

the RED CUP Q&A



separating alcohol fact from fiction
EVERY TUESDAY IN THE DAILY WILDCAT

Q What type of alcohol has the most sugar content?

A. Alcohol is made by fermentation, when yeast convert sugars into ethanol (alcohol) and carbon dioxide. The sheer variety of spirituous beverages is, in effect, a reflection of the many sources of sugar from which alcohol can be made. For example, malted barley gives us beer, grapes become wine, rice turns to sake, agaves yield mescal, and apples ferment to hard cider.

Most sugars are converted to alcohol during fermentation, leaving little left over in the final product. The exceptions to the low sugar rule include sweet wines, liqueurs, mixed drinks, or other beverages where sugar is added, such as the whopping 60 grams of sugar in a can of Four Loko. The taste test is the best indicator of sugar content in alcohol – if it tastes sweet, it's probably in there. Avoid these if you want to keep your sugar intake in check. Most beers, wines, and liquors, on the other hand, are sugar-free or close to it.

In fact, it's not the sugars or the carbs that are the primary concern here, but the calories. Alcohol has lots of them at 7 calories per gram, which is almost as much as fat and nearly double the amount found in carbohydrates (including sugar) or protein. Brewers and distillers have jumped on the "low-carb" bandwagon in an attempt to paint their products as friendly to dieters, but **if you want to avoid packing on the pounds, it's not what you drink, but how much of it that makes the difference.** Moderating your intake can also help you avoid late night grazing, since – let's face it – the more you drink, the more you eat.

Individuals with diabetes and others with low blood sugar have to be particularly mindful about their alcohol intake because alcohol can cause glucose levels in the bloodstream to drop. If you choose to drink and want to avoid crashes in blood sugar, eat a good meal before you imbibe, set a limit on how many drinks you will have, and pace yourself as you go.



wildfact

Want to unravel the myths and mysteries of high fructose corn syrup and other sugars? Check out a FREE Well U presentation on March 9th from noon-1pm at the Gallagher Theater for the sweet truth on the sweet stuff.



Got a question about alcohol?

Email it to redcup@email.arizona.edu



www.health.arizona.edu

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