

Is That a Drink, or a Dessert?

by *Delisa Renideo*

When you hear the word “dessert” what do you think of? Sweet and high in calories, right?

When you hear the word “beverage” what do you think of? Something you drink, right?

After reading about the [“20 worst drinks in America”](#) I’m beginning to think that in many cases, a beverage has become a liquid dessert.



Remember when we used to line up at the water fountain in elementary school? Water qualifies as a drink. Water makes up 2/3 of our bodies and we need to consume lots of it.

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Many people realize that soda isn’t an ideal drink, so marketers have

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cleverly convinced us to drink other beverages that sound healthy, such as vitamin water and energy drinks. But what is vitamin water? Well, it’s mostly sugar, with some synthetic chemical vitamins thrown in. The leading brand, Vitaminwater, is made by Coca-Cola and has 33 grams of sugar per bottle. How much sugar is 33 grams? Eight teaspoons!

Interestingly, [Coca-Cola is being sued by the Center for Science](#) in the Public Interest, alleging that marketing Vitaminwater as a “healthful alternative” to soda is deceptive and in violation of FDA guidelines. How did Coca-Cola respond? They dismissed the suit as “ridiculous” on the grounds that “no

consumer could reasonably be misled into thinking Vitaminwater was a healthy beverage.” What? Say that again?

And what is an energy drink? Sounds good, doesn’t it? We all want to have energy. Well, an energy drink is souped up with both caffeine and large doses of sugar. Is that really energy, or just a buzz?

As always, we need to learn to read labels. We also need to understand how to interpret these labels. When we see how many grams of sugar are in our drink, we need to convert that to something we can relate to better, such as a teaspoon. There are 4 grams of sugar per tea-spoon, so just divide the grams of sugar by 4 to find out how many teaspoons there are.

A 20 ounce bottle of SoBe Green Tea has 240 calories and 61 grams of sugar. Divide that by 4 and you get 15 teaspoons of sugar! How about using a tea bag and some hot water to make some tea,

and if you want to add a teaspoon of sugar to it, go ahead. You’d never think of adding

15 teaspoons of sugar to it!

Another thing to watch out for when reading labels is the serving size. If you buy a 16 oz. bottle of tea, would you only drink half of it? The label says a serving is 8 oz. This makes it



sound like the calories and sugar content are more reasonable. Only 80 calories per serving. But if you drink the whole bottle (who wouldn’t?) it becomes 160 calories of pure sugar. (10 tsp.)

Many other drinks are far worse. A 20 oz. bottle of Sunkist Soda has 320 calories and 84 grams of sugar. (21 tsp.)

Starbucks Peppermint White Chocolate Mocha with Whipped Cream

has 660 calories, 22 g. fat and 95 g. of sugar. (That's 24 tsp. sugar, which equals 1/2 cup, 200 calories of fat, and about 1/3 of an average day's calorie burn). McDonald's Triple Thick Chocolate Shake has 1160 calories, 27 g fat and 168 g sugar. (37 tsp. of sugar, over 3/4 cup, and over half an average day's calorie burn!) Drinks that combine lots of sugar with lots of fat provide a double whammy!

The calories we drink **DO COUNT**. We tend to overlook all those liquid calories, but they can make the difference between a healthy weight and obesity. Most of us wouldn't eat desserts all day long, but many people are doing the equivalent by drinking sweetened drinks all day. Let's start getting our energy and our vitamins from healthy food and our liquid from H₂O.