DIFFERENT. Nabisco's Original and Reduced Fat are crunchy, sweet, and toasted. Whole Foods are pale, speckled, less sweet, and less crunchy. All scored Good for nutrition.

THE ICON Nabisco Original Premium Saltines Topped with Sea Salt, 10 cents per serving

THE COMPETITION Clover Valley Saltines (Dollar General), 4 cents. Nabisco Saltines are already low in fat and don't have a reduced-fat version.

THE VERDICT: SIMILAR. Original Saltines have a mild, salty, flour-based taste, and so do the store-brand crackers, though they were slightly stale. Both scored Fair for nutrition.



▶ Showstopping screen

It's not often that we test a product that literally stops our employees in their tracks, but that was the effect when head TV tester Claudio Ciacchi wowed a lunchtime crowd with LG's giant 84-inch Ultra High Definition TV. The set, model 84LM9600, is among the first of a new breed of so-called 4K TVs with four times the resolution of current 1080p sets, promising even more detailed images than the best 1080p models. The bad news: a \$20,000 price tag, plus a lack of 4K content that can take full advantage of the TV's higher resolution.

▶ SEE WHAT 4K TV HAS TO OFFER

Use your smart phone to download the RedLaser or ShopSavvy app and scan the code for the video.



U.S. hospitals still not safe enough

Looking for good news about hospital safety? More hospitals are required to track and report more data, so our updated hospital safety Ratings now include 2,031 hospitals—up from 1,159 institutions in our August 2012 report.

But we still find cause for concern:

- The lowest-scoring hospital, Clinch Valley Medical Center in Richlands, Va., got only a 14 on our 100-point scale. Beth Stiltner, the hospital's quality/risk manager, says that the score represents "only a small piece of the entire hospital's performance" and that in 2012 the hospital reduced its infection rates. We'll incorporate new data into future updates when they're released by the government.
- The average score for all hospitals was 49. "When it comes to health care, average should never be good enough, and this average is clearly not even close," says John Santa, M.D., director of the Consumer Reports Health Ratings Center.
- The highest-scoring hospital, Bellin Memorial Hospital in Green Bay, Wis., got a 74. That's up from another hospital's high score in August of 72 but shows that even top-scoring hospitals can improve.

In addition, teaching hospitals, which are supposed to prepare future doctors, are lagging. Almost two-thirds of the nation's 258 teaching hospitals that have a safety score ranked below average. "Those hospitals should set the bar higher," Santa says. "But that is not happening."

That trend is especially acute in and around New York City: 27 of the 28 teaching hospitals in the region scored

below the national average. The exception: Winthrop University Hospital in Mineola, N.Y. Overall, 58 of the area's 70 hospitals with a safety score ranked below average.

Our updated safety score focuses on five key measures: readmissions, complications, communication, the overuse of CT scans, and infections. The data, which come from the government, cover different time ranges, depending on the specific measure. Full Ratings, as well as advice on other factors to consider when choosing a hospital, are available to online subscribers at ConsumerReports.org/hospitalratings.

HIGHEST-SCORING teaching hospitals

| | | |
|---|--------------------|-----------|
| Mayo Clinic Hospital | Phoenix | 69 |
| Mayo Clinic Jacksonville | Jacksonville, Fla. | 68 |
| Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center | La Crosse, Wis. | 66 |
| Bronson Methodist Hospital | Kalamazoo, Mich. | 65 |
| Saint Mary's Hospital | Waterbury, Conn. | 65 |
| Mayo Clinic-Saint Marys Hospital | Rochester, Minn. | 65 |
| Indiana University Health Ball Memorial Hospital | Muncie, Ind. | 64 |
| Avera McKennan Hospital and University Health Center | Sioux Falls, S.D. | 63 |
| Baystate Medical Center | Springfield, Mass. | 63 |
| University of Utah Health Care-Hospital and Clinics | Salt Lake City | 62 |

LOWEST-SCORING teaching hospitals

| | | |
|---|--------------------|-----------|
| University of Connecticut Health Center, John Dempsey Hospital | Farmington, Conn. | 17 |
| Kings County Hospital Center | Brooklyn, N.Y. | 22 |
| Bronx-Lebanon Hospital Center Health Care System | Bronx, N.Y. | 25 |
| Grady Memorial Hospital | Atlanta | 27 |
| Shands Jacksonville Medical Center | Jacksonville, Fla. | 27 |
| Tulane Medical Center | New Orleans | 28 |
| Westchester Medical Center | Valhalla, N.Y. | 28 |
| Harlem Hospital Center | New York City | 28 |
| Jacobi Medical Center | Bronx, N.Y. | 29 |
| University Medical Center | Lubbock, Texas | 30 |
| Saint Louis University Hospital | St. Louis | 30 |



Relaxation drinks: An anti-frazzle fizzle?

If you're looking for a beverage to help you chill out, you're not alone. U.S. consumers spent \$464.9 million on drinks for de-stressing and promoting sleep in 2010, the most recent year for data, according to Zenith International, a U.K.-based food-and-drink consulting group. That's up 38 percent from 2009. But labels don't usually list specific amounts of their claimed mellowing agents. Our own analysis of eight widely sold relaxation drinks showed that many didn't have enough of the ingredients purported in published studies to help you unwind.

What we found. Among the tested products, only the iChill Relaxation Shot, Relax Drink Extreme Relaxation Shot, and ViB (Vacation in a Bottle) products showed the amounts of their relaxation ingredients; the rest just named them or listed a blend. For each product in our tests, we took samples from three batches. Results are from 2012, when we tested; some drinks have since been reformulated.

Three drinks listed GABA, a chemical that may help regulate stress and anxiety, but even at their maximum recommended daily doses, two—Dream Water 0-Calorie Sleep and Relaxation Shot and RelaxZen Night—contained far lower amounts than the daily dose of GABA used in a published study. The third drink, RelaxZen Day, had far higher amounts.

When we tested, labels for Dream Water, Marley's Mellow Mood, and RelaxZen Night listed unspecified amounts of melatonin, a hormone that has had mixed results in treating insomnia. All three contained lower amounts than the typical 0.3-milligram to 5-milligram dose used in clinical trials to treat insomnia. Relax Drink and iChill listed amounts per serving (1 milligram and 5 milligrams, respectively), but both averaged far less than claimed (0.02 milligrams and 0.3 milligrams).

Four products listed L-theanine, an amino acid in green-tea leaves that some evidence shows might help with relaxation and sleep. Three of the four listed L-threonine, an amino acid in proteins, but we found no evidence that it aids mental relaxation. Of the four, only ViB specified the amounts of both amino acids on its label, and its levels of both varied widely.

Dream Water listed 5-hydroxytryptophan, a chemical that might help raise levels of the brain chemical serotonin and have a positive effect on anxiety and sleep. But the levels averaged much lower than those used to treat sleep disorders in published studies.

Five products listed one or more botanicals, including chamomile, passion flower, and valerian. RelaxZen Day had significant levels of a compound that indicated the presence of passion-flower extract; compounds in the rest

suggest low or trace amounts of the claimed botanicals.

Health concerns. Some labels of tested products noted that the drink might cause drowsiness and shouldn't be used when driving. Many indicated that the drink should be avoided by pregnant or nursing women and by children. Yet our mystery shoppers found relaxation drinks in supermarkets, drugstores, and gas stations, sometimes in refrigerator cases near sodas and juices. That children may have easy access to these products concerns Sylvie Stacy, M.D., whose review of the safety and efficacy of ingredients in relaxation drinks appeared in the December 2011 issue of the *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychopharmacology*.

"Although moderate consumption of these beverages by healthy individuals is likely safe," she wrote, "an objective reduction in stress is improbable and associated adverse effects are possible." Stacy, a resident in preventive medicine at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore, said she began examining safety concerns involving relaxation drinks because of recent reports of risks possibly associated with highly caffeinated energy drinks. The Food and Drug Administration has said it would conduct a safety review of energy drinks. The FDA is considering requiring that labels disclose the amount of caffeine those products pack, limitations on use, and warnings about possible adverse effects. That makes sense, because our recent investigation found that energy drinks sometimes have more caffeine than their manufacturers claim.

Our investigation into relaxation drinks has found little evidence that these products have been associated with harmful reactions. A spokesman for the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration said that relaxation drinks "do not contribute to emergency-department visits" or that the visits are so rare that they could not be counted.

The Food and Drug Administration said in response to our Freedom of Information Act request that it has received six adverse-event reports. (By themselves, such reports don't prove that a product or its ingredients caused a problem.) According to the reports, a 12-year old boy became ill on Nov. 30, 2012, after drinking Marley's Mellow Mood. He was "shaking and twitching," but symptoms abated, according to the reports. Five other children complained of vomiting, headache, nausea, chills, and fatigue, according to the reports.

We asked a Marley's spokesman to comment and received e-mail messages stating that the "packaging clearly states that Marley's Mellow Mood is not intended for

consumption by children," that the company "cooperated fully with the FDA" and that Marley's own investigation found "no issues with product quality or package integrity." An FDA spokeswoman said the reports were still being investigated.

Bottom line. An occasional relaxation drink is probably fine for most healthy adults, but read the labels for warnings and maximum daily servings. It's sensible for people taking supplements or medications to first consult their health-care provider about possible interactions. Then check our chart for container size, price, calories, and sugars per container, which vary widely.

Put with chart

We bought most of the drinks online or in stores in the New York tri-state area, Pennsylvania, and Ohio between October 2011 and August 2012 and tested at least one sample from each of three batches of a product, choosing one flavor (usually fruit).

DID YOU KNOW?

Seven of the eight tested drinks were labeled dietary supplements. The exception, ViB, bore a nutrition-facts label indicating that it was a conventional beverage. (The new Marley's label now bears a nutrition-facts label, but the samples we tested were labeled dietary supplements.) Dietary ingredients in supplements require no FDA preapproval; in conventional beverages, the same ingredients must be FDA-approved as food additives or termed "generally recognized as safe."

Extra content for CRO only Up Front/Crackers - CR May 2013

| NUTRITION: HOW 30 CRACKERS STACK UP | | | | | | |
|--|--------------|-------------|----------|---------|-------------|-----------|
| In order of nutrition score. | | Per serving | | | | |
| Product | Serving size | Weight (g) | Calories | Fat (g) | Sodium (mg) | Fiber (g) |
| Very good | | | | | | |
| Nabisco Triscuit Reduced Fat | 7 crackers | 30 | 120 | 2.5 | 160 | 3 |
| Wasa Whole Grain Crispbread | 1 slice | 12 | 40 | 0 | 50 | 2 |
| Kashi Original 7 Grain Sea Salt Pita Crisps | 11 crisps | 31 | 120 | 3 | 180 | 5 |
| Good | | | | | | |
| Nabisco Triscuit Original | 6 crackers | 28 | 120 | 4 | 180 | 3 |
| Kellogg's Special K Multi-Grain | 24 crackers | 30 | 120 | 3 | 220 | 3 |
| Nabisco Triscuit Thin Crisps Original | 15 crackers | 30 | 130 | 4.5 | 180 | 3 |
| Nabisco Wheat Thins Reduced Fat | 16 pieces | 29 | 130 | 3.5 | 230 | 3 |
| Market Pantry Woven Wheats Whole Grain (Target) | 7 crackers | 31 | 130 | 6 | 200 | 3 |
| Dare Grains First Whole Grain | 4 crackers | 18 | 80 | 3 | 140 | 2 |
| Mary's Gone Crackers Organic Original | 13 crackers | 30 | 140 | 5 | 190 | 3 |
| Sensible Portions Pita Bites Original Sea Salt | 9 crackers | 28 | 120 | 3.5 | 220 | 1 |
| Mediterranean Snacks Lentil Crackers Sea Salt | 18 crackers | 28 | 110 | 3 | 200 | 1 |
| 365 Everyday Value Organic Wheat Squares (Whole Foods) | 16 crackers | 30 | 120 | 4.5 | 150 | 2 |
| Nabisco Wheat Thins Original | 16 pieces | 31 | 140 | 5 | 230 | 3 |
| Crunchmaster Multi-Seed Original | 15 crackers | 30 | 140 | 5 | 110 | 2 |
| Blue Diamond Almond Nut-Thins Hint of Sea Salt | 17 crackers | 30 | 130 | 2.5 | 80 | 1 |
| Nabisco Wheat Thins Toasted Chips Garden Valley Veggie | 13 chips | 28 | 130 | 4.5 | 260 | 2 |
| Red Oval Farms Mini Stoned Wheat Thins | 21 crackers | 30 | 130 | 3 | 410 | 1 |
| Pepperidge Farm Jingos Lime & Sweet Chili | 23 pieces | 30 | 130 | 4 | 220 | 1 |
| Keebler Town House Flipsides Pretzel Reduced Fat | 5 crackers | 14 | 60 | 2 | 180 | 0 |
| Fair | | | | | | |
| Clover Valley Saltines (Dollar General) | 5 crackers | 14 | 60 | 1.5 | 170 | 0 |
| Nabisco Original Premium Saltines Topped with Sea Salt | 5 crackers | 16 | 70 | 1.5 | 150 | 0 |
| Milton's Original Multi-Grain | 2 crackers | 16 | 70 | 2.5 | 105 | 0 |
| Nice Golden Rounds (Walgreens) | 10 crackers | 31 | 150 | 6 | 380 | 1 |
| Nabisco Ritz Reduced Fat | 5 crackers | 15 | 70 | 2 | 150 | 0 |
| Keebler Town House Flatbread Crisps Sea Salt & Olive Oil | 8 crackers | 15 | 70 | 2 | 140 | 0 |
| Keebler Club Multi-Grain | 4 crackers | 14 | 70 | 3 | 120 | 0 |
| Sunshine Cheez-It Big | 14 crackers | 30 | 150 | 8 | 230 | 0 |
| Nabisco Ritz | 5 crackers | 16 | 80 | 4.5 | 105 | 0 |
| Nabisco Ritz Toasted Chips Sweet Home Sour Cream & Onion | 12 chips | 28 | 140 | 6 | 270 | 0 |