Is Gen Z Really Zoomin' on Caffeine or Gorging on Pure Sugar?

I'm sure you've seen it before. The girls on TikTok pull out their comically large mason jars, loading up with ice, and then proceeding to dump in *insane* amounts of caramel, chocolate, sweet creamers, and milk, before topping it off with what, in comparison, looks like just a splash of coffee. It's almost impressive how much sugar these girls can jam-pack into a single cup of "coffee." I say "almost impressive" because what looks like a sweet TikTok trend is twisting into a terrifying sugar-obsessed generation that might have more sugar in their blood than water.

Coffee has been Americans' choice morning beverage for centuries. But what was normally an average cup of Joe has now twisted into more of a milkshake with a touch of coffee among teens and young adults. As one news outlet, Fast Company, puts it, they "like it cold, sweet and loaded with creamer." In fact, 85% of Gen Z coffee drinkers are adding creamers, compared to just 70% of coffee drinkers overall (more on this later).

Most *aficionados* like some type of sweetener in their coffee, and that is totally normal. A couple of sugar packets, a dollop of creamer or milk, perfectly manageable. Even having a sugar-filled coffee every once in a while is alright (I myself enjoy a little sweet treat here and there. Lord and my bank account know that I enjoy a Starbucks Pumpkin Spice Frappuccino a little too much. But this is the difference: I can recognize it as a sweet treat, not a daily ritual that not only wastes my money, but my calories).

This new trend of coffee is *overflowing* into an artificial sweetener nightmare. A popular example of these cavities-waiting-to-happen beverages was the 2023 Dunkin' Donuts Pumpkin Swirl Frozen Coffee. Bobby Parrish, popular TikTokker and Food Network champ, found that a large drink of this alone has 185 grams of sugar. To put that into perspective, you could eat 14 whole glazed donuts and be *equivalent* to that one beverage.

If this is a drink Dunkin' put out, America isn't "running" on it as the motto states; it's waddling.

Surely it cannot be good to start your morning with a triple-chocolatey mocha malt that will make you crash either from caffeine or the insane sugar content. It's not just the younger generation that is guilty of this either. As said before, even though they're the main culprits, 70% of *all* coffee drinkers enjoy some sugary counterpart to their drink. The cherry on top of this Frappuccino-focused piece? America is already having a problem with type 2 diabetes. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 1 in 3 Americans has prediabetes. Instead of decreasing these numbers, it seems we are increasing them with every extra pump of syrup we add.

So yes, my fellow Gen Zers, I know it's good, and yes, I know the temptation of a sweet treat is irresistible. But I assure you, you do not need that extra pump of syrup.