



# THE **LEAN** BERETS

## AVENGERS OF HEALTH!

### “BAR FIGHT!”



*(By Kevin Rail, BS, Special Ops Director, The Lean Berets)*

*The nutrition bar industry is booming and getting bigger every day. The companies that produce these bars go to great lengths to capture the market and fight for your hard earned money. Well, as acting Special Ops Director of The Lean Berets, I've taken it upon myself to give you the lowdown of what to look for in a bar before you slap a few bills on the counter. This may come as a shock, but you may be getting fooled and deceived and don't even know it.*

**Sugars:** Since sugar is such a hot topic in the press these days, I'm going to cover it first. Unless you like the taste of unleavened cardboard, I'm sure you'd like a bar with some flavor, right? Me too! That's where the wonderful world of sweeteners joins the dance.

- As toxic as sugar may be, here's the paradox. Trust me when I tell you, it needs to be in a bar or it will be as bland as a bed sheet. But it is highly advisable that you scan the ingredient label and find out, not only what sweetener is used, but also how many grams of sugar the bar has. You will easily find this information in the **Ingredients** label and **Nutrition Facts** panel.
- Sweeteners like sucralose, aspartame, high fructose corn syrup and acesulfame potassium have no place in society, let alone your body. Avoid bars with these nasty substances at all costs.
- Back in the day, I taste-tested a lot of bars that had artificial sweeteners and they were just plain awful! They sort of had an alcohol-like taste and equally pungent odor that would take down a charging yak. Yuck! I painfully choked down even the smallest of portions.



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- I once ate a bar called a *Monkey Bar* that was a couple days out of date. I was starving and needed something quick and literally had a buck in my wallet. The bar was \$.39 in this sale bin so I figured... Needless to say, it reeked of alcohol and fake sweetener, but I downed that thing faster than the speed of insanity. Two weeks later, when I finally stopped vomiting and taking a minimum of five trips to the bathroom a day for—other reasons, I was finally able to regain a normal lifestyle.
- Learn from my misfortune! It's good practice to avoid ALL artificial sweeteners, *especially those that have "tol" at the end*, such as maltitol, erythritol and sorbitol. These are known as sugar alcohols, and this also explains the alcohol-like flavor I experienced when I ate that corrupted bar.
- Additionally, the claim is that these sweeteners are naturally produced, but there is a good chance they derive from genetically modified corn. And since we're on the subject of GMOs, also be leery of dextrin, maltodextrin, corn syrup and any other corn derivative. They will always be genetically modified unless the bar is 100% organic. Your best bet is to spare yourself the skepticism and throw these bars into the Firing Squad on-deck circle.
- Don't worry; there are some bars that have clean sweeteners in them too. Look for ones that contain organic agave, cane sugar, brown rice syrup, coconut nectar, date sugar, or fruit. But, here's where that darn paradox creeps back onto the field.
- Even if a bar has an organic form of sweetener, it could still be high in sugar content. That's when you refer to the nutrient facts panel. You know, that big rectangular box on the package with all the fun little words and numbers? Here is where you will see the grams of sugar.
- When you are reading this info, make sure to look at the top for the serving size. If it's one serving, then the grams of sugar you see is for the entire bar. However, if it says, "Three servings per bar," then you best multiple by three! Then the truth will set you free.
- For example, if a bar is listed as having one serving per package and it has 22g of sugar, then you know that's the entire amount. If it says it has 10g of sugar, but has three servings at the top, then you're getting 30g of sugar. **PAY ATTENTION TO THIS!**
- For the record, every 4g of sugar equals one teaspoon. This means a healthy bar containing 22g of sugar also gives you a **HEALTHY** dose of sugar—in the form of 5½ teaspoons hombre! The bar I'm referring to here is a Clif bar. I used to eat two in one sitting. For those of you who are a little mathematically challenged, that comes out to 11 whopping teaspoons of sugar in one fell swoop!



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*The point is, bars may appear healthy at first glance, but they could also be high in sugar, which is bad news if you are trying to cut down excess calories.*

**Protein:** We all know by now what protein is all about. It supports lean muscle mass, it helps with immune function and helps with the recreation of every cell in the body. When it comes to bars, know the protein source.

- Often times, they have a form of whey protein called isolate or concentrate. In some cases, they have both. Isolate goes through a process to make it the purest form of whey possible and has a very high biological value, which means it absorbs quickly and easily. It also tends to be lactose free or very close to it. Concentrate is not processed, but has higher lactose content.
- You will also see milk, soy, hemp, rice, pea, chia and just plain nuts in ingredient labels as sources of protein.
- The take-home message is, know what you are allergic or adverse to when choosing your bar. If you are vegan, for example, any bar with milk or whey is out of the question. This also holds true if you are lactose intolerant.

**Fiber:** It stands to reason that bars with fruit in them will be high in fiber. However, nowadays you will find high-fiber bars with ingredients other than fruit, such as inulin, chicory root, corn fiber, and whole grains.

- I'm going to make this easy. Always aim for a bar with at least 4g of fiber per serving. Fiber has a wonderful way of filling you up and keeping you full for an extended period of time. This is clutch if you are going to be away from food for a while or are trying to drop some weight.

**Fat:** Fat content will vary depending on the bar you choose. The ones with a lot of nuts, coconut, and seeds will be higher in fat content than others. I'm actually a huge proponent of fat and look for bars with a high content. All the forms I mentioned above are healthy fats, which much like fiber, fill you up and keep you feeling full. Additionally, they add flavor and help with brain function, inflammation reduction, and hormone production. *Don't be afraid of fats!*

**Carbs:** The carb content of a bar will be determined from the amount of sugar, whole grains, fruit, and to a lesser degree, nuts, seeds, and milk it contains. Unless it is one of those specific, nasty smelling and tasting high protein/low carb bars, it will have a generous amount of carbs. Fear not, as long as there is a balance of protein and fiber. Always think, balance makes perfect!



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**Calories:** When it comes to bars, calories never were and never will be the enemy. It's the quality that matters. For example, a 20-oz bottle of soda contains over 250 calories and a bar might contain over 350, but soda has no nutrient value whatsoever. A good bar, on the other hand, will have quality calories that derive from whole foods and healthy nutrients.

- *Calories in bars derive from the three macronutrients—protein, carbs, and fat.* You will see bars that range anywhere from 190 to over 400 calories. The highest calorie bars are also usually high in fat, since 1g equals 9 calories.
- Take your reason for choosing the bar into consideration when you make your selection. For example, if you are at work and ravenous, and will be eating dinner in a couple hours, stick with a bar of smaller size, such as a 200-calorie bar. If you are going hiking and won't be eating a solid meal for a while, a more substantial bar is a better option.



### **The Lean Berets featured pick: "Perfect Bar"** *The Perfect Bar*

*Company* is as legitimate as they come. You won't find a hint of foreign or artificial substances in any of their bars. One of the main things we like about these is they also blend in greens and sea vegetables like alfalfa, kale, celery, spinach, dulse, and kelp. For those of you that might be turning your nose up right now, I'm begging you to trust me when I say these bars taste delicious! Go to your local health food store and stock up right now.



**Conclusion!** The most important take-home message is, always read the ingredient label first, then scan the nutrient facts panel. As soon as you spot an unworthy ingredient, there's no sense to look at the grams of protein, fiber, fat, and carbs. *Stick with the most whole, organic bar as possible and steer clear of ingredients you cannot pronounce. Also stay away from numbers, colors, and abbreviations in ingredient labels. You have my permission to send them to the Firing Squad. ☺*

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