

SAUSAGE SHOWDOWN

THERE ARE AS MANY CHICKEN-SAUSAGE FLAVORS AS DAYS IN A MONTH—OUR GUIDE TO THE BEST-TASTING AND MOST NUTRITIOUS

PRECOOKED CHICKEN SAUSAGE IS truly convenient. Keep a package or two on hand to accompany Sunday morning pancake breakfasts or to sauté with some sliced peppers and onions for a quick weeknight dinner. We knew many chicken sausages were healthier than their pork counterparts, but were pleasantly surprised to discover *how* much healthier (see below). The chicken sausages have far fewer calories and less fat per serving, so we're happy to recommend them and use them in recipes.

It was difficult to test this category, as there are many different manufacturers making myriad flavors. So we purchased as many sausages as we could find and tested them all. After a belly-filling tasting of 27 chicken sausages, it's safe to say that each of us found a new favorite. Here's what we thought about our Top 8 picks, organized by manufacturer (see Sources, page 82).

**Al Fresco**

Three of the seven Al Fresco flavors we tried ended up in our Top 8—Sweet Italian Style (our overall favorite), Buffalo Style and Teriyaki Ginger—but only the Sweet Italian flavor garnered our Smart Choice rating (the others were a bit high in sodium). All of us on the tasting panel prefer spicier foods, but we agreed with Jessie's comment that the Sweet Italian had "great flavor—spicier than I would expect for a 'sweet' sausage." Carolyn C. thought the flavors really came through in the Teriyaki Ginger sausage, but Stacy couldn't get past its "too pink" color. Hilary wished for "a little more heat (and some blue cheese sauce)" on top of the Buffalo Style flavor.

Applegate Farms

You might know Applegate Farms from its nitrate-free deli meats; it also has a selection of organic poultry sausages. The Chicken & Apple offering is one of our favorites. Carolyn M. loved seeing big chunks of apple in the sausage and appreciated its "great smoky flavor." Stacy and Hilary both noted its moist texture, which was welcome after tasting some really dry sausages.

Bilinski's

Of the four Bilinski's flavors we tried, two—Mild Italian Style and

Al Fresco Sweet Italian

Bilinski's Mild Italian Style

Bilinski's Spinach & Garlic



Spinach & Garlic—get our Smart Choice award. Both are low in calories, fat and sodium. The Mild Italian got second place overall in our tasting. Stacy said, "Great color, nice sweet veggie flavor—finally a sausage I can eat!" Carolyn C. loved the garlic flavor in the Spinach & Garlic variety.

Casual Gourmet

Tomato, Basil & Mozzarella—oh my! Most of the tasters really liked the combination, but its white color put off many of us. As Hilary noted, "Doesn't look that good, but tastes the best! Cheesy! Yummy! Juicy!" Stacy felt the basil and mozzarella flavors really came through, but Carolyn C. thought there was "too much going on," masking the chicken flavor.

Coleman Natural

We tasted quite a few sausages with southwestern spices, but only Coleman Natural's Cilantro made the Top 8 in terms of flavor. Some of us thought these sausages were simply hot and lacked real cilantro flavor, but Stacy remarked, "Good spice level, nice texture and good casing snap." —C.M.

TASTING PANEL: Carolyn Casner, Recipe Tester | Stacy Fraser, Test Kitchen Manager | Carolyn Malcoun, Assistant Editor | Hilary Meyer, Recipe Tester | Jessie Price, Senior Food Editor

EATINGWELL TEST KITCHEN'S TOP 8 HEALTHY CHICKEN SAUSAGES

Brand	Price/weight per package	Calories per 3 oz.	Fat (g)	Saturated Fat (g)	Cholesterol (mg)	Sodium (mg)	Carb (g)	Protein (g)	Taste (1-5 stars)
AL FRESCO: BUFFALO STYLE	\$4.49/12 oz.	160	8	2.5	50	630	4	19	★★★★
SWEET ITALIAN STYLE	\$4.49/12 oz.	170	8	2	70	440	2	19	★★★★
TERIYAKI GINGER	\$4.49/12 oz.	170	8	2	70	660	7	19	★★★★
APPLEGATE FARMS: CHICKEN & APPLE	\$6.99/12 oz.	140	6	2	65	500	6	14	★★★★
BILINSKI'S: MILD ITALIAN STYLE	\$4.99/12 oz.	106	6	2	91	410	2	14	★★★★
SPINACH & GARLIC	\$4.99/12 oz.	106	5	2	61	410	2	14	★★★★
CASUAL GOURMET: TOMATO, BASIL & MOZZARELLA	\$12.69/3 lb.	122	7	2	56	626	1	17	★★★★
COLEMAN NATURAL: CILANTRO	\$4.99/12 oz.	150	9	2	56	525	1	15	★★★
Benchmark: PORK SAUSAGE		322	30	10	63	641	0	12	