

## More on McDonald's

<http://www.futureofcapitalism.com/2010/12/more-on-mcdonalds>

One of the complaints that [Monet Parham](#) and the Center for Science in the Public Interest make in their [Happy Meal lawsuit](#) against McDonald's is that the meals have too many calories. From the suit:

McDonald's Web site lists 24 Happy Meal combinations. Considering that a reasonable lunch for a young child would contain no more than 430 calories (one third of the 1,300 calories that is the recommended daily intake for children 4 to 8 years old), not a single Happy Meal meets that target. The average of all 24 meals is 26 percent higher in calories than a reasonable lunch. In fact, one meal (cheeseburger, French fries, and chocolate milk) hits 700 calories — a whopping 63 percent higher (and more than half the calories for the entire day).

The source for these numbers was McDonald's own published Happy Meals nutrition information available on its website, and dated June 2, 2010.

Three days after it received the pre-suit notice, McDonald's altered this data, reducing the amount of calories and sugar. After McDonald's altered its own data, three of the 24 meals suddenly met the calorie target described in the pre-suit notice.

In response, a FutureOfCapitalism.com reader-participant-content co-creator-community member-watchdog has helpfully provided the San Francisco public schools elementary school lunch [menu](#) for November. Weekly average per-meal calories for the government school meals, not including drinks, are, according to the menu, 708, 662, 666, 730, and 650.

The reader-participant-content co-creator-community member-watchdog also provided the [ingredient lists](#) for the government school lunches. My favorite is the "pizzaburger," a "beef and chicken patty (smoke flavoring added) with pizza sauce, cheese, and cheese substitute," whose ingredients consist of:

Broiled Beef and Chicken Patty: ground beef (not more than 30% fat), ground chicken, water, textured vegetable protein (soy protein concentrate, caramel color), salt, flavor enhancer (hydrolyzed corn gluten, soy protein and wheat gluten, autolyzed yeast extract, partially hydrogenated soybean and cottonseed oil, dextrose, thiamine hydrochloride, disodium inosinate, disodium guanylate), black pepper, onion powder, liquid smoke (water, smoke flavor, polysorbate 80), garlic powder; Pizza Sauce With Cheese and Cheese Substitute: tomato puree (tomato paste, water), low moisture-part skim mozzarella cheese (pasteurized milk, cheese cultures, salt, enzymes), mozzarella cheese substitute (made with vegetable oil) (water, casein, partially hydrogenated soybean oil, salt, sodium aluminum phosphate, lactic acid, natural flavor, starch, sodium citrate, sorbic acid (preservative), trisodium phosphate, artificial color, guar gum, artificial flavor, magnesium oxide, ferric orthophosphate, zinc oxide, riboflavin, cyanocobalamin, folic acid, pyridoxine hydrochloride (Vitamin B6), niacinamide, thiamine mononitrate, Vitamin A palmitate, seasoning (food starch-modified, salt, sugar, garlic powder, spices, partially hydrogenated soybean oil, onion powder, ascorbic acid, disodium inosinate, disodium guanylate, ferrous lactate), artificial color (canthaxanthin)).

Remember, this isn't a once-every-so-often treat provided at parental discretion, like a Happy Meal — this is the food the state is serving for lunch in the essentially compulsory government schools. The fact

that it's McDonald's rather than the government schools that are getting sued by this parent and advocacy group gives away what the lawsuit is really about. It's not really about food, or calories — it's about an attempt to increase the power of the state over private enterprise by restricting the power of the private enterprise to market its product. The suit isn't about the "meal," it's about the "happy."

*More McDonald's:* The company's official [statement](#) responding to the lawsuit is here: "We are proud of our Happy Meals and intend to vigorously defend our brand, our reputation and our food." The Cato Institute's Walter Olson has a Daily News piece up about the case [here](#).

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by Ira Stoll | Dec 16, 2010 at 12:01 pm

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