



The Devil is in the Details...

I'm eating "lite" and non-fat foods, so why am I still gaining weight?

By Ryan Lonnett, Founder of Empowered Wellness

Following our recent publication of the *Sugar Showdown – Let's Get Ready to Rumble* and an interview on NPR, we've received many requests for more examples of hidden sugar and other ingredients that are contributing to our national health crisis.

In the early 1980s, the average person in the U.S. consumed about 25 pounds of sugar per year in his diet. Today, the average person is consuming over 156 pounds on a per capita basis, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. According to the Sugar Association, 29 of those pounds come directly from the sugar bowl (sucrose) and the rest is from our food. Of course, those foods include things like candy, soda and junk food but plenty of sugar is hiding in places where you might not expect it, such as ketchup and peanut butter. Many "lite" foods are loaded with sugar, but their "lite" labels lead many to believe they are eating diet-safe food. Not necessarily so.

This reminds me of my cousin. Little John was born a "Junior", but this name became ironic as he gradually grew to become a very large man. He loved food, became a chef and opened a small restaurant in my hometown in 1985. He needed some muscle to move furniture into the new restaurant and he enlisted my brother, Ray, for some help. Little John's physical condition had him struggling and he decided that day to start a new diet. He gave Ray \$25 to buy him some of the "lite" and non-fat Lean Cuisine frozen dinners that he'd seen on TV. Ray returned with nine to 10 packages, and John ate them for lunch. All of them.

The purpose of the *Sugar Showdown* was to create a visual for the Department of Agriculture's statistics on sugar consumption and to demystify nutrition. We speak daily with people that are depriving themselves with what they think are healthier choices but they're not seeing the results they desire and they don't understand why.

So let's look at one of the other culprits: peanut butter. Here are pictures of two similar looking peanut butters. The red one markets itself as "the closest you can get to real peanuts" but when we look at the nutrition



labels on both, the green one is 100% peanuts and the red one has a few other ingredients, including sugar. All of the ingredients are represented in the photos.



Our non-profit organization, The Empowered Wellness Movement, is often invited to deliver presentations in FCPS classrooms and this picture *always* gets the students' attention. We promote choosing non-processed foods and while many are easily recognized (carrots, bananas, etc.), we give the students some tips to identify whether a food in a package is

actually from a farm or factory made. I'm all for occasionally indulging in a sundae, but I don't recommend having one for lunch--in the guise of a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Peanut butter with sugar and processed jelly on processed bread can have as much sugar as that sundae you were planning on having after dinner. With increased awareness and the right tools, we can all make more informed choices. Those choices will drive what the market delivers in the future as supply always meets demand.



For more tips on Healthy Choices or for setting up a presentation at your own school, please visit:

www.empowered-wellness.com or

<https://www.facebook.com/EmpoweredWellness>

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