



If you are from New Orleans, King Cake is nothing new. However, King Cake has become more than just Haydel's, McKensie's and the battles among the Randazo family. The last weekend of January was the King Cake Festival in New Orleans. There was even a category "most likely to replace a meal," which was won with a Sushi King Cake. Seems like if you put it in an oval, and make it colorful you can call it a King Cake.

Also new this year, "Eat Fit King Cake". While traditional king cake ingredients are NOT healthy, I don't want the FIT label to encourage a "free for all" approach to the Eat Fit King Cake. Below is a brief discussion about the ingredients.

Ingredient Breakdown

Greek Yogurt – great first ingredient. Independently, Greek yogurt is a nutritious snack offering protein, fat and carbohydrates along with fortified calcium.

Eggs – a typical ingredient for a baked good. Also, "all natural".

Almond flour – gluten free alternative to whole wheat flour. Almond flour is a good source of healthy fats, specifically Omega 6 and is rich in fiber.

Swerve (erythritol, oligosaccharides) – The manufacturer claims this as a

"natural" sugar alternative. However, erythritol is an industrial product created by extracting the glucose from corn. Oligosaccharides are a prebiotic fiber that occurs naturally in various plants. While Swerve doesn't mention the plant sources, this type of sweetener often causes gastric cramping.

Coconut oil, coconut milk and coconut flower – The coconut craze has exploded. However, as usual, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. A lot of the coconut claims have not been supported by research. Additionally, while no long term studies have been completed specifically on coconut's effect on cholesterol, it is well documented that saturated fats will increase your LDL (bad cholesterol). The fat in coconut is almost 90% saturated fat. I'll have a nutrition newsletter dedicated to fat in the future.

Better but "Fit"?

The ingredient list for the Eat Fit King Cake has a lot less ingredients and has eliminated unhealthy ingredients such as: high fructose corn syrup, and partially hydrogenated oils. Additionally, with about half the calories of traditional king cake per serving, it can be easier to fit a single serving of Eat Fit King Cake into a healthy lifestyle. Therefore, I would say it is healthier in comparison to

traditional king cake. However, in my opinion, for a food to be considered "FIT" it should meet the following criteria:

- ✓ Provide essential vitamins and minerals.
- ✓ Sufficient protein to meet your athletic needs.
- ✓ Adequate healthy fats.
- ✓ Fibrous carbohydrates to achieve optimal health.

The Eat Fit King Cake should NOT be consumed as a dietary goal, but as the "treat" it is and mindful of the portion size (1/6 of the cake). Lastly, I believe fitting indulgences into a healthy lifestyle is less about the specific food and more about conscious eating.

How do you eat?

Laissez les bons temps rouler

– If a single serving of an indulgence triggers a food party, you may want to re-evaluate your "treats". It is not uncommon for the taste of something *good* to entice us to eat more and more. Try the following strategies to avoid over indulging:

- 🌈 Savor your one piece, slowly.
- 🌈 Wait until there is only one more piece left (so you can't go back for more).
- 🌈 Take your treat and leave (the room, the party, the house).



Comedy and Tragedy – If you are an emotional eater, happy or sad - you over eat, you'll want to avoid indulgences at these times. Find a new outlet for your emotions other than eating:

- Take a relaxing bath or shower.
- Go for a walk around the block.
- Listen to music.
- Have a cup of tea or warm milk.
- Turn to your "down time routine" – watching tv, reading, solitaire, talking to friends, etc...
- Go play with your pet, they'll love the attention!
- If you can't get out of the habit to eat while emotional, then reach for better foods: fruits, vegetables, high fiber grains.

Lagniappe – An indulgence should be just a little something extra. If you can stick to one single serving of any indulgence, sweet king cake, savory king cake or anything in between you can fit your favorite treat into a healthy lifestyle. What are the habits of Lagniappe eaters?

- Conscious of what a single serving is – by reading labels and measuring.
- Slowly enjoying that little something extra.
- Acknowledging when they've had enough "little extras" so a treat remains a treat and not a staple of their meal plan.

Monthly challenge:

Teenage Athlete- Mindfully treat yourself to your favorite indulgence. Take your time and savor the treat.

Parents – Don't be fooled by packaging. Read nutritional labels and be a good role model for portion control.