

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

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## Frozen Goodness

Does it come as any surprise that the US leads the world in the production of ice cream? At 23 gallons of ice cream or other frozen dessert each, and 1.6 billion gallons a year nationally, that's not surprising at all! What does seem a bit surprising is that, given the heat we live in, no Florida cities are among the top 5 for ice cream consumption. Still, if we're anything like the national average, about 90% of us eat ice cream or some kind of frozen dessert. Yum, yum, yum!

Given our national taste for frozen goodies, and our expanding waistlines, is it any wonder that people are asking "Which one should I, or dare I, eat?" You know the labels are confusing. How can something that says "Sugar Free" in huge letters have so many calories? And if you read the Nutrition Facts box, you'll see that some of those 'sugar free' varieties have more carbohydrates than the regular ice creams!

How can that be? Is the box lying? No, both the front and back are being truthful. The front 'sugar free' statement just means that *no sugar* was added to the mixture. But it doesn't mean that there is no sugar. Milk has sugar, lactose. So if there is milk in the mixture there will probably be milk sugar. If they used fruit juice concentrate there will be plenty of sugar. Oh yes, it looks and says 'all natural', but fruit juice is sweet. Concentrating it makes it sweeter. Using it adds a lot of sugar.

If the manufacturer simply took out all the sugar and used a low-calorie sweetener there would be two problems. One, there would be much less ice cream

because all the sugar is missing. And two, it wouldn't be smooth and creamy, it would be icy, hard as a brick. So, to keep the wonderful texture a lot of less-sweet starches are used. They keep the dessert smooth and scoopable, not rocky. But they also add some calories as carbohydrate. For a person with diabetes or someone who is just trying to limit their carb intake, these products are no help at all.

Some of the lower calorie products are made with little or no fat. They tend to have problems too. Without fat the flavor is not as strong, and the texture is more icy and grainy. So again, some starches are used to keep it smooth and soft.

What's a person to do? First, decide what your priorities are - carbs, fats, or calories? Then read the Nutrition Facts label, not just the front of the package. Finally, watch your serving size. If you must limit your carbohydrate intake you will need to choose very carefully. Go by the Total Carbohydrate amount, not the grams of sugar. All carbohydrate except fiber becomes sugar in your system. Because all the frozen treats tend to have a lot of carbohydrate you might decide that when you do eat ice cream, you'll take just a little bit of your favorite kind. If you need to manage the fat content, then go for a fat-free variety. Read the label to help yourself decide how much of your chosen variety your calories can afford.

Remember as you look the label to consider any toppings or cones too. A large waffle or sugar cone can add over 250 calories, but a paper dish has 0 cal. Whipped cream is pure fat, lots of calories there. Nuts too have a lot of fat. Caramel, chocolate and yes, those red maraschino cherries have lots of sugar. A low calorie jam might be a better topping choice. Pick your favorite flavor, choose a portion size your diet can afford, then eat it slowly and savor every lovely, luscious bite of it.

If you want to make your own there are plenty of recipes around. Eggs help make a smooth, creamy frozen dessert, but must be cooked first to be safe. Find a cooked custard recipe like the one below, or use pasteurized eggs or egg substitute instead. This is a plain vanilla frozen custard, perfect to serve over berries.

#### Vanilla Frozen Custard

2 C low fat milk

3 eggs

3/4 C sugar

pinch of salt

1 C chilled whipping cream

1 Tbsp vanilla

Beat eggs. Put milk in a metal bowl that fits on top of a small saucepan. Put about 1 inch of water in pan, put bowl on top and heat until water boils and milk is hot. Spoon a little hot milk into the beaten eggs to warm them, then gradually stir the egg mixture, sugar and salt into the rest of the hot milk. Continue cooking and stirring over the boiling water until mixture thickens. Remove from heat and refrigerate until cold. Whip chilled cream with vanilla, fold into chilled egg mixture. Line an 8x8 inch cake pan with heavy duty plastic wrap. Pour milk mixture into pan and freeze. For fluffier custard after 2 hours remove from pan and beat until fluffy. Return to freezer until firm. Serve within 2 days. Serves 6.

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