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**What Makes a Snack Bar Snackworthy**  
 Blog Name: Nutrition Tidbits - HealthCastle

Thursday, August 30, 2007

Take a walk down the snack aisle at your local grocery store and you'll see a wide selection of snack bars. Many of them have eye-catching labels shouting "all-natural," or "zero trans fat," with pretty pictures of fruits and nuts on the packaging. Of course, food packaging does not guarantee that what's pictured is contained in the actual food inside! We set out to review (and taste) a selection of snack bars that are out on the market, and we share our results below.

**What Makes A Snack Bar "Snackworthy"**

To make the list, a snack bar had to:

- contain no more than 200 kcal total calories
- have 3 g or more of fiber
- offer 5 g or more of protein

We also ruled out any snack bars that had sugar as the first ingredient - and not just sugar that was actually called sugar, either! Sugar can appear in many forms on an ingredient list. Some common words that should raise your "sugar radar" are **high fructose corn syrup** (or any other kind of syrup), glucose-fructose, and sugar cane juice.

**Snack Bars worth mentioning...**

**Kashi TLC Crunchy Granola Bars:** These tasty bars meet all criteria above. Providing 4 g of fiber and 6 g of protein, these granola bars are baked with roasted nuts and Kashi's signature 7 whole grains blend. Please note that unlike most other snack bars, which are chewy in nature, these bars are crunchy and dry.

**Gnu:** The flavor we tasted was banana walnut, and with its moist and chewy texture, we loved it! The bar is low in fat and comes packed with 12 g fiber per serving. While the protein content is lower than our criteria (3 g per bar), the amount of fiber to be found in one bar means it's still a good choice for someone who does not get much fiber from other sources. This snack bar is sweetened with fruit juice instead of sugar or syrup.

**LaraBar:** The main thing that impressed our testers about this snack bar is the simple list of ingredients - basically a blend of fruits and nuts, and nothing else. The bar is also moist and chewy. One tip for those watching their total fat intake: the percentage of calories from fat tends to be higher with LaraBars, mainly because of the nuts that go into them. That's not necessarily a bad thing since nuts contain the desirable kind of fat (monounsaturated). There are many flavors available to choose from.

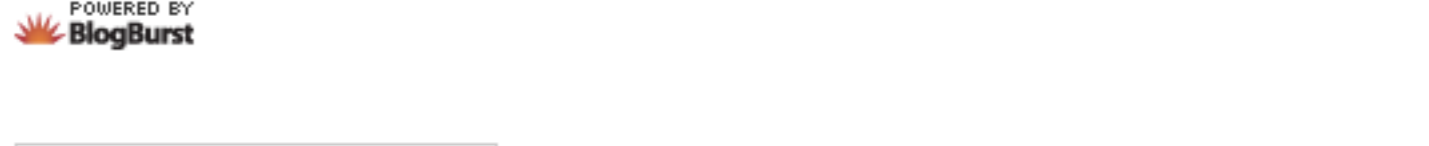
**BellyBar:** This line of bars is marketed to pregnant or nursing women. The Bellybar line is fortified with iron, folic acid, calcium and DHA. Unfortunately, the first ingredient on their list is sugar (in the form of brown rice syrup). Although BellyBars don't meet our criteria, we mention them here because of their unique nutritional profile catered to pregnant women. If you are pregnant and considering this product, be aware that prenatal supplements also contain high levels of nutrients found in this line of bars and you should not consume both unless your doctor has advised you to.

**The Bottom Line**

- Not all snack bars are created equal. Many bars available today are quite high in sugar. If you really feel the urge to get one of these snack bars, be smart about your choices by checking the ingredient list and Nutrition Facts panel.
- Snack Bars are not health foods. Do not let snack bars replace the fresh fruits and vegetables in your daily diet. After all, these bars are created to emulate what you are supposedly missing by not eating fruits and vegetables. Why not go for the real thing instead?

Disclaimer: HealthCastle.com did not, and will not, receive monetary compensation for this review. Editorial reviews on this website do not endorse commercial products or trade names.

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