Tasty Freeze

Our POZ comparison shoppers test six frozen dinners for nutrition—and flavor.

April 1, 2006 By Nick Burns

Frozen dinners rank high in convenience, but often low in health benefits and taste. Even those marked “healthy” can pack ingredients that an HIV positive diner would do better to avoid. Nutritionists Elysa Silbersmith and Tamara Simpson of God’s Love We Deliver recommend these six. Positive *POZ* staffers tasted, tested and passed out stars.

AMY’S TOFU VEGETABLE LASAGNA ★★★

Tastes great, staffers said. But it’s a little high in sodium, with 630 mg. “You don’t want more than 600 mg per meal,” says Silbersmith. “And people with high blood pressure should keep daily salt intake below 2,000 mg.” An alternative: Amy’s 340 mg Light Sodium Tofu Vegetable Lasagna.

LEAN CUISINE GLAZED CHICKEN ★★★

Low in sodium, fat and sugar—this chicken dish with mushrooms, rice pilaf and green beans delivers lots of taste without lots of harmful extras. “The meat in frozen meals is often high in saturated fats,” Silbersmith says, “but this one isn’t.” *POZ* staff says: This one is the best of the bunch.

AMY’S BLACK BEAN ENCHILADA ★★

Tofu, corn, black beans, onions, zucchini and peppers fill sauce-smothered tortillas—and wowed our staffers. They’re low in fat and cholesterol, but each enchilada has 390 mg of sodium, so don’t eat more than one if you have high blood pressure—or pick the light- sodium version, at 190 mg per enchilada.

DR. PRAEGER’S CALIFORNIA VEGGIE BURGERS ★★

Silbersmith: “They’re low in sugar and salt, high in fiber—great for people with diabetes or high blood pressure or cholesterol. And they taste great!” Cook one in the oven, not the microwave, add a whole-grain bun and a salad to make a meal. Bun appétit!

HEALTHY CHOICE ROASTED CHICKEN BREAST ★

Roasted chicken with mushrooms, peas, carrots and potatoes—the classic American meal. Our nutritionists say it’s high in fiber, but if you’ve got a kidney disorder, avoid its high potassium. One taster compared it to airline food—acceptable only in a pinch.

HEALTHY CHOICE CHICKEN BREAST AND VEGETABLES ★

Chicken, broccoli, carrots and peas hook up with pasta, swimming in a creamy herb sauce that’s flavorful, if (as staff said) a bit soupy. Silbersmith appreciates its low saturated fat and high fiber, “especially for folks with high cholesterol.” Start your ovens.

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