



## Consumer Federation of America

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### CFA Reveals Alcohol, Calories and Carbs in Top Selling Beer, Wine and Distilled Spirits Brands *Review Underscores Need for Government Action to Mandate Standardized and Complete Alcohol Label*

Washington, DC; June 30, 2008 – While continuing to press the federal government to require standardized labeling information on all beer, wine and distilled spirits products, one of the nation’s largest consumer organizations is taking action so Americans will have basic “alcohol facts” now.

For the 55 percent of adult Americans who drink alcoholic beverages, Consumer Federation of America developed *Alcohol Facts*, a side-by-side comparison of the alcohol, calorie and carbohydrate content per serving of the 26 top selling domestic and imported alcohol brands. Designed to help consumers follow the *Dietary Guidelines’* advice that men limit their consumption to two drinks a day and that women restrict their consumption to one drink per day, *Alcohol Facts* further explains what constitutes a “standard drink” -- 12 ounces of regular beer, 5 ounces of wine and 1.5 ounces of 80-proof (40%) distilled spirits. According to the *Dietary Guidelines*, these amounts represent moderate drinking. Public health officials warn that consuming too much alcohol contributes to dependence, obesity and a range of diseases, such as liver cirrhosis and cancers of the upper gastrointestinal tract.

“Right now, consumers really have no way of knowing the most basic information about alcoholic beverages,” said Chris Waldrop, Director of the Food Policy Institute at the Consumer Federation of America. “It’s time to end the confusion so consumers can make informed and responsible purchasing and consumption decisions. We’re making information available today on some of the top selling brands, but the federal government needs to require standardized and complete alcohol labeling on all alcoholic beverages.”

**Categories, Brands Can Vary Significantly in Calories and Carbohydrate Content**  
Based on liquor industry sales data compiled by Adams Beverage Group, CFA’s analysis focused on 26 top selling alcohol brands, comprising 13 beers and flavored malt beverages, 8 spirits products (vodka, rum, whiskey, gin and tequila), and 5 brands of wine. Using the standard serving size for each category, CFA found the alcohol per serving ranged from 0.42 fluid ounces to 0.70 fluid ounces depending upon the specific brand and type of alcoholic beverage. In contrast, calorie and carbohydrate content varied significantly among the categories and brands as follows:

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- Among spirits, calories per serving ranged from 86 calories for spiced rum to 120 calories for gin. The average (not including mixers) was 98 calories per serving;
- For wines, calories per serving ranged from 105 calories for a merlot to 125 calories for a cabernet sauvignon. The average was 118 calories per serving;
- The greatest variation in calories occurred among beers and flavored malt beverages. Light beers (5 brands) averaged 100 calories per serving, regular beers averaged 140 calories (5 brands) per serving, and the flavored malt beverages (3 brands) ranged from 190 calories per serving to 241 calories per serving;
- Variations were greatest when analyzing carbohydrate levels. Compared to no carbohydrates in spirits, wines ranged from 0.8 grams per serving for chardonnay to 5.0 grams per serving for cabernet sauvignon. Among different beers and malt beverages, carbohydrates ranged from 3.2 grams per serving for light beer to 38 grams per serving for a flavored malt beverage.

### **Findings Are Result of Investigation of Top Selling Liquor Brands**

To develop *Alcohol Facts*, CFA staff used sales data from Adams Beverage Group to identify the top selling domestic and imported liquor brands and then obtained detailed information about the alcohol content, the amount of alcohol per serving, the number of calories per serving, and the carbohydrates per serving for each product. Since the federal government does not require this information on the labels of most alcoholic beverages, CFA staff had to search for what was available on product websites and then wrote to the manufacturers to obtain the remaining details. CFA then verified its information by commissioning the food testing facility, Rtech Laboratories, to analyze three top selling beer, wine and distilled spirits brands and comparing the results against CFA's findings.

“Consumers should not have to search out information on website pages to figure out what is in their drink,” Waldrop said. “The fact that this information wasn’t readily available underscores why Americans need the same helpful and easily accessible labeling information on alcoholic beverages that is now required for conventional foods, dietary supplements, and nonprescription drugs.”

To put the findings of its investigation into consumers’ hands, CFA has summarized its *Alcohol Facts* comparison chart as a wall poster, which is available as a download through the CFA Web site. CFA also plans to distribute multiple copies to national and state consumer organizations, state departments of health, nutrition and public health organizations and alcohol-related organizations and agencies. In addition, CFA will provide free copies of the poster to anyone who wants one. Interested persons can contact Chris Waldrop at CFA.

The poster is available on the CFA website here:

[http://consumerfed.org/elements/www.consumerfed.org/file/food/CFA\\_Alcohol\\_Facts\\_Poster\\_FINAL.pdf](http://consumerfed.org/elements/www.consumerfed.org/file/food/CFA_Alcohol_Facts_Poster_FINAL.pdf).

### **About the Consumer Federation of America**

Consumer Federation of America is a non-profit association of over 300 organizations, with a combined membership of over 50 million Americans. Since its founding in 1968, CFA has worked to advance the interest of American consumers through research, education and advocacy. CFA’s Food Policy Institute was created in 1999 and engages in research, education and advocacy on food and agricultural policy, agricultural biotechnology, food safety and nutrition.

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