



## The Offenders

If you can think of the items on our **Super Foods** list as being the good guys, then these three Hombres aren't just bad, they're downright ugly. What's more, these amigos like to travel together in a pack; you'll often find more than one of them in the same processed food product. Once you start to read food labels, you'll realize just how common they are in a wide range of foods we eat. By themselves they add nothing in the way of nutritional value, only empty calories in the form of fat and sugar. It's easy to see why their over-consumption is directly linked to the rise in obesity, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes in our society. Our dubious achievement award for the three "**most wanted**" are:

- **Refined Wheat Flour** - found in many packaged foods including bread, bagels, pastas, pretzels, crackers, and other snack type foods. Utterly devoid of fiber and nutrients, this type of flour is processed to such an extent that it then has to have vitamins and minerals added back to it. Your body will assimilate these concentrated calories very quickly, and is similar to eating table sugar by the spoonful. Many well known and respected nutritionists believe over-consumption of refined wheat flour is one of the reasons for the rapid rise in obesity in our society.
- **Trans-Fatty Acids and Hydrogenated Oils** – contained in products such as mayonnaise, many commercial peanut butters, margarines, salad dressings, and baked goods (naming just a few). While the process of hydrogenation gives a food product a longer shelf life, it also creates an unnatural man-made chemical compound the human body has difficulty metabolizing and absorbing properly. In fact, your body will treat Hydrogenated oils as if they were **saturated** fats. Hopefully by now we all know what excess consumption of saturated fats does for our hearts and vascular systems.
- **High Fructose Corn Syrup** - so very common in a wide range of processed foods and beverages, particularly in many so called "natural" juice products and drinks marketed to children. Fructose is a naturally occurring sugar found in *small* quantities in fruit, and as such rarely poses a health risk. The refined syrup on the other hand, is a very concentrated source of simple sugar. Not only does this add a lot of extra calories, but the sudden surge of insulin necessary to deal with all that sugar is hard on our vascular system. Over time this is a contributing factor to cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

So what should we do? Awareness is always the first step and that means getting used to reading the labels on any packaged foods that you consume. If you aren't sure what is in your foods, try checking the internet, you can run a search for any of these ingredients and you will pull up a wealth of information. You will find it difficult to avoid these three products when shopping outside of the perimeter in chain grocery stores. The inside aisles of such stores are usually a minefield of these three additives, so choose wisely. More health conscious stores such as Trader Joe's and Whole Foods have a much larger selection of products without these ingredients (not all of them however, you still need to read the labels). The bottom line is none of these ingredients are necessary or desirable to maintain optimal health and it's in our best interests to reduce their intake as much as possible!