

Dressing Renal Patients for Success, Ranch-Style

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THE POPULARITY OF ranch salad dressing in America is hard to argue. Ranch has been the best-selling salad dressing in the United States for nearly 25 years.¹⁻³ Additionally, its presence is global with sales across the United States and in more than 30 countries.⁴

Among renal dietitians, ranch salad dressing may be a less popular choice. For starters, it is not low in sodium.⁴ Also, its creaminess comes from buttermilk, a food that naturally contains sodium, phosphorus, and potassium.^{5,6} The naturally occurring minerals from dairy products can be an issue for renal patients, but what is more concerning is the prevalent use of phosphorus additives (such as phosphoric acid) in popular ranch salad dressing products. As with other processed foods and drinks, phosphorus additives in salad dressings may extend shelf life and replace more expensive ingredients.¹ In ranch salad dressing, phosphoric acid may provide a tangy taste for less cost than lemons.⁷

Hidden Valley “Original Ranch” is a well-known ranch salad dressing. This Original Ranch contains vegetable oil (soybean and/or canola), water, egg yolks, sugar, salt, cultured nonfat buttermilk, natural flavors (milk, soy), <1% of spices, dried garlic, dried onion, vinegar, phosphoric acid, xanthan gum, modified food starch, monosodium glutamate, artificial flavors, disodium phosphate, sorbic acid, and calcium disodium EDTA as preservatives, disodium inosinate, disodium guanylate.⁸ The HV Food Products Company, the makers of Hidden Valley Original Ranch, was unable to provide phosphorus or potassium content for its Original Ranch dressing.⁹ According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Nutrient Database, 1 serving or 30 g of commercially prepared regular ranch salad dressing has 55 mg phosphorus, 19 mg potassium, and 270 mg sodium.⁵ At 270 mg, sodium content is not low. The amount of potassium is unremarkable. Although 55 mg of phosphorus is not alarming, a few points are noteworthy. It is likely that the average

commercially prepared regular ranch salad dressing contains phosphorus additives. That being said, the 55 mg reported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture nutrient database may be an underestimation of the true phosphorus value. The phosphorus from additives is more readily absorbed in the gut than naturally occurring phosphorus, and this high absorption may not be reflected in analysis and/or on nutrition labels.¹⁰ One must also remember the tendency for most people to eat >30 g or 2 tablespoon serving of salad dressing at one sitting, thereby consuming more sodium, phosphorus, and other nutrients.

Ranch’s popularity is not limited to salad. Its flavor is pervasive. In addition to its more than 10 varieties of ranch salad dressing, Hidden Valley also advertises ranch sandwich spreads, pasta salad mixes, and dips.¹¹ “Lester’s Fixins Food Sodas” available online includes a ranch salad dressing flavor.¹² A simple Internet search at Walmart.com revealed close to 25 different categories of ranch-flavored products.¹³ Ranch-flavored potato-crust cheese sticks, sandwich “kits” with bacon, shake-on popcorn seasonings, and ranch-flavored tuna fish are just a sampling of ranch’s pervasiveness.¹³

Because of the ubiquity of ranch salad dressing, expecting renal patients to abstain from it altogether may be unrealistic. Identifying better ranch salad dressing products that are free of phosphorus additives and lower in sodium may help renal patients make smart choices. A search was done in late July and August 2014 to find ranch salad dressings free of phosphorus additives. The search was not limited to one geographic area. Product information was obtained in person by visiting stores and by searching online. Only salad dressing and no other ranch products (like dip) was explored. The search was discontinued after finding approximately 25 to 30 different ranch salad dressing products free of phosphorus additives. Ranch salad dressings with phosphorus additives were also noted. Product name and sodium content is listed in [Tables 1 and 2](#). Taste and cost are two factors not considered in the search. Both taste and cost strongly impact a person’s interest to purchase a product, and exploring these influences further is necessary for renal dietitians to make the best recommendations for patients.

Results from [Tables 1 and 2](#) were further analyzed to create a list of “better” ranch salad dressings. Products

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Table 1. Ranch Salad Dressing Products Free of Phosphorus Additives

Product	Na	Notes
Trader Joe's Parmesan Ranch Dressing	130	1 g saturated fat.
Marie's Creamy Ranch Dressing	150	3 g saturated fat.
Follow Your Heart High Omega Vegan Ranch Salad Dressing	150	0 g saturated fat (15 g total fat), dairy free, vegan, non-GMO, gluten free; several other ranch varieties free of phosphorus additives.
Naturally Fresh Ranch II Dressing (w/o MSG)	170	1.5 g saturated fat; K = 35.
Marie's Yogurt Ranch Dressing	180	1 g saturated fat.
Organic Organicville Non-Dairy Ranch Dressing	200	1.5 g saturated fat, non-dairy organic.
Marzetti Classic Ranch Dressing	200	Marzetti Aged Parmesan Ranch has phosphorus additives.
Hidden Valley Salad Dressing & Seasoning Mix, The Original Ranch	203*	*As prepared.
Bolthouse Farms Salsa Ranch Yogurt Dressing	210	0.5 g saturated fat; Walmart, Victor NY.
Litehouse Jalapeno Ranch Dressing	220	Other Litehouse varieties have phosphorus additives.
Marketside Buttermilk Ranch Yogurt Dressing	220	0 g saturated fat; K = 35; Walmart brand; Walmart, Victor NY.
Olde Cape Cod Chipotle Ranch	230	Walmart, Victor NY.
Walden Farms Ranch Dressing	230	0 calories, 0 g fat, 1st ingredient is water; Wegmans.com
Annie's Naturals Dressing, Cowgirl Ranch	240	1 g saturated fat.
Opa by Litehouse Greek Yogurt Ranch Dressing	240	0 g saturated fat; other Litehouse varieties have phosphorus additives.
Kraft Anything Dressing Cucumber Ranch	240	Most Kraft ranch dressings contain phosphorus additives.
Naturally Fresh II Ranch Dressing Pour It On	245	Comes in single serving 2 oz container.
Marzetti Simply Dressed Light Ranch Dressing	270	1 g saturated fat.
Wegmans FYFGA Yogurt Ranch Dressing	270	FYFGA = Food You Feel Good About; K = 35; 1 g saturated fat; Wegmans.com .
Brianna's Classic Buttermilk Ranch Dressing	280	
Simply Organic Ranch Dressing Salad Mix	290*	*As prepared; Wegmans.com
Drew's Chipotle Ranch Dressing & Quick Marinade	290	Creamy ranch and organic peppercorn ranch have phosphorus additives.
Cardini's Aged Parmesan Ranch Dressing	300	
Braswell's Ranch Salad Dressing & Recipe Mix	300	*As prepared; Walmart.com
Newman's Own Ranch Dressing	310	
Whole Foods 365 Organic Ranch Dressing	330	Wholefoodsmarket.com and personal communication for reference.
Delmonico's Restaurant Peppermill Ranch Dressing	370	Walmart.com

GMO, genetically modified organism; K, potassium (milligrams); MSG, monosodium glutamate; Na, sodium (milligrams).

In order of the lowest to highest sodium content; Na and K per 30 g or 2 T serving unless otherwise noted.

Data from manufacturer Web sites, accessed July 30 through August 19, 2014. See [Appendix: Manufacturer Web Sites](#).

*These products are mixes and need additional ingredients like milk and mayonnaise to create the finished salad dressing. The finished product (prepared at home with the added ingredients) and NOT just the mix is compared to the other ready-to-eat dressings in the table.

free of phosphorus additives and lower in sodium, lower in saturated fat, and free of ingredients like monosodium glutamate and high fructose corn syrup made the list ([Table 3](#)). [Table 4](#), otherwise known as the “less-preferred” ranch salad dressings, displays products with 2 phosphorus additives. No other criterion was used to qualify products for [Table 4](#).

The exploration of ranch salad dressing products was informative. Without question, salad dressing choices are numerous, even overwhelming. Wegmans Food Markets, a grocery chain headquartered in upstate New York, sells 100 different kinds of salad dressings (written communication from Wegmans Consumer Affairs representative). Both Panera Bread and Paula Deen brand salad dressings are available in stores.^{14,15} Dressings with cilantro, avocado, peach, Vidalia onion, and champagne are not uncommon, and Trader Joe's has a hummus dressing. Variety is definitely observed within the ranch category, too: chipotle, peppercorn, cucumber, avocado, bacon,

three cheese, buttermilk, homestyle, buffalo, salsa, and spicy ranch are common flavors, not to mention organic, fat-free, and light varieties. Kraft makes Taco Bell ranch (a spicy and southwestern), Velveeta ranch (a cheesy and cheesy jalapeno), a bulls eye BBQ (barbecue) ranch, and a Grey Poupon Dijon Ranch.¹⁶

Well-known brands like Kraft and Hidden Valley sell many varieties of ranch; in this case, both brands retailing ≥ 10 ranch salad dressing flavors.^{11,16} Ranch salad dressing products in these brand families typically contain phosphorus additives. Many store brands also contain phosphorus additives. Of all the ranch salad dressing products named in [Tables 1 and 2](#), not one lists phosphorus content on the nutrition facts label. Five product labels include potassium. Finding ranch salad dressing products with < 200 mg of sodium per serving is challenging; only 5 of 54 products meet this target ([Table 3](#)). All ranch salad dressing products listed in [Table 2](#) had a sodium content of at least 200 mg. There

Table 2. Ranch Dressing Products Containing Phosphorus Additives (Phosphoric Acid and or Any Phosphate)

Product	Na	Notes
Stonewall Kitchen Ranch Dressing	220	
Heinz Ranch Dressing & Dip	225	Walmart.com
Litehouse Family Favorites Homestyle Ranch Dressing & Dip	230	Some Litehouse varieties are free of phosphorus additives.
TOPS Ranch with Bacon Dressing	230	2 phosphorus additives; TOPS Friendly Market, Fairport NY.
Golding Farms Ranch Dressing	230	2 phosphorus additives; Walmart, Victor NY.
Litehouse Yogurt Ranch Salad Dressing	230	Some Litehouse varieties are free of phosphorus additives.
Drew's Creamy Ranch Dressing & Quick Marinade	240	Chipotle ranch is free of phosphorus additives.
Kroger Creamy Ranch Dressing	240	Creamy fat-free ranch is free of phosphorus additives; King Soopers sells Kroger brand products; King Soopers, Boulder CO.
Wegmans Creamy Ranch	250	Wegmans.com
Kraft Classic Ranch	260	
Wishbone Chipotle Ranch	260	
Hidden Valley Original Ranch Dressing	260	2 phosphorus additives.
Tuscan Garden Ranch Dressing	260	2 phosphorus additives; Aldi brand; Aldi, Webster NY.
Simply Nature Organic Peppercorn Ranch Dressing	260	Aldi brand; Aldi, Webster NY.
TopCo Valu Time Ranch Dressing	260	2 phosphorus additives; TOPS Friendly Market, Fairport NY.
Hellmann's Blue Ribbon Collection Creamy Ranch	260	Unilever brand.
Best Yet Ranch Dressing	260	C & S Wholesale Grocers brand; 2 phosphorus additives; Kalil Grocery, Inlet NY.
Price Chopper Ranch Dressing	260	2 phosphorus additives; Price Chopper, Lake Placid NY.
Shur Saving Light Ranch Dressing	260	2 phosphorus additives; Hegedorn's Market, Webster NY.
Family Gourmet Ranch Dressing & Dip	270	Family Dollar brand; Family Dollar, Farmington NY.
Ken's Steak House Ranch	280	
Western Family Creamy Ranch Dressing	280	2 phosphorus additives; Westernfamily.com
Great Value Buttermilk Ranch Dressing	290	K = 30 mg; Walmart brand; Walmart, Victor NY.
Marzetti Aged Parmesan Ranch Dressing	290	
Shur Fine 3 Cheese Ranch	300	2 phosphorus additives; Hegedorn's Market, Webster NY.
Fit & Active Fat Free Ranch Dressing	310	2 phosphorus additives; Aldi brand; Aldi, Webster NY.
Riverton Valley Ranch Dressing	340	Greenbriar International Inc brand; K = 25; Dollar Tree, Webster NY.

K, potassium (milligrams); Na, sodium (milligrams).

In order of the lowest to highest sodium content; Na and K per 30 g or 2 T serving unless otherwise noted.

Data from manufacturer Web sites, accessed July 30 through August 19, 2014. See [Appendix: Manufacturer Web Sites](#).

is more variation observed in sodium among products free of phosphorus additives, from only 130 mg to 370 mg (Table 1). Powdered ranch salad dressing mixes (prepared at home usually with milk and mayonnaise) reviewed during the search are found to be free of phosphorus additives. Hidden Valley makes powdered ranch salad dressing mixes in 3 flavors, and at least 3 other brands of powdered ranch salad dressing mixes are identified in the search (2 of these three are included in Table 1).¹¹ Yogurt-based dressings are trendy now, are lower in saturated fat, and in general seem to be free of phosphorus additives more often than they contain them.¹⁷ Making ranch salad dressing from scratch is fairly simple and may be a desirable option for those patients who like to cook. Homemade ranch salad dressing ideas are listed in Figure 1.

Although it is known that phosphorus additives are readily used in processed foods and drinks, the exploration of ranch salad dressings confirms that there is still a lack of consistency among products. For example, both Drew's Creamy Ranch and Organic Peppercorn Ranch have phosphates, but Drew's Chipotle Ranch Dressing does not. This is also observed with Marzetti, Litehouse, and Kraft brands. This means it is not safe to recommend

or label a brand as free of phosphorus additives. Instead, renal dietitians must teach patients to read all labels and not make generalizations about products containing phosphorus additives. Another observation from searching ranch salad dressing products is that although it may be easy to make assumptions about products containing phosphorus additives, such assumptions can be false. For instance, one may assume Aldi's Fit & Active Fat Free Ranch Dressing is free of phosphorus additives because "fit & active" sounds like a healthy choice. However, this dressing has not 1 but 2 phosphorus additives as well as a sodium content of 310 mg per serving. Similarly, Aldi's Simply Nature Organic Peppercorn Ranch Dressing contains disodium phosphate, proving that organic foods are not immune to phosphorus additives.

Searching for ranch salad dressings free of phosphorus additives was revealing in several ways. It confirmed that not only do numerous ranch salad dressing choices exist but also many options may be acceptable for renal patients. Surprisingly, it was not as difficult as anticipated to find 25 or more different ranch salad dressing products free of phosphorus

Table 3. “Best Dressed” – Better Ranch Dressing Choices (From Table 1)

Product	Na	Notes
Trader Joe’s Parmesan Ranch Dressing	130	1 g saturated fat.
Follow Your Heart High Omega Vegan Ranch Salad Dressing	150	0 g saturated fat (15 g total fat), dairy free, vegan, non-GMO, gluten free; several other ranch varieties free of phosphorus additives.
Naturally Fresh Ranch II Dressing (w/o MSG)	170	1.5 g saturated fat; K = 35; other ranch varieties free of phosphorus additives.
Marie’s Yogurt Ranch Dressing	180	1 g saturated fat.

GMO, genetically modified organism; K, potassium (milligrams); MSG, monosodium glutamate; Na, sodium (milligrams).

All the ranch dressing products in Table 1 are free of phosphorus additives; Table 3 lists products from Table 1 that are free of phosphorus additives and lower Na (<200 mg), lower in saturated fat (<2 g), and free of MSG and high fructose corn syrup.

In order of the lowest to highest sodium content; Na and K per 30 g or 2 T serving unless otherwise noted.

Data from manufacturer Web sites, accessed July 30 through August 19, 2014. See Appendix: Manufacturer Web Sites.

additives. Ranch salad dressings with phosphorus additives are more prevalent with the bigger name brands. Unfortunately, these bigger name brands speak louder and their products are often more available to patients. Accordingly, the search results reinforce the continued urgency to teach patients to consistently read labels to look for phosphorus additives. By teaching renal patients to read product labels, renal dietitians can help renal patients “dress for success” and make better ranch salad dressing choices.

Table 4. “Over Dressed” – The Less Preferred Ranch Dressing Choices (From Table 2)

Product	Na
TOPS Ranch with Bacon Dressing	230
Golding Farms Ranch Dressing	230
Hidden Valley Original Ranch Dressing	260
Aldi Tuscan Garden Ranch Dressing	260
Best Yet Ranch Dressing	260
Price Chopper Ranch Dressing	260
TopCo Valu Time Ranch Dressing	260
Western Family Creamy Ranch Dressing	280
Aldi’s Fit & Active Fat Free Ranch Dressing	310

K, potassium (milligrams); Na, sodium (milligrams).

All the ranch dressing products in Table 2 contain at least 1 phosphorus additive; Table 4 lists products from Table 2 with the most phosphorus additives; all products in Table 4 have 2 phosphorus additives.

In order of the lowest to highest sodium content; Na and K per 30 g or 2 T serving unless otherwise noted.

Data from manufacturer Web sites, accessed July 30 through August 19, 2014. See Appendix: Manufacturer Web Sites.

Supplementary Data

Supplementary data related to this article can be found at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1053/j.jrn.2014.10.006>.

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