

# Comparing Food Recommendation Across Different Diets: How Do the Best and Popular Diets Differ

University of South Carolina Health Promotion, Education and Behavior | Emma Dear

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## Introduction:

With an even greater emphasis in recent years on making health-related decisions, an increasing number of people are becoming involved with making conscious choices about what they eat. However, between popular diets, new diets, and fad diets, conflicting opinions may lead consumers simply to never decide at all. For this project, I compared a list of Best Diets to the Most Popular Diets. Each was ranked by World News and Report. The Best Diets was rated by a panel of doctors and nutritionists. The Most Popular list was based on internet searches. Five out of the ten diets on the Most Popular list did not appear on the list of the forty Best Diets. This presents many problems in that people may be confused by the promises of diets that are not backed by science. One of these diets that fell in the #2 spot is the Dubrow diet. Developed by a plastic surgeon, the emphasis on complicated rules is appearance. (Its last phase is titled 'How to Look Hot While Living Like a Human') It recommends extreme calorie restriction, around 800 calories at certain stages. Another at the #4 spot is the Carnivore Diet, developed by Dr. Shawn Baker whose medical license was revoked in 2017. This diet is exclusively meat and dairy, outlawing fruits, vegetables and grains. Many of the Most Popular diets are extreme and would be difficult to maintain since many are based on low-calorie intake. Many are familiar with the "fad diet cycle" that is fueled by the lack of sustainability these diets offer. Oftentimes these diets recruit new users through bold promises of fast results. They are marketed as a scientific "breakthrough" and may use complicated jargon to make their claims hard to understand but seemingly reputable. Even if one becomes educated on how not to fall for these tricks, there are conflicting recommendations by reputable doctors about what is best for our health. We compared each of the Best Diets to see how they differed from other diets in their category. Ideally, we would have a completed data set for the Most Popular Diets as well. Many of these meal plans require products sold by companies who only let you view meal plans with a purchase. I urge further research to be done on the food recommendations of these fad diets to quantify how they differ from better-supported recommendations, and further why so many people are interested in diets not supported by science.

## Methods:

The goal of this project was to uncover differences in food groups across 40 diets as ranked by US News. Two reviewers categorized each diet by food group and divided them into one of four categories: 19 moderate (e.g., DASH diet), 9 plant-based (e.g., Ornish diet), 8 low carbohydrate (e.g., Atkins diet), and 4 meal replacement (e.g., Slim-fast). One-way ANOVA with Tukey's test for post-hoc comparisons was used to determine potential differences. Then the Most Popular Diets list, also by US News was compared to the Best Diets list by using the same categories for their general diet recommendations.

## Results:

Plant-based diets contained significantly more fruit than the Low-carbohydrate or Meal replacement diets. Plant-based diets contained significantly less seafood and meat and poultry than Low-carbohydrate diets. Plant-based diets contained significantly more nuts and seeds than Meal-replacement diets. Plant-based diets contained significantly more added sugar than Low-carbohydrate or Moderate diets ( $P$ 's all  $<0.05$ ). Moderate diets also contained more grains and less meat and poultry than Low-carbohydrate diets ( $P$ 's all  $<0.05$ ). Meal-replacement diets contained less meat and poultry than Low-carbohydrate diets ( $p < 0.01$ ).

## Discussion:

Clearly even within the doctor recommended diets, there is disagreement on which food group recommendations are best for overall health. We also must consider that there is no universal diet at all. Individual differences could result in a different need due to varying lifestyles. All the Best Diets still have some evidence of all the food groups currently recommended by the government. Though the moderate diets are the best representative of standard recommendations, the other types The list of the Most Popular Diets proves consumers buy into misleading information that could have severe negative effects on their health. Many possible influences could cause people to rely on extreme methods to lose weight. With weight and health-related diseases continuing to be the leading cause of death proves the need for further research on how to promote a healthy lifestyle.

