



# 14 Low-Calorie Alcoholic Drinks Registered Dietitians Love

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Low-calorie alcoholic drinks may sound like an oxymoron but they really are a thing—and they can be helpful if you're trying to decrease the amount of calories you're consuming from alcohol. In one of the more unfair laws of the universe, [alcohol](#) isn't exactly a health elixir. Liberator of deep, dark secrets, yes. "You have dance moves like [Beyoncé](#) and need to share them with the world" cheerleader, sure. But whether you're trying to [lose weight](#) or generally live a healthy life, cocktails aren't always a great fit.

That doesn't mean you've got to give imbibing up for good—eating and drinking things you enjoy is a necessary part of maintaining a good outlook on food (and your sanity). But if you're trying to be mindful of the calories in your alcoholic beverages, there are a few things to keep in mind.

## **First, a primer on how to order low-calorie alcoholic drinks.**

The good news is alcoholic drinks *can* be lightened up if you know how to order them. Because here's the thing: All [alcohol](#)—whether it's liquor, wine, or beer—is calorie-dense, Rachel Beller, M.S., R.D.N, founder of [Beller Nutrition](#), tells SELF.

"A shot of hard liquor, which is typically an ounce and a half, has about 96 calories," she says. And remember, that's *before* you start adding in mixers. Gentle reminder: Tonic water is *not* the same as soda water. "A 12-ounce can has about 124 calories and 32 grams of sugar," says Beller. "Even if you're not drinking a full can, that's still a lot of sugar and calories where soda water has none."

Unfortunately [wine](#) isn't much better calorie-wise. "A glass of wine, which is usually a five and a half-ounce pour, has approximately 130 to 140 calories, and a 12-ounce light beer will contain anywhere from 120 to 150 calories, depending on what kind it is," says Beller.

If ordering a low-calorie alcoholic drink is your primary concern, go for a very simple liquor-based drink like vodka soda with a squeeze of lime, suggests Beller. "You're not getting the kind of nutritional value that you get from red wine, [which has antioxidants](#), but it has fewer calories," she explains.

In general a good rule of thumb when ordering a cocktail is to keep it simple and ask the bartender to skip the sugary syrups and go easy on mixers like juice. "Ask for just a splash," says Beller, who is a fan of antioxidant-rich [pomegranate](#) juice over cranberry juice. She also loves kombucha as a mixer with vodka: "It has a delicious apple-cidery taste, and half of a large bottle of kombucha (about eight ounces) is only around 25 calories," she says.

Keep reading to learn which low-calorie alcoholic drinks other nutritionists recommend.

## 1. A Bloody Mary, extra spicy

"I especially love when they come with pickles, olives, or other fun garnishes. I prefer Bloody Marys to sweet drinks because the extra [sugar](#) in most cocktails gives me a terrible hangover. Also when a drink is super spicy, it slows down my drinking and encourages me to have a sip of water between each sip of alcohol." —Abbey Sharp, R.D., [Abbey's Kitchen](#)

## 2. A glass of pinot noir or champagne

"I rarely pick a mixed drink, as the added sugar and calories are just not worth it for me. I like a glass of red [wine](#), preferably a pinot noir as it has a high concentration of antioxidants, including polyphenols, flavonoids, and resveratrol. And of course I appreciate the occasional glass of French champagne because life's too short not to." —Denise Julia Garbinski, M.B.A., R.D.N. of [Botanical Nutrition Therapy](#)

### 3. A Johnny Walker Black and Diet Coke

"I'll get flack for this—many whiskey-lovers make fun of me for mixing the good stuff with Diet Coke, but that's just my taste preference. I also ask the bartender to use a jigger so I know how much [alcohol](#) is mixed in." —[Toby Amidor](#), M.S., R.D., author of *The Greek Yogurt Kitchen: 130 Delicious, Healthy Recipes for Every Meal of the Day*

### 4. A low-calorie version of a cosmopolitan

"It's raspberry-infused vodka, club soda, and a splash of lime and cranberry juice. Even though fruit juices contain antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals, they also contain a high amount of natural [sugar](#), which can add up in a drink. Just a splash of the cranberry juice adds enough flavor but keeps the calories in check." —Dawn Orsaeo, R.D., L.D.N.

### 5. A Moscow mule with a twist

"My absolutely favorite for the summer is a Moscow mule with ginger beer, vodka, [lime juice](#), and lots of ice, skipping the simple syrup. It's so refreshing, and when you don't use simple syrup it's only around 80 calories." —Molly Morgan, R.D., C.D.N., C.S.S.D., owner of [Creative Nutrition Solutions](#)

### 6. A Scotch on the rocks

"My favorite is Macallan 12-year aged Scotch. I like to avoid sugary mixers like [juice](#), and since Scotch is stronger I sip it slower and one glass can last me the whole evening." —[Rebecca Lewis](#), in-house R.D. at [HelloFresh](#)

## **7. Silver tequila on the rocks, or with soda plus lime juice or an orange slice**

"Silver tequila usually has less sugar in it than brown tequila or other brown liquors. I skip the sugary mixers and drink it straight up or with no-calorie club soda and a little flavor from a splash of citrus." —Sarah Rueven, R.D., owner of Sarah Rueven Nutrition

## **8. A vodka seltzer with lemon or lime**

"There's a common misconception that tonic water is the same as seltzer water, but it actually contains a lot of [calories](#) and sugar. I opt for seltzer instead, which is just water with bubbles. A squeeze of either lemon or lime gives the drink a healthy (and sugar-free) boost of flavor!" —Rebecca Ditzkoff, R.D., CUNY School of Public Health and member of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

## **9. An ice cold beer**

"A true Wisconsin native, I'm especially a fan of a nice hoppy craft brew. Not only do I enjoy the flavor complexities a craft beer has to offer, beer gives you the most volume for about the same total of calories and [alcohol](#) as wine and spirits, meaning it takes longer to drink and therefore helps moderate total alcohol consumption." —Emily Brown, R.D.N., L.D., wellness dietitian at the Mayo Clinic Healthy Living Program

## 10. A toned-down mojito

"I love the mint and lime in a mojito, but I find many places make them too sweet, so I get a sugarless mojito with extra lime. Most of the time, the mint and extra lime are enough flavor for me. If I'm feeling like it needs a little extra sweetness, I'll add my own [sugar](#) or stevia. I end up with a perfect drink every time." —Dina Garcia, R.D.N., mindful eating coach and founder of [Vida Nutrition](#)

## 11. A glass of sauvignon blanc or a simple marg

"I don't worry about calories or sugar. I drink my favorite wine of choice—sauvignon blanc—or a margarita on the rocks with salt (no mix, just straight tequila, lime, and agave). I know I can drink two beverages, enjoy the taste, and still get up for [yoga](#) the next morning!" —Laura Cipullo, R.D., C.D.N., C.D.E., C.E.D.R.D., owner of [Laura Cipullo Whole Nutrition](#)

## 12. Vodka soda with a splash of juice

"Trendy drinks like those made with aloe vera juice, kombucha, and [bone broth](#) may be novel, but they are not more nutritious or diet-friendly than a classic vodka soda with a splash of your favorite juice." —[Tanya Zuckerbrot](#), M.S., R.D.

## 13. Kombucha with vodka

"I love putting [vodka in my kombucha](#), but I do it from a flavor perspective rather than for nutritional impact." —[Esther Blum](#), M.S., R.D., author of [Eat, Drink, and Be Gorgeous](#)

## 14. Market berry cocktails

Kristy del Coro, R.D., and culinary nutritionist for Rouge Tomate New York, likes using fresh muddled berries with vodka and simple honey syrup for extra sweetness. Get the recipe [here](#).