

bar essentials

If many energy bars seem like candy in disguise, that's because they are: Loaded with sugar, they offer only empty calories. But you don't have to settle for the pasty, healthy versions. Some bars both taste good and are good for you—if you stick with those containing about 200 calories, 5 to 10 grams of protein, and at least three grams of fiber, says Sydney Foster, a registered dietitian at the La Palestra Center for Preventive Medicine, in New York City. *Real Simple* tasted 100 varieties. These eight raise the bar.

chewy



winner

GNU FOODS FLAVOR & FIBER CINNAMON RAISIN

Delicious, raved testers. "Like an oatmeal cookie," one said.

DIETITIAN'S VERDICT: This snack is rich in fiber, which helps you feel full and curbs your appetite. (Contains 130 calories, four grams of protein, and 12 grams of fiber.)

TO BUY: \$2 for a 1.4-ounce bar.

RUNNER-UP

CLIF BAR CHOCOLATE CHIP

Definitely tasty, but almost too chewy.

TO BUY: \$1.30 for a 1.7-ounce bar.

crunchy



winner

POWERBAR NUT NATURALS FRUIT & NUTS

A "just right" mix of almonds, peanuts, and strawberries.

DIETITIAN'S VERDICT: The carbohydrates (20 grams) and protein help build muscle. (Contains 210 calories, 10 grams of protein, and three grams of fiber.)

TO BUY: \$1.50 for a 1.58-ounce bar.

RUNNER-UP

CLIF MOJO HONEY ROASTED PEANUT

All nuts, no fruit.

TO BUY: \$1.40 for a 1.59-ounce bar.

chocolaty



winner

LÄRABAR JÖCALAT CHOCOLATE

Many loved this bar's rich flavor and "sophisticated taste."

DIETITIAN'S VERDICT: The nuts pack in heart-healthy mono- and polyunsaturated fats. (Contains 190 calories, five grams of protein, and five grams of fiber.)

TO BUY: \$2 for a 1.7-ounce bar.

RUNNER-UP

LUNA BAR S'MORES

Nice and crunchy, but not for chocoholics.

TO BUY: \$1.30 for a 1.69-ounce bar.

fruity



winner

LÄRABAR CHERRY PIE

"Mouth-puckering, but in a good way," declared one tester.

DIETITIAN'S VERDICT: Each bar is the equivalent of one serving of fruit. (Contains 190 calories, four grams of protein, and four grams of fiber.)

TO BUY: \$1.70 for a 1.7-ounce bar.

RUNNER-UP

RENEW LIFE ORGANIC FIBER CRANBERRY CRAZE

A little sticky, though refreshing.

TO BUY: \$3 for a 1.76-ounce bar.

powerful prototype

Like many brilliant ideas, the energy bar was born of frustration. Brian Maxwell, a marathoner, liked to power up on high-carb foods before runs but found his regular snacks of raisins, nuts, and bread too bulky to tote along to races and too tough to digest on the go. (Talk about runner's cramps.) So in 1983 Maxwell and his nutritionist girlfriend mixed up a batch of homemade bars in their Berkeley, California, kitchen using ingredients like oat bran, peanut flour, and almond butter. They sold the concoctions, calling them PowerBars, from their car at races. More than 20 years later, the rest of the industry is still trying to catch up.

—Dana Walcott



Snack attack?

Go to www.realsimple.com/healthy-snacks to find healthy noshes that can satisfy any craving.