

Half of the grains you eat each day should be whole grains.

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NUTRITION TRENDS

Whole grains

Whole grains are front and center in the cereal aisle these days, as General Mills recently added whole grains to all their cereals and more whole-grain pastas like Ronzoni and Barilla are popping up in every shape and size. And just to make it interesting, chefs from San Francisco to New York are offering whole grains on their menus. The whole-grain explosion has been fueled, in part, by the 2005 U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Guide Pyramid, which for the first time recommended that at least half of the grains you eat each day be whole grains. Whole grains are nutrition powerhouses packed with vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients thought to help boost good health by reducing the risk of potentially life-threatening diseases, such as cancer and heart disease. Research also shows whole grains, like whole-wheat bread, brown rice and bulgur, make weight control easier when they're a regular part of your diet because they're high in fiber.

Prediction This one's a keeper. Look for more whole-grain dishes in restaurants and even more whole-grain products on store shelves. "The new recommendation for 3 ounces [or the equivalent of three slices of bread] a day of whole grains is here to stay," says Suzanne Farrell, M.S., R.D., a dietitian in private practice in Colorado.

Portion control

While some restaurants are still into supersizing, the overall trend is toward smaller portions. And the biggest trend in the supermarket is for proportioned snacks designed to make sure the munchies don't overpower your willpower. "We've been saying it for years: It's not about the nutrients

EATING *right*

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THE BEST AND THE WORST FOOD FADS OF 2005,
PLUS OUR PREDICTIONS FOR THE NEW YEAR
By Densie Webb, R.D., Ph.D.

Sometimes it seems like diet trends fluctuate more often than your weight — with even more dramatic highs and lows. Here's a look back at some of the past year's best and worst trends, along with our expert predictions about which ones are here to stay and which ones will fall by the wayside this coming year.

you're eating; it's how much you're eating," says Lisa Young, Ph.D., R.D., author of *The Portion Teller: Smartsize Your Way to Permanent Weight Loss* (Morgan Road, 2005), and an adjunct assistant professor at New York University.

Prediction Expect to see more pre-portioned foods at the supermarket or, as Young calls them, "portion control for dummies." Limit yourself to a single snack pack and you've got the calorie count under control.

Tossing trans fats

Getting rid of trans fats in foods is not just a trend, it's the result of a new Food and Drug Administration regulation effective Jan. 1, 2006, that all food products clearly label their trans-fatty-acid content. Food companies like Nabisco, Pepperidge Farm and Frito-Lay — that didn't want the bad rap associated with trans fats — began removing these harmful fats from their products this year. Trans fats are liquid oils that are chemically altered to transform them into solid fats like in stick margarine and they are found in many packaged foods. But they possess at least as much artery-clogging power as saturated fats do.

Prediction Trans fats are destined to go the way of the banned artificial sweetener cyclamate or red dye No. 2. Their elimination is a healthy trend in processed foods that's here to stay.

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Hidden artificial sweeteners

Reduced-sugar, "less-sugar," "sugar-free." Terms like these are showing up on labels more and more. But read the labels on some of these foods and you may find artificial sweeteners such as aspartame and sucralose on the ingredient lists, conveniently omitted from the front label. The cut-back in sugar is only possible because artificial sweeteners have been added.

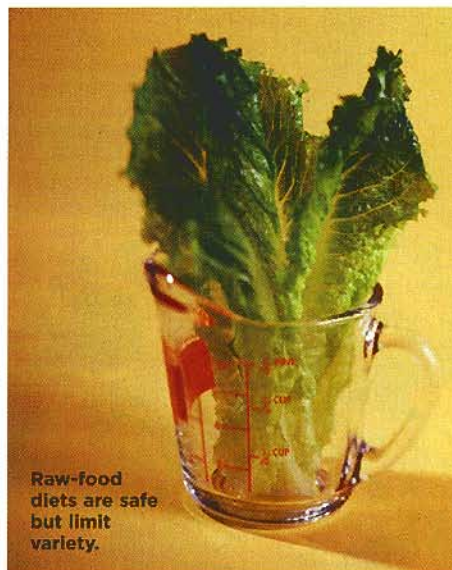
While the debate over the safety of artificial sweeteners continues (the FDA says they're safe, while some consumer groups still question their safety), you should be able to choose whether to include them in your diet.

A caveat: "Sugar-free doesn't mean calorie-free," says Rachel Brandeis, M.S., R.D., a spokeswoman for the American Dietetic Association. So, read nutrition labels. You may be surprised to find that some products claiming "less sugar" have almost the same number of calories per serving as the regular version!

Prediction Savvy dieters will help eradicate this trend. Once consumers realize that reduced-sugar foods can have the same number of calories as regular versions, they won't be fooled twice.

High-meat diets

Atkins Nutritionals may have filed Chapter 11, but low-carb diets are still making the rounds. While low-carb diets, like Atkins, may have spelled weight-loss success for some, a new study suggests there may be a dark payback. When you drastically cut back on carb intake, your diet shifts to high-protein foods like meat. A study recently published in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* found that women who ate more than 3 ounces a day of red meat (including beef, pork,



Raw-food diets are safe but limit variety.

veal and lamb) and processed meats (sausages, ham, bacon and cold cuts) had a 20 percent greater risk of developing colon cancer than those who ate less than ½ ounce of red meat a day.

Prediction Low-carb diets are already on the way out, as experts are recommending we eat less meat and more whole grains, vegetables and fruit. However, don't be surprised if this trend resurfaces in a few years.

Raw-food diets

Eating diets that consist of only raw, uncooked foods is a small but influential trend. So, should you take the raw plunge? This isn't a diet trend that will kill you. "There's no real harm in it," says dietitian Brandeis. But you're missing out on the health benefits certain foods have when they're heated.

Prediction Raw-food diets are destined to remain the equivalent of dietary off-roading: It's fun occasionally to take a back road, but there aren't enough of us willing to permanently sacrifice the smell of sautéing onions and the taste of a warm meal to make this one a long-lasting trend. ☹

Austin, Texas-based DENISE WEBB is co-author of *The Dish* (Atria, 2004).

PHOTOGRAPHY: (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT) MONICA STEVENSON/PICTUREARTS; ANN STRATTON/PICTUREARTS.

Low-carb diets are losing popularity.