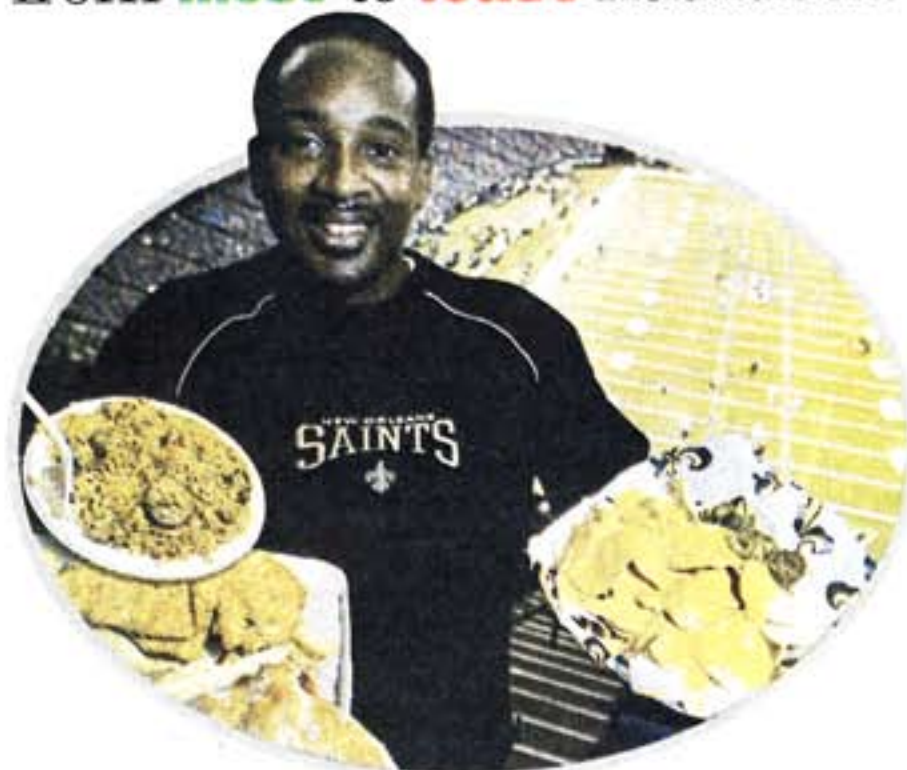


Here's one BCS poll that truly is a matter of life and death: a ranking of the Best Concession Stand food, from **most** to **least** nutritious.



# DEATH BY NACHO

From school cafeteria lines to fast-food drive-thru lanes, America is getting hip to healthful eating options. But there's one place where eating the right thing is as difficult as it has ever been: stadium concession areas.

By Molly Kimball  
Contributing writer

The reason is obvious: limited supply for limited demand. Nutrition is the last thing on the minds of most Saints and Hornets ticketholders as they snake their way through the Superdome and Arena food and drink lines. Health-conscious or not, on game day, "tastes great" still trumps "less filling" for most.

But what if you're on a fitness program and want to cheer on the home team without veering off your diet? What's a fat-conscious fan to do?

The answer can be found in our BCS (Best Concession Stand) rankings, which list 15 Dome and Arena food staples from most to least nutritious.

The top three items are high in energy-sustaining protein, low in fat and refined carbohydrates. Unfortunately, one of them is available at only one stand in the Arena, and the other two are limited to pricey club-level seating areas only. At sporting events, it helps to be wealthy if you want to eat healthy.

The bottom four items contain enough blood-pressure-raising sodium and artery-clogging saturated fat to land you in the post-game emergency room, instead of in your living room watching the highlights.

We're not saying you can't down a Dome foam or a foot-long chili dog on occasion. We're just saying that it's easier to manage your health if you know exactly what you're getting your body into when you put concession-stand food into it.

## 1 Chicken or steak kabobs\*

**Calories** 130-160  
**Total Fat** 3-6g  
**Saturated Fat** 1-2g  
**Total Carbohydrate** 2g  
**Fiber** 0g  
**Protein** 24g  
**Sodium** 500mg

Note: Lower numbers are for chicken, higher numbers for steak. The kabobs are the most nutritious stadium fare, by far. With an average of 150 calories each, they're essentially pure protein, with few carbs and little fat. The sad news: They're available only at the Arena.

## 2 Pasta bar\*\*

**Calories** 280  
**Total Fat** 9g  
**Saturated Fat** 1g  
**Total Carbohydrate** 23g  
**Fiber** 0g  
**Protein** 27g  
**Sodium** 750mg

\*Red sauce; no pasta, garlic bread or salad dressing. Club Level fans have access to a pasta bar where chicken, shrimp, crawfish and/or vegetables can be heated in a skillet with penne pasta and white or red sauce. Served with a Caesar salad and garlic bread. To make it diet friendly, request little or no dressing, skip the bread and pasta.

## 3 Grilled chicken Caesar salad\*\* without dressing

**Calories** 210  
**Total Fat** 7g  
**Saturated Fat** 3g  
**Total Carbohydrate** 12g  
**Fiber** 3g  
**Protein** 26g  
**Sodium** 680mg

Another item that is available only in the club levels. Each 2-ounce ladle of Caesar dressing adds another 190 calories and 18 grams of fat, so be careful.

## 4 Blackened turkey sandwich\*\*

**Calories** 245  
**Total Fat** 4g  
**Saturated Fat** 1g  
**Total Carbohydrate** 30g  
**Fiber** 1g  
**Protein** 22g  
**Sodium** 250-600mg

Not a bad bet for a stadium sandwich, this one is plain and simple: a small bun (alas, it's white bread, not wheat) and lean turkey breast. It's a pity that this sandwich is offered only in the Superdome's Club Level.

## 5 Quiznos roast beef sub\*\*\*

**Calories** 350  
**Total Fat** 8g  
**Saturated Fat** 4g  
**Total Carbohydrate** 37g  
**Fiber** 4g  
**Protein** 32g  
**Sodium** 700mg

Quiznos offers 5-inch subs that are low in fat and high in protein. Unfortunately, they are pre-prepared off-site, so white bread is your only option. There are no Quiznos in the Arena, and only two locations in the Superdome — both on the upper terrace level.

## 6 BBQ brisket sandwich

**Calories** 270-350  
**Total Fat** 6-15g  
**Saturated Fat** 2-6g  
**Total Carbohydrate** 30g  
**Fiber** 1g  
**Protein** 24g  
**Sodium** 250-600mg

The brisket sandwich is a pretty decent alternative to the turkey sandwich — at least the day we had it. There can be a lot of variation in the fat content of brisket, so there's no guarantee that you'll always get the leaner cuts.

## 7 Popcorn

**Calories** 410  
**Total Fat** 24g  
**Saturated Fat** 4g  
**Total Carbohydrate** 48g  
**Fiber** 8.5g  
**Protein** 8g  
**Sodium** 748mg

The popcorn at the Dome and Arena is served in enormous 65-ounce tubs. However, since no extra butter is added, the nutritional numbers on the popcorn are high, but not scary-high. The better news is that this bucket of popcorn packs in more than 8 grams of fiber, about a quarter of the USDA's daily recommended intake.

## 8 Peanuts

**Calories** 1,020  
**Total Fat** 84g  
**Saturated Fat** 12g  
**Total Carbohydrate** 36g  
**Fiber** 12g  
**Protein** 42g  
**Sodium** 1,368mg

Holy cow, 1,000-plus calories for peanuts? Many people's impression is that peanuts are good for us, so they're a guilt-free snack. And this is true, if you have one or two servings. Unfortunately, most stadium peanuts have approximately six servings per bag. So if you have the willpower to consume only a third of the nuts in the bag, you're in good shape.

## 9 King-size soft pretzel

**Calories** 360  
**Total Fat** 2g  
**Saturated Fat** 0g  
**Total Carbohydrate** 76g  
**Fiber** 2g  
**Protein** 12g  
**Sodium** 300mg

The soft pretzel is lower-cal than the popcorn, but only by about 50 calories. And it's got the carbohydrate equivalent of 5 slices of white bread. If you must have the pretzel, keep it plain. Ordering the jalapeno and-cheese-stuffed pretzel will tack on 120 calories and 10 grams of fat.

## 10 Cajun jambalaya

**Calories** 480  
**Total Fat** 14g  
**Saturated Fat** 4g  
**Total Carbohydrate** 77g  
**Fiber** 3g  
**Protein** 13g  
**Sodium** 1,380mg

No surprise here. That heaping bowl of jambalaya is packed with carbs, high in fat, and loaded with sodium. Your taste buds may love it, but your waistline won't.

## 11 Hot dog, plain

**Calories** 300  
**Total Fat** 19g  
**Saturated Fat** 7g  
**Total Carbohydrate** 23g  
**Fiber** 1g  
**Protein** 10g  
**Sodium** 956mg

Good news if hot dogs are part of your game-time tradition. A plain hot dog is actually not a calorie disaster, and ketchup and mustard add only a trivial amount of calories. Don't get too excited, though: Its high amounts of saturated fat, sodium and refined white carbs make a hot dog on a bun a far cry from "health food."

## 12 Foot-long hot dog with chili and cheese

**Calories** 640  
**Total Fat** 41g  
**Saturated Fat** 16g  
**Total Carbohydrate** 43g  
**Fiber** 2g  
**Protein** 24g  
**Sodium** 2,410mg

A full day's worth of sodium and just shy of a day's worth of saturated fat, all in one convenient package! Stick with a plain, regular-sized hot dog unless you're into playing roulette with your health.

## 13 Domino's pepperoni pizza personal size

**Calories** 650  
**Total Fat** 32g  
**Saturated Fat** 8g  
**Total Carbohydrate** 69g  
**Fiber** 5g  
**Protein** 25g  
**Sodium** 1,000mg

No one ever claimed that pepperoni and cheese on white dough was good for you. This one has just over a half-day's worth of saturated fat and sodium. Best bet if you're craving pizza is to split it with a friend. Your heart (and your waistband) will thank you.

## 14 Chicken tenders with french fries

**Calories** 805  
**Total Fat** 40g  
**Saturated Fat** 8.5g  
**Total Carbohydrate** 69g  
**Fiber** 5g  
**Protein** 47g  
**Sodium** 1,490mg

And to think, this is what parents often get the kids for dinner at games (and many other fast-food places).

## 15 Chili and cheese nachos

**Calories** 1,270  
**Total Fat** 80g  
**Saturated Fat** 32g  
**Total Carbohydrate** 102g  
**Fiber** 5g  
**Protein** 40g  
**Sodium** 2,868mg

It's a cardiologist's worst nightmare: a day and a half's worth of saturated fat and more sodium than you're supposed to get all day tucked into a plastic tray. Plain nachos aren't much better, with 930 calories, 58 grams of fat and 2,200 mg of sodium.

Note: Nutritional numbers were obtained by reading labels on pre-packaged items; by contacting the food suppliers for nutritional information; or by applying estimated portion sizes to the USDA's nutritional values database.

- \* New Orleans Arena only
- \*\* Arena and Superdome club sections only
- \*\*\* Superdome only

Ratings by registered dietitian Molly Kimball