

The Simply Bar (Vegan, Gluten-Free)

With so many "bars" out there, it is so hard to differentiate one from another these days. Yet, The Simply Bar defines its niche as "the most protein with the least calories of any natural food bar." I must admit, when I had a look at the nutrition statement, I was impressed. The bars are a good, average size, yet the calories are relatively low (just 138 to 160 depending on the bar), the fat is low (just 1-3 grams, depending on the bar), and even the sugars aren't unreasonable in comparison (8-14g of sugar depending on the bar), yet the protein is remarkably high, loaded with 16-18g per bar! How do they achieve this? Soy crisps.

The Simply Bar looks very much like a rice crispy treat, but what lies within is actually quite different. The soy crisps are made up of non-gmo soy protein, tapioca starch, and wee bit of salt, and are denser and heartier than your standard fluffy rice crisps. However, they have a softer initial crisp, a barely audible crunch, and a firmer (yet not chewy) texture. These bars definitely taste far more substantial than a rice crispy bar, and are quite fulfilling, especially when compared to the calorie profile.

The texture and make-up of each Simply Bar is inherently the same, but they do come in five different flavors:

Lemon Coconut – I have an indifferent relationship with lemon at this point. It isn't my favorite flavor, yet I am often surprised by lemony items which I do enjoy. Fortunately, this bar isn't overwhelming lemon. In fact, all of the flavors are quite subtle; the occasional chew of coconut, a mellow lemon essence, a very light sweetness. This is an excellent choice for a hike or after a workout. I find that my taste buds are heightened during and after physical activity, making many energy bars and drinks far too sweet, but the flavors and sweetness in this bar aren't the least bit overwhelming.

Cocoa Coffee – This flavor really didn't stand a huge chance with me; it is for true coffee fans. Though it did have an essence of cocoa, this isn't quite mocha material either; the real organic coffee beans stole the show. Overall, the Cocoa Coffee flavor was lightly sweet, like a morning cup of joe with a teaspoon or two of sugar added and a few chocolate chips melted in for good measure. It is true, I don't drink or even remotely like coffee, but I must say that this bar did have a wonderful aroma.

Cinnamon – Ah, this is my bar. The raisins tasted almost like sweet berries against the intensely cinnamon backdrop. This was definitely the sweetest flavor (though not too sweet), but it really is for cinnamon fans only. The spice is ever-present and potent, so much so that you can even taste the slight bitter aftertaste that it leaves in its wake. As a cinnamon fanatic, I was in heaven! This is a bar I would be happy to enjoy for an afternoon burst of energy, or following a good workout (protein for recovery!) once my taste buds had a few minutes to relax.

Cocoa with Raspberry – Unlike many chincy snack bars, the raspberries in this one are generous and most certainly natural. They aren't sweetened, but rather you get their refreshing sweet-tart taste against the lightly sweet Simply Bar background with just a hint of cocoa. It had a mellow chocolate flavor that was subtle, yet present.

Peanut Butter Chocolate – I loved the rich peanut butter scent that emerged as I tore into the package. The overall flavor was surprising mild, just sweetened, just spiked with peanut butter, and just dashed with cocoa. For a treat, I would reach for a sweeter option, but like the Lemon Coconut flavor, this one seems well suited to physical activity.

These bars are vegan, dairy-free, and gluten-free, a definite bonus for many. However, those who are intolerant to soy, allergic to soy protein, or who are like me and shouldn't consume much soy protein due to a health condition such as a thyroid disorder, may need to consume these bars sparingly. This is a third party review by Alisa Fleming, author of *Go Dairy Free: The Guide & Cookbook*. For more information and to purchase this product, see [The Simply Bar website](http://www.simplybar.com).