SAFE SNAX

“I had no time to get real food.” “It’s better than a doughnut, bag of chips, or candy bar.” There are lots of reasons why people grab an energy (or granola or cereal) bar. Well, now you can eat real food without any fuss. Ready Pac’s new line of Ready Snax offers half a dozen options to hold you over ’til your next meal without a trip to the vending machine.

The Veggie, Cheese & Pretzel Snack Pac pairs carrots and grapes with enough cheddar to supply 5 grams of protein and 10 percent of a day’s calcium (but just 2½ grams of saturated fat). The half-dozen mini-pretzels could be better (they’re mostly white flour), but at least they don’t add much salt. The entire 150-calorie snack has just 130 mg of sodium.

Got a sweet tooth? Pick up the Apples, Granola & Yogurt (110 calories). If your appetite’s a little larger, try the Veggies, Hummus & Sunflower Seeds (220 calories). It packs 7 grams of fiber—as much as a cup of raisin bran cereal.

For variety, there’s the 140-calorie Veggies & Cheese with Ranch Dip. To dodge some of the 340 mg of sodium, try dipping the peas and carrots into just half the dip.

Okay, they’re not perfect. But have you ever read, say, a CLIF BAR label? The first of its “whole, organic ingredients” is organic brown rice syrup (AKA sugar).

Granted, Ready Snax need a fridge. And you could pack your own snack of fruit, veggies, and cheese or yogurt in a reusable container.

But no time? That excuse is history.

Ready Pac: (800) 800-7822

NO SERVA

“Our freshly-made semolina flour cannelloni is filled with grilled natural white meat chicken, spinach and custom Impastata Ricotta, Fontina, Aged Parmesan, imported Pecorino Romano and Asiago cheeses,” intones the box of Buitoni Riserva Grilled Chicken & Spinach Cannelloni. “Creations” like this come “from the fresh herb gardens, to the chefs’ hands, to the villa’s table.”

Really?

Does Buitoni get its powdered chicken broth, cornstarch, brown sugar, whey, dextrose, and xanthan gum from the herb garden? That’s not to say that Buitoni’s creation is unnatural. It’s filled with natural milk, cheeses, cream, and butter, which helps supply each serving with 15 grams of saturated fat (three-quarters of a day’s worth). Add in the white-flour pasta, and you’ve logged 560 calories seasoned with 1,070 milligrams of sodium (two-thirds of a day’s max). Maybe that’s why Buitoni calls it a “complete meal.”

The Grilled Chicken & Spinach Cannelloni is part of a line of 12 “artisan quality Italian meals for two,” like Shrimp & Lobster Ravioli, Braised Beef & Sausage Ravioli, and Grilled Vegetable & Goat Cheese Agnolotti. Each has roughly 300 to 600 calories and 600 to 1,500 mg of sodium.

“Sit down and savor,” urges Buitoni. Go ahead. Just don’t be surprised if you end up too stuffed to get up.

Buitoni: (800) 727-0050

Creamy Dijon Dressing

Whisk together 1 Tbs. of Dijon mustard, ¼ cup of orange juice, 2 Tbs. of minced red onion, 2 Tbs. of minced fresh dill, ¼ cup of mayonnaise, and ¼ cup of canola oil.

Drizzle two tablespoons over a mixed salad or steamed snow peas, broccoli, or asparagus. (Makes eight 2 Tbs. servings.)

Photos: Jorge Bach.