

[ FOOD COURT ]

# Water for chocolate?

Warming up to tasty low-cal cocoas



12 oz.

**Take a moment** this month to wrap your hands around a warm cup of hot chocolate—without the sticky aftertaste of remorse. Lucky for waistlines, a variety of low-calorie and low-fat powered

brands are available. An instant favorite? Swiss Miss, one of whose recipes incorporates no added sugar.

But how do you think it compares to low-fat hot chocolates made from scratch?

## Verdict

It wasn't easy locating low-fat made-from-scratch hot chocolate, but we finally struck upon the rich and creamy 12-ounce Signature Starbucks low-fat hot chocolate, made with skim milk, sugar, vanilla and cocoa. With 60 calories and 1 gram of fat per 8-ounce serving, however, the powered Swiss Miss option with no added sugar proved to be a much healthier choice—we could have had a generous serving of

low-fat whipped cream and a low-fat cookie with this Swiss Miss delight and still consumed less calories and fat than the tall Starbucks beverage, which featured 330 calories and 15 grams of fat. Of course, the low-fat Starbucks hot chocolate made from scratch boasts a richer flavor and smoother consistency, but if you're watching your waistline this season, the powered hot beverage is your best bet.

Christine H. Haas is a certified NASM personal trainer and a licensed nutritionist. Visit her website at [www.nuweights.com](http://www.nuweights.com).



# Quick Byte

As far as caffeine intake goes, is there a recommended daily amount? How much is too much?

—Falls Church

Research shows 200 to 300 milligrams of caffeine per day is a safe amount—less if you ever experience uncomfortable anxiety or jitteriness as a side effect. To put the quantity in perspective, consider that one can of caffeinated soda contains about 50 milligrams, and one 16-ounce Starbucks coffee has about 320 milligrams.

*Quick Byte is an excerpt from Well Bent, Christine Haas's live chat, online the second Tuesday of every month at 11 a.m..*

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COURTESY OF STARBUCKS (PAPER CUP); COURTESY OF CONAGRA (SWISS MISS); JONATHAN TIMMES (HAAS); SHUTTERSTOCK (MUG)

[ TRAINING ]

# Power Strip

## A new brand of aerobics

is shaking up the Northern Virginia gym circuit. While strip classes may not always use an actual pole, participants mime the movements of the dancers, and poles can easily be purchased and installed in private homes. The routines offer a challenging cardiovascular workout while strengthening your core, legs and upper body. While beginners often admit to feeling awkward, new approaches such as strip aerobics are key to maintaining fitness motivation—and routine instructors say participants start to feel more comfortable with the moves about 15 minutes in. Select Sport and Health Clubs in Northern Virginia are offering this new workout routine, while area Target locations carry the popular DVDs.



SHUTTERSTOCK

Around here, a discovery isn't considered a breakthrough until you see it light up the face of a child.



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