

## A New Year's Diet

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In Britain, at the start of each New Year, many people make a resolution to go on a diet, in order to shed weight following excess eating and drinking over the Christmas and New Year breaks. I'm not sure if the same applies in North America and elsewhere.

My wife and I were listening to a local radio station during a car journey early in January when a particular deejay commented that a listener had recommended a diet where the dieter merely had to avoid any food or drink beginning with the letter C. As we continued our car journey, we began taking it in turns to name a food or drink beginning with the letter C. Although we didn't really have any hard-and-fast rules, we did try to avoid a welter of trade-names, except for a few well-known drinks. We surprised ourselves at how quickly we came up with a list of 100 foods and drinks beginning with C. Our initial list is below.

|              |             |              |                 |                 |
|--------------|-------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| cabbage      | cassis      | chicken      | cocktail        | cornbread       |
| Cake         | catfish     | chicory      | cocoa           | corned beef     |
| calabrese    | catsup      | chilli       | coconut         | Cornish pasty   |
| calamari     | cauliflower | chimichanga  | cod             | Cos lettuce     |
| calvados     | cava        | chips        | coffee          | cotton candy    |
| Cambozola    | celeriac    | chocolate    | Cognac          | courgette       |
| Camembert    | celery      | chokecherry  | coho salmon     | crab            |
| camomile tea | cendol      | chop suey    | Cointreau       | cracker         |
| Campari      | cep         | chorizo      | Coke            | crackling       |
| Candy        | Chablis     | chow mein    | cola            | cranberry       |
| candyfloss   | Champagne   | chowder      | coley           | cream           |
| cane sugar   | chapati     | chutney      | conchiglie      | cress           |
| cannelloni   | Chardonnay  | ciabatta     | confectionery   | crisps          |
| cantaloupe   | Chartreuse  | cider        | conger eel      | croque-monsieur |
| caramel      | Chaser      | cilantro     | cookie          | croquette       |
| cardamom     | Cheese      | cinnamon     | cordial         | cucumber        |
| Carrot       | cherry      | citrus fruit | coriander       | cumin           |
| Cashew       | chestnut    | clam         | corn            | cupcake         |
| cassata      | chervil     | clementine   | corn flakes     | curds           |
| Cassava      | chewing gum | cockle       | corn on the cob | custard         |

Once we had reached 100 items, some further thoughts occurred. How easy is it to extend the C list? A careful dictionary search would probably throw up many more. Is there another letter of the alphabet for which such a lengthy list can be so easily generated using reasonably familiar foods and drinks? How about the initial letters R, S and T? What's so special about the letter C?