

The Beer Diet

We know how concerned our readers are to watch the calories. We recognise how important it is to you to maintain a svelte, trim figure, especially when you pull that XXXL beer festival T-Shirt out of the 2001 collection from the wardrobe, and wear it while sayshaying into your local, raising eyebrows as you order your favourite pint.

We appreciate how health conscious our readership is and how the pressure of getting the next pint in makes it difficult sometimes to think about a balanced diet. And we understand that, while you're all committed to the cause of moderation, sometimes everyday stresses lead you to be a little naughty and go over the government's advisory limit of 21 units of alcohol per week (for a male) by a teensy bit.

To make sense of all this confusion, we have taken all the worrying out of a weekend's drinking and calculated the calories and alcohol units for you. With just a bit of creativity we've ensured a stonking good weekend that stays within the weekly unit limit and also reins in the calories to within the average male requirement of 2,500 per day (ladies you'll have to reduce portion sizes by about a fifth).

Note that this diet has been inexpertly calculated by a completely unqualified nutritionist whose knowledge has been acquired

through using the www.drinkaware.co.uk unit calculator and another good few hours of surfing the internet and – so not too dissimilar from many 'lose the pounds' articles in other magazines.

In fact, the diet is deliberately optimised to make use of seasonal ingredients and the ideal time to try it is right at the beginning of April.

It's so dull only to drink the odd pint or two here and there and we appreciate how readers love a party, so this diet takes a two week period and shouts, out and proud, 'Viva la weekend!'

We start on a Sunday. Total abstinence is required until Friday as we're banking our alcohol units for the main event.

Friday Breakfast

Fibre is an important part of the diet so start with a 50g bowl of All-Bran (160 cal). It needs to be eaten dry as there's no room for the luxury of milk in the calorie total. Wash it down with a glass of tap water.

Friday Lunch

A lettuce salad at an amazing 19 calories will provide vitamins for vitality.

To maintain fitness and to burn off approximately 1,000 calories, go for a brisk ten kilometre run in the afternoon.



Friday Evening

Now the fun begins. You can go down the pub and drink a couple of pints of a session ale, like Greene King IPA, which will rack up about 400 calories and four units. Wash this down with three pints of a best bitter, such as Fuller's London Pride, at approximately 630 calories and seven alcohol units. You can even push the boat out and sink a pint of man's beer like Orkney Skullsplitter. At 8.5%, this will also give you a whack of around 420 calories and about four and a half units – for the full testosterone-busting effect see if you can drink it down in one.

There's only one thing that will round off a good drinking session on an empty stomach – a greasy doner kebab. Stagger into the takeaway and put your hands around all one thousand calories worth of fat, carbohydrate and, of course, the all important protein and healthy salad. Plenty of chilli sauce will aid the kebab's transit through the digestive system – or at least in the morning you'll feel like that's happened.

Saturday Early Hours

The combination of Skullsplitter and kebab may have awakened romantic thoughts and it's well known that engaging in sexual activity burns off a surprising number of calories.

A full five minutes of vigorous sex before you pass out will burn off as many as 25 calories. Time to nail the lie that dieting is all work and no play.

Saturday Morning

As you wake up, probably sometime close to midday, the unit count stands at 16 for the week and yesterday you consumed about 2,600 calories – a hundred more than the guidelines. But, remember the run that burnt off 1,000 calories? You can cash in that cheque now by going for a full English breakfast – with the day ahead coming up you really need to put a lining on the stomach. A hearty plateful, such as the Wetherspoon Traditional with Black Pudding, has about 900 calories. Lovely. Don't stint on the brown sauce.

Saturday Afternoon

What's Saturday without going to watch a bit of footie? Stop off for a couple of pre-match pints at the boozier on the way to the ground. Mild is in order for this time of day – much lower in calories and alcohol than your unhealthy fighting lagers. Two snifters of Tetley's Mild, if you can find it, at 3.3% ships about 300 calories and just over three units.

What football match is complete without a pie? The British working man (or woman) is entitled to his (or her) Saturday institution of around 500 calories of lard-encrusted pastry and the lowest-grade, mechanically-recovered meat. Goes down a treat.

Celebrate or commiserate post-match with a classic bitter like Timothy Taylor's Landlord (4.2%) at about 200 calories and a little over two units of alcohol.

Saturday Evening

The more mathematically minded reader may have deduced that the unit count is now at 21 for the week and we've still not got hammered on a Saturday night – as is every red-blooded British person's birthright. Time to employ the cunning plan – draw forward our allowance from next week a few hours early. You're bound to have the self-discipline to cut down in compensation next week, aren't you?

This allows a modest evening's drinking in the local boozier with some more full-bodied beers. Start with a couple of pints of 4.5% Marston's Pedigree, making a total of about five units and 450 calories. You might be feeling a bit peckish – and what's better to soak up the liquid than a traditional pack of pork scratchings? A 50g bag contains about 340 calories. Yum.

You might then want to slake your thirst on an excellent strong ale such as Ringwood Forty-Niner (4.9% oddly enough). A pint of this will add on about 245 calories and going on for two and a half units.

Being on a diet means you may have to slow your drinking down as tonight's session only allows for four pints – but enjoy the

complexity of a pint of Theakston's legendary Old Peculiar as compensation. At 5.6%, approximately 280 calories and topping three units, it certainly pulls its weight.

The day's calories tot up to just under our 2,500 limit (bearing in mind we ran off the breakfast yesterday). There's about 150 calories to spare to invest in a bag of crisps before we wait until midnight and...

Saturday Midnight

...yes, it's curry time and a whole new day and its allowance of 2,500 calories! Counting the calories in a communal eating experience like the post-pub curry is an inexact science but a portion of curry and rice is around 400 calories and seeing as everyone normally orders (and eats) at least enough for two people as well as the poppadoms, naan breads and samosas then we may be looking at ingesting about 1,400 calories during our nocturnal spicy banquet. And don't forget the beer too. A few choice curry houses serve real ale but many have yet to see the light so an average three 330ml bottles of Cobra beer at 5% adds in another five units and about 430 calories.

Fall asleep in the taxi. You dream about a diet that allows you to drink seven pints of real ale and have a full English breakfast and huge curry...and then wake up to realise you're actually on it. Life is good and everyone's your best mate.

Sunday Morning

Life doesn't feel so good when the after effects of the vindaloo have you doing a bit of impromptu exercise – running to the bathroom at 11am on Sunday morning. You probably couldn't stomach anything at the moment but you're allowed another bowl of dry bran flakes with water if you can manage it.

Sunday Lunchtime

All good things come to an end and with only five units left for the rest of the week it's almost time to go back on the wagon.

But not before a traditional Sunday lunchtime down the pub. A couple of pints of best, like London Pride, will account for those five alcohol units rather pleasurably. As you flick through the Sunday papers you'll no doubt come across countless government-sponsored articles, as usual, on the evils of alcohol. Feel rather self-satisfied that if you abstain for the rest of the week then you'll be staying under their weekly unit limit.

The beer throws on 400 calories so leaving a good 150 calories for a healthy Sunday lunch. Were you to be at a Wetherspoons then their side salad with dressing comes in well under this total as does their child-sized portion of Spaghetti Bolognese.

Perhaps with virtually all your calories for the day already spent at the Indian restaurant, you start to wonder whether it was such a good idea to have had the gut-busting curry when, in fact, you

weren't hungry at all last night. Too bad. This is a diet and no diet feels good unless it makes you feel bad most of the time. Suffer sucker.

Unable to have a proper drink for the rest of the week or to eat for the remainder of the day, there's plenty of time to head back home and check the scales to see that weight just falling off. And if it isn't, well, maybe you can conclude that this diet doesn't suit your metabolism and go and drown your sorrows with your mates down the pub.

