

# FitFacts®

## The Caloric Expense of Alcohol During the Holidays

FOR THOSE OF YOU WANTING TO DROWN YOUR SORROWS OF A HOLIDAY SEASON GONE MAD WITH COPIOUS AMOUNTS OF SPIKED EGGNOG LIKE ACTOR CHEVY CHASE IN THE MOVIE CHRISTMAS VACATION OR BRINGING GOOD CHEERS BY COMBINING LARGE AMOUNTS OF HIGH-FAT TREATS WITH HIGH-CALORIC ALCOHOL, THE NEW YEAR MAY START WITH A RUDE AWAKENING.

Researchers at the Laval University in St.-Foy, Quebec found that combining high-fat foods such as glazed ham, stuffing and pecan pie with alcoholic drinks causes people to put away many more calories than eating fatty foods with nonalcoholic drinks, or eating low-fat foods with or without alcohol.

Considering that a traditional Christmas dinner can easily add up to more than 1,500 calories—a plate filled with ham, cornbread with butter, a slice of cheesecake, mashed potatoes with gravy, salad with croutons and vinaigrette, and a glass of beer—consuming additional calories from alcohol is likely to put extra pounds on your frame.

Some alcoholic beverages are more forgiving—at least in terms of their caloric intake—than others. In general, hard liquor and cocktail drinks tend to have many more calories than a glass of beer or wine, but having one cocktail or multiple drinks can easily add up to a meal.

Let's take a look at some popular seasonal choices for alcoholic beverages:

### EGGNOG

One cup of eggnog (250 ml) contains 160–290 calories and a shot of spirits adds about another 60 calories, a fine dessert in itself.

### WINE

Red and white wine have about the same amount of calories, 121–125 calories per 5-ounce glass. Dessert wines tend to have more calories: A 3.5-ounce glass, for instance, has about 165 calories.

### BEER

Among the popular non-light beers on the market, a 12-ounce bottle of Corona Extra (148 calories, 14 g of carbs and 4.6% alcohol by volume) is the “lightest” pick.

Samual Adams Boston Lager comes in second with 160 calories, 18 g of carbs and 4.8% alcohol content; Bass Ale ties with 160 calories, 13 g of carbs, but a higher 5.5% alcohol content; and George Killian's Irish Red a close third with 163 calories, 14 g of carbs, and 4.9% alcohol content.

Better for your waistline are the following two “light beers”: Beck's Premier Light with 64 calories, 4 g of carbs and 3.8% volume of alcohol and Michelob ULTRA, which has 95 calories, 2.6 carbs and 4.1% volume of alcohol. Amstel Light, which packs 99 calories, 5.5 g of carbs and 3.5% volume of alcohol, is a true alternative to Amstel's heavyweight Cream Stout.



### HARD LIQUOR AND COCKTAILS = HARD TO BURN CALORIES

When it comes to hard liquor, a 1.5-ounce glass of 53-proof Kahlua has 170 calories, which is only 10 calories shy of a whole wheat Krispy Kreme doughnut.

A frozen margarita made with 2 ounces of tequila, 4.5 ounces of Jose Cuervo margarita mix, and salt will set you back about 246 calories, the equivalent of a 4-ounce serving of Baskin-Robbins Cherries Jubilee ice cream.

A 12-ounce serving of Rum and Coke will set you back 361 calories, or those packed in Carl's Jr. Charbroiled BBQ Chicken Sandwich.

A 2-ounce Martini, made with Gin and dry Vermouth, has 119 calories; a 2.1-ounce serving of a Manhattan, made with Whiskey, Vermouth and Bitters, has 132 calories. This makes these two “Ms” the low-calorie cocktail drink alternative.

### A HAPPY HOLIDAY

So whether you're struggling with holiday angst or excessive holiday cheer, try going for a walk, a bike ride or any other type of physical activity that will lift your spirits.

Being physically active before or after a meal will not only help burn calories, but is also a great way to deal with holiday stress.

Then get the family and friends together for a great comedy hour with the Griswold's, the Grinch, or if you prefer a Hallmark classic, the television rebroadcasting of “It's a Wonderful Life.”

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

[UC Davis Health System](http://UCDavisHealthSystem)