Graduating from New York’s French Culinary Institute in 1997, I dreamt of becoming a personal chef. I’ve always loved to cook and having the opportunity to use my skills as a paid profession sounded too good to be true. However, I was a little skeptical about pursuing this due to its relative freelance instability, so I abandoned the idea for the time being.

Meanwhile, I started an editorial publishing career at HarperCollins Publishers and specialized in cookbooks from high-profile Food Network chefs to small single-subject titles. After a couple of years being an editor’s assistant, I had a strong desire to broaden my interest in food and become a registered dietitian.

While I was a full-time student at New York University making my way through the Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD) requirements, I answered an ad through the school’s nutrition department listserv for a personal cook to an elderly man living in the East Village. His name is Stanley. Luck was finally on my side; I was hired to cook his weekly dinners at his residence.

If you are looking to become a personal chef or transfer your culinary interest into a full or part-time profession, here are my best suggestions and advice for success:

**Be Persistent:** Although I previously applied to a number of personal chef positions and was consequently turned down due to lack of experience in this specific area, I highly suggest getting relevant experience at a local catering company or restaurant. The most important thing to keep in mind is to establish a culinary arts platform, even if it’s extensive home cooking and entertaining experience. For employment listings, check out www.craigslist.com in your city for postings under the food/beverage/hospitality link, or contact a cooking school in your area for assistance in placement. Alternatively, create flyers and place them where your desired target audience will view them (health food stores, upscale grocery stores, gyms, and so on).

**Market Yourself:** Strongly promote the registered dietitian credential as an added bonus of value to the personal chef position, in addition to any culinary arts degrees, courses, or continuing education cooking classes. Capitalize on this distinguishing asset to set yourself apart from the competition. Make potential clients aware of your expertise in a certain area, whether it is an international cuisine, clinical experience in cardiac, diabetic, or sports nutrition, or working with a certain aged population. Advertise your combined nutrition and cooking background and how it makes the best package deal of all the other options available (take out restaurant food, fast food, and frozen meals).

**Food History:** While you will learn many food quirks about your client(s) as time goes on (Stanley loved lentil soup, but hated lentils as a side dish), prepare yourself well for the first few weeks of cooking for someone who is essentially a stranger. Never assume anything; like any customer driven service, pleasing the client is paramount. Create a detailed questionnaire with food likes and dislikes. Be as specific as possible in regards to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6
Happy Spring to All DBC Members!

Your Executive Committee continues to find ways to add value for you, our members. Cheryl Toner, MS, RD has worked diligently to enhance our Geographical Network Team and their role. We have changed the name to Regional Network Coordinators. This group has had several conference calls to develop a game plan to strengthen our presence locally and regionally. They have set the foundation, and you should see more planned events for members on a regional basis.

Thanks, Cheryl!

With ADA working on a new Corporate Identity concept, we are waiting to release our new marketing brochures and exhibit banner. A big thank you goes to the Marketing Team, and especially Erin DeSimone, MS, RD, LDN and Rayona Baker, RD, LD for their work on updating our marketing materials. In addition, look for DBC at the Ohio Dietetic Association and the Texas Dietetic Association this spring. We will be presenting a seminar to the members and, of course, sharing with them the benefits of membership in DBC.

Are you participating in the Brilliance Factor training sessions? I continue to hear what a great opportunity for career growth these sessions provide. Find out more by going to the DBC Web site. Thanks to Jane Dunn, MS, RD these programs are adding value for you, our members.

Are you signed up for the listserv? Doing so is a great way to network with you peers, and share and gain valuable information. Thanks to Erika DeVore, RD who tirelessly makes sure that this member benefit remains up and running.

“Volunteers aren’t paid, not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless.”—Anonymous

As always, thanks to all of you who volunteer to continue the growth of DBC. Volunteering does require sharing of your time and talent, but the rewards are great. For those of you who question whether you have something to contribute to DBC, consider the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and former President Jimmy Carter on volunteering:

“Everyone can be great because anyone can serve. You don’t have to have a college degree to serve. You don’t even have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve... You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love...”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Throughout my life, I’ve seen the difference that volunteering efforts can make in people’s lives. I know the personal value of service as a local volunteer.”—Jimmy Carter
Valerie, tell us about your work in Abu Dhabi!
My work here involves writing for the Web site www.expatwomanabudhabi.com. ExpatWoman is an online magazine written by women and for women who are moving to or living in the UAE. The topics are varied and must appeal to a wide range of women seeking information about Abu Dhabi. I was writing nutrition articles for the health section of the Web site and was offered the editor position. It has been challenging, for the site is not all nutrition related, and I did not have previous experience in this field.

My personal goals (to have fun and enjoy my work) have remained the same since I entered dietetics years ago. I feel as dietitians we need to be flexible with career options and strive to incorporate areas of nutrition and health that may seem outside the normal range of traditional dietetics practice. Continuous learning and self education is a must — share what you have learned and always ask for help!

What prompted you to get into this line of work?
For this job I had to totally re-invent myself! My initial goal for working in the UAE was quickly dismissed after months of futile job searching. I fortunately connected with a former colleague at a local hospital who wanted me to develop and administer a dietetic internship program that was slated to be a model program for the UAE. This program did not come to fruition, but her tireless work to help achieve the recognition needed to promote dietitians in the Emirates has been successful. My part in this endeavor has been writing and submitting nutrition-related articles to magazines, newspapers, and Web sites, espousing the RD as the nutrition expert. Writing allows me to use my creative talent, and my current job as editor has taught me that I can practice dietetics without leaving the house. Compensation is not what it should be, but the opportunity to make a difference in this “new” country (36 years old) is an amazing once in a lifetime experience.

Why is it important to promote the role of the RD to the UAE population?
It is important to establish the value of a RD in the community. The UAE is a new country, and the infrastructure that you and I take for granted is not yet established. There are no public health programs that include nutrition education or services for the public to access, so very little nutrition is being integrated into the community at the grassroots level. The burden of nutrition intervention and education is left to hospitals, which is not the place to start educating the community about nutrition. They are starting to draft community healthcare programs, but they are in their early days yet.

Business and industry has no idea what a registered dietitian is, much less what role they may play in a restaurant chain, supermarket, catering business, or school foodservice. It is the responsibility of each dietitian here to market ourselves as the “nutrition expert” to the government. Hopefully once this is fully accomplished, the public and private sectors will create an awareness of the importance of educating dietitians with proper programs and fold the graduates of those programs into the community. My dietitian colleague mentioned earlier has been working with the American Dietetic Association and a local university to get an approved dietetics program up and running. This program will likely become a model program for all of the UAE and the Middle East.

The UAE has catapulted itself into the twenty-first century. The once isolated country has adapted Western culture into numerous parts of daily life, especially food. A desire for fast food and a population with large amounts of disposable income has resulted in a booming “eat in the car” family style of dining. The consequences of that lifestyle have just now become a topic of discussion in the media. The idea of preventative health care, brought to the forefront by a 20% rate of diabetes and a 30% rate of
Have you ever made a comment in a meeting that was essentially ignored only to have a colleague say the same thing, basically, and be acknowledged with a “Yeah! Good Point!” Silently you think, “Isn’t that what I just said?”

We tend to blame others for not hearing what we said. However, it’s likely the way you said it and the words you used to communicate your message contributed to the result. In *How to Say it for Women*, Mindell presents tips and plenty of specific examples to upgrade your communication and make it more effective. The author presents material, in a simple easy to grasp way, that will make your communication more influential, clearer, and more successful. This book, not for women only, is for anyone whose style of communication lacks confidence, is wishy-washy, or peppered with phrases such as, *kind of, sort of, its just my opinion, this may be a stupid question but, I hope*, and many other qualifiers, hedges, and tags that weaken your message.

This weak language makes women (and men) invisible. What you say, and more importantly, how you say it influences your leadership image. Word choice and grammar make a difference in your ability to gain respect, persuade, and lead.

The following are a few of the key points that helped me make my communication more effective. Listen to your language to identify areas for improvement.

**Sounding Indecisive:** Hedging Hurts: Hedges are words you hide behind when you are not confident enough to commit to what you are saying. When your language is filled with hedges, you do not come across as confident about what you are saying, so others do not listen or pay attention.

   *Example:* I’m not sure but…, I really don’t think…, I’m not a numbers person but, it’s just my opinion…, the way I see it, I’m not an expert but. Eliminate hedges and make your point. It is not necessary to qualify what you say, if you believe your message is worthwhile.

**Weak Words and Phrases:** Replace vague and puny words with strong words.

   *Weak:* I need you to get me the research as soon as possible.
   *Stronger:* It is essential to complete the research by April 30.
   *Weak:* I think it is very, very important that we chat about this issue.

   *...weak language makes men and women invisible.*

   *Stronger:* It is critical we examine the communication problem in the department.

**Rambling and Repeating:** Too many details can blur the message. Speaking in a clear, concise, and precise way makes your message much easier to be “heard”. A common mistake is presenting a lengthy preamble to your intended message explaining, qualifying and setting up your point. People stop listening before you get to your key message.

**Powerful Grammar:** Weak grammar strings phrases and sentences together with lots of “ands” and “buts”. The use of the parallel form is one of the most effective ways to speak and eliminates run—on sentences (and excessive detail). Parallelism, using identical syntactic construction in corresponding clauses,* is best understood with examples:

   * • Government of the people, by the people, for the people
   * • To speak clearly is to speak effectively
   * • Working for a respected leader:
   *   Employees thrive, sales grow, and turnover declines

Another very effective style is to state your bottom line (key message) followed by three points to support your line of reasoning. Example:

   * Weekly staff meetings are required to enhance department communication
   * • Miscommunication is creating discord
   * • Flexible hours limit staff interaction
   * • There are many rumors about the new company owners

* *American Heritage Dictionary*
Relevant Application: If you want to get better results at work, or be recognized for promotion to management and leadership roles, then take steps to strengthen your communication. Reading this book is the first step. Reading is not enough. It takes practice. Here are some action steps for those who are serious about enhancing their professional image by upgrading workplace communication.

- Listen to yourself. Notice your language and select one or two areas to work on at a time.
- Re-read e-mails before you send them. Strengthen your written words.
- Form a book club with trusted colleagues at your workplace. Take turns leading a discussion of this book chapter by chapter.
- De-brief with book club members after meetings to give each other feedback on communication.
- Observe and model good communicators on television, in meetings, and elsewhere.

Circle the number
That best describes you.

1. I consider my communication skills appropriately assertive and quite effective most of the time.
2. I sometimes use assertive communication such as with my children or spouse, not usually at work.
3. My communication is peppered with phrases such as I’m sorry, kind of, sort of, it’s just my opinion, I’m not sure but, or rambling detail.
4. When my higher power gave out assertive communication traits, I must have been at the pool.

My number is____

Member Spotlight

What is the biggest challenge you face in your work?
Understanding the female culture in a very young country. The women in this society are just now attending school, seek higher degrees and choosing careers. Trying to instill a work ethic and time commitment to a demanding clinical job can be frustrating. Many do not grasp the concept of working eight hours each day while others still want to bring their maids to work with them! On the whole, though, the dietetics students are some of the brightest women I have ever had the pleasure of meeting.

What has surprised you most?
The amount of money available in the UAE to build the country and still have tons left over to provide housing benefits, healthcare benefits, schooling, and many other perks—free to the National population. To be around such wealth and actually watch the country being built is amazing. Great pride is taken in making the UAE look fantastic—beautiful parks, beaches, and immaculate streets make the place visually pleasing.

What advice can you give to dietitians who would like to pursue such a career?
Well, I would not advise getting on a plane and coming to the Middle East—not first anyway. Go to another country, like England; get your feet wet in a foreign country, and then head east! The transition from the U.S. to England and working with the National Health Service was a real eye opener and good practice before coming here.

All joking aside, experience as much as you can in whatever position or career you are in. Take the jobs nobody else wants, say the things no one else wants to say, and keep your options open for advancement. Choose your battles wisely and remember that losing is sometimes the best way forward.
different meat cuts, seasonings, doneness of cooked vegetables, salad dressings, among other food criteria. In addition, include a section on favorite foods, known food allergies, and, if pertinent, any relevant medications that have food-drug interactions.

**Meal Planning:** In Stanley’s case, I opted to calculate his estimated calorie and protein requirements before designing his meals because of his recent medical history. When I first met him, he was clearly malnourished and severely underweight. Having just been recently hospitalized for a heart attack, his doctor sent him home with discharge instructions to follow a prudent diet (low saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium). Thus, the challenge was to create high-calorie meals that were reduced in fat and finding creative ways to season the food without using fresh herbs (apparently, he was “allergic” to them, but was amenable to dried spices). After a couple of months, he was happy to have gained about eight pounds on his lithe frame.

Determine all the meal components on an individual client basis, but a basic meal would generally include a lean protein, a starch, and cooked vegetables. (Other side dishes and dessert are optional). Weigh your options here. Is it more time effective for your business to simply prepare these three meal components, or is it more cost effective to use more of your time and resources if you prepare an additional side dish and dessert?

**Cooking Equipment:** Prior to cooking, complete a detailed inventory of their entire kitchen. Make sure that appliances are in good working order, and compile a list of needed materials such as storage containers (all sizes are a must), utensils (different sized whisks), and other basic supplies (mixing bowls, pots, pans, skillet, etc.). Do the same for their cupboards and pantry in regards to staples, such as salt, sugar, flour, dried spices, and the like. Remember that you will not have the luxury of all your home gadgets or familiar ingredients. Stanley did not have a Microplane zester, immersion blender, or a basic eight-inch non-stick pan, but he was happy to purchase them once the need arose.

**Pricing Issues:** The going rate for a personal chef ranges from $25-$35 an hour, depending on level of personal chef experience, which accounts for at-home menu planning, recipe research (I often used Cooking Light magazine for their nutritional breakdown and emphasis on healthy cooking methods), shopping (check out food delivery services for time-saving purposes), cooking (always account for a liberal amount of time for such-mundane tasks as rinsing herbs or cooling down foods to room temperature), and clean-up. Alternatively, you could charge by the entire meal instead if you find this option more profitable.

**Organizational Skills:** This job requires a significant amount of multi-tasking, whether you have several clients or are simultaneously preparing many dishes, all requiring different cooking times (for the last few months of my employment, I also took on Stanley’s live-in son, Lance, as another client, who required completely different meals). I either photocopied or downloaded recipes into a weekly packet and then made a corresponding prioritized checklist for each day. Of course, not all basic recipes require written instructions, so the more confident one is of his/her culinary knowledge in the kitchen, the better for time management purposes. I found that streamlined repetition made for easy preparation over time (for example, Stanley asked for braised endive, Swiss chard with polenta, and a mustard salmon every Thursday for two months).

**The Cooking:** Most personal chefs cook in their client’s residence, so you must be comfortable enough to immerse yourself in someone else’s kitchen for a few hours at a time. If you are looking to broaden your customer base, a significantly larger scale operation involves preparing meals at a commercial kitchen and having them packaged and delivered in special disposable containers, all case in a cooler. Perhaps you might find that buying groceries is more cost effective at a wholesale food supplier, like Costco.

The best part of this job was doing what I love as a profession, making for fulfilling and gratifying hours of what rarely seemed like work in the typical sense. Necessary skills for success involve a preference for independently working; the ability to improvise and take charge in last-minute solutions; a personable demeanor; a solid business sense; and a quick pace in the kitchen.

Although I would not return to this line of work in the future, the experience was invaluable. Like all jobs, a good deal of personal satisfaction lies in your choice of employer; I was fortunate as Stanley was both easygoing and even willing to broaden his choice of foods. Best of luck!

Karen Ferries, RD is a relatively new member to DBC. Previously employed at Housing Works Inc, an HIV adult day healthcare center in Manhattan, as a community nutritionist, she is now freelancing as an assistant food stylist and working in recipe development. Her email is kferries@yahoo.com.
My career path has been far from traditional. When I quit my job as an international flight attendant, I used to say that I was tired of asking “chicken or beef?”, so I quit to attend chef’s school. The same “joke” sometimes draws blank stares these days since “chicken or beef?” is a distant memory on today’s bargain flights.

But I did take a leap of faith to enroll in a full-time, 16-month program at California Culinary Academy in San Francisco before apprenticing in France for six months. I returned to San Francisco to help open Wolfgang Puck’s first restaurant there. I quickly learned that my income would be seriously limited if I remained a line cook, even in a top restaurant. I began to moonlight for affluent families who could afford their own private chef. Most of my clients had dietary restrictions of some sort – low fat, low sugar, low calorie……but none of my fancy formal training had prepared me for this. Nutrition was not a part of any chef school’s curriculum at that time, and there were very few chefs who knew much about nutrition, so I taught myself. After a few years, I decided to legitimize my self-taught “healthy cooking” to understand the physiology behind the seemingly “finicky” requests that continued to pour in. While cooking at night, I attended UC-Berkeley by day and earned a nutrition degree and RD credential. I had no idea what I would do with this skill set, but I was convinced it was the only thing I could do.

I haven’t looked back. Every day, I have opportunities I would never have imagined, and each year only gets better and more exciting. I’ve cooked for celebrities (and a prince!), written cookbooks, articles for magazines and newspapers, and analyzed recipes for nutritional content. Currently, I’m a consulting nutritionist to weight loss television as well as a busy author, instructor, speaker, and spokesperson.

To anyone considering adding a culinary degree to his or her RD credential, I would suggest exploring a variety of career goals before narrowing your focus to one or two. You will be surprised at the number of options available a Chef – RD.

Here are some other important things to consider once you decide to pursue a culinary education:

1. Plan Ahead – Try to visit the school(s) you're considering to see if it’s a good fit for you. Most schools have tours as well as counselors available to answer all of your questions.

2. Accreditation – A reputable culinary school should have some form of accreditation. Visit the Web site of the American Culinary Federation to research accreditation for culinary schools. The school you choose will be on your resume for life and every future employer will take note. Be certain to choose the best school you can afford. (And if you can't afford it, try to get Financial Aid!! See #3)

3. Budget – Next to choosing the right school, your budget is pivotal in making your dream a reality. Tuition can range from hundreds of dollars to more than $15,000 a year at one of the top schools (not including room and board, transportation, uniforms, knives, etc.) Be careful to think this through and don’t be discouraged, as many schools have excellent financial aid programs to help you make the plunge.

4. Scheduling – As you may have to relocate, switch jobs, or make a myriad of different changes to accommodate your schooling, be certain you understand your scheduling options well in advance. Some programs only commence once a year while others have new classes starting quarterly (or even monthly).

5. Placement – Be sure the school you choose provides assistance in job placement opportunities. New graduates are not always as desirable as seasoned grads who’ve worked in the field for awhile. A good placement department can be your best friend in helping you embark on your new career.  

Happy Cooking!

Cheryl Forberg is the Nutritionist for NBC’s The Biggest Loser. She is a professional chef, registered dietitian and a James Beard award recipient for healthy recipe development. Her new book, Positively Ageless: A 28-Day Plan for a Younger, Slimmer, Sexier You (Rodale) will be published in April. She resides in Napa, California.
Obesity is rising. The population is aging. Heart disease is the number one killer. Consumers are increasingly looking to make better choices to improve their health. Yet, they struggle to make healthy choices. Why? Consumers need SOLUTIONS.

A recent study showed that consumers have more faith in consumer advocacy groups and their local supermarkets than they do the government or food companies when it comes to finding useful information about food choices. Just as consumers look to their medical provider for medical advice, the customer often looks to their supermarket for nutrition advice. Many food purchase decisions are made in the store, so more supermarkets are seeking the services of registered dietitians. Our opportunity lies in providing nutrition and health solutions to customers living in a busy world.

My role at Albertsons has evolved over the years. We have recognized the sales opportunities of providing meal solutions, recipes, and healthier options to the customer. I am the link between the health world and the marketing and merchandising world. Curious about how I spend my time? Here is a general list of day to day activities that are probably common to most supermarket nutrition professionals.

- Media spokesperson
- Managing Editor of the “To Your Health” store newsletter
- Create nutrition and food training videos for in-store associates
- Create in-store scripts for “Kid Healthy Eating” store tours
- Develop store nutrition tours
- Write weekly in-store nutrition radio broadcasts
- Serve as a Marketing/Sales Department resource by Writing nutrition copy for ads
  - Working with category buyers to assess product health value
  - Working with fresh departments to develop nutrition signage
  - Developing recipes for fresh departments (i.e., Deli)
- Perform as a nutrition speaker at community events and at the corporate level.
- Provide wellness materials and lessons at corporate staff events
- Develop nutrition education materials for store events
- Resource for customers via the internet and phone calls.

Albertsons was founded in 1939 and currently operates 545 Albertsons and Lucky supermarkets in Idaho, Montana, Southern California, Southern Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. Albertsons is part of the SUPERVALU family, with its approximately 2,450 retail grocery locations.
Food Safety Is Key to Supermarket Success

By Marcella Taylor Gelman, MS, RD
Manager, Consumer Protection
Vons, A Safeway Company

I’m the Manager of Consumer Protection for Vons. Vons is a division of Safeway, Inc., a Fortune 100 company. Safeway operates 1,743 stores across the US and Canada. Vons is the largest of Safeway’s 10 divisions and has 297 grocery stores located in Southern California and Southern Nevada.

I’ve been with Vons for 19 years. I was originally hired as the Quality Assurance Consumer Coordinator and handled product complaints. I transferred to the Consumer Affairs Department and was promoted to Supervisor, Consumer Affairs. After Safeway purchased Vons, the Food Safety Department was created (the name has recently changed to Consumer Protection Department). I’ve been in the current role with functional oversight over food safety, sanitation and regulatory compliance for almost 11 years. I think dietitians and supermarkets go together naturally, as well as dietitians and food safety.

My job function includes developing, implementing and maintaining a variety of food safety programs as prescribed by our corporate office. We also develop division-specific programs to help improve food safety. Safeway has recently started utilizing an independent third party to verify compliance to food safety programs at retail, and I play an active role in monitoring these results and driving change. I serve as the liaison for the Vons Division with local environmental health departments, state health officials, the FDA, the USDA, and other assorted government agencies. I’m actively involved with the California Retail Food Safety Coalition. The Coalition brings together representatives from the food industry, government and academia to identify and address emerging food safety concerns in order to formulate recommendations for presentation to the State Legislature.

Bottom line: my job is to help ensure that the food we sell is safe.

Consumer Health and Nutrition Resources: Your Local Supermarket

By Melissa Hooper, MS, RD, LD
Registered Dietitian for Stater Bros.

Stater Bros. Markets has 164 outlets in southern California and continues to grow. As a dietitian, I give store tours, answer consumer questions and help promote the “Healthy Selections” program. I also serve as a resource for local media to field questions about this program.

Additionally, Stater Bros has a monthly mailer that is sent to 3.9 million homes. I provide a nutrition-related topic for each mailer that helps consumers make healthier choices in the grocery store. I also target specific products to participate in the “Healthy Selections” portion of the mailer. I write articles and assist with the creative development and the editing of the quarterly store newsletter. These newsletters contain relevant, up-to-date information about critical nutrition and health topics.

I also provide editorial for the yearly calendar and write messages for the in-store broadcasts. I am working on updating the Web site and look for ways to connect the pharmacy with nutrition.

I love what I do! The “Healthy Selections” program is in its infancy, but we are committed to this program and other avenues of consumer outreach. Our goal is to help consumers make better food choices, improve quality of life and hopefully help reduce their risk of developing nutrition-related diseases.
I’ve often been told I am lucky. Secretly I smile. My definition of luck is being ready to step into an opportunity. It’s just that opportunities often occur in the most unexpected ways. And working with the McDonald’s Owner/Operator Association of Southern California (MOASC) was definitely unexpected.

In 1991 I was teaching part time at Santa Monica College and seeing clients in private practice. I love the academic challenge and the opportunity to educate in teaching. The intimate connection with clients and opportunity to see them move forward is also incredibly satisfying. Lucky me, I got to do both.

I can’t remember how I met the manager of the local cable television station on the SMC campus. He mentioned he was looking for content and asked if I would be interested in producing a program on nutrition. I decided to stretch myself, noting that I could learn something about working with media. We created a program titled “Focus on Nutrition” and made exactly one episode.

HOW TO EAT OUT HEALTHFULLY
The first episode addressed the topic of eating out healthfully. I decided to highlight strategies for a range of locations, from fine dining to fast food. I had easy access to a chef/owner of a local bistro and the executive chef of another fine dining establishment, as my husband owns a food distribution company and he directed me to willing participants. The fast food connection was a bit more challenging. I wrote letters to a number of establishments and heard back from just one PR representative on behalf of McDonald’s: Could he see a script?

My guess is that they were relieved and pleasantly surprised that a dietitian was talking about how to navigate choices at a fast food restaurant… not just beating it up. Soon we were taping at a local store with the gracious cooperation of the owner and staff.

I’m not sure how many people saw the program, I certainly didn’t hear much about the actual show, but I did get a call back from the PR representative to see if I would consider working with the public relations firm on the McDonald’s account. It was a pivotal moment.

Years earlier I had been an outspoken critic of a McDonald’s located inside the Children’s Hospital in Los Angeles. That was before I witnessed a close friend’s son get a “hall pass” to meet us in the restaurant for lunch. This child was receiving long term treatment at the hospital. When his beaming smile passed through those golden arches, I realized that eating at McDonald’s was about the food and a lot more than the food. I thought long and hard, deciding to meet with the PR representative. I wanted more information.

CONSULTING FOR McDonald’S
The meeting was a pleasant surprise. I asked for everything I needed to do my best work. I made it clear that my time was for sale, not my integrity. I am hired by the public relations firm, not McDonald’s directly. Ironically we have come to realize that this partnership works because of my integrity and my autonomy. As an independent voice we believe I have more credibility than as a spokesperson for McDonald’s.

The initial work involved speaking with reporters at events and press conferences and reviewing media and advertising copy. When the first television interview began with a rather pointed question, I smiled and responded with the same sensibility I learned fielding challenging questions in the classroom. I guess the PR folks were impressed that I didn’t become unglued in the glare of the television cameras.

The next year, the budget expanded and we developed a curriculum to teach middle school teachers how to teach nutrition in the classroom. The next year, McDonald’s changed course, and my work with them quieted down. I was contacted periodically over the next ten years for small events. Work with MOASC and McDonald’s changed dramatically in 2002.

SALADS AND MORE: “A little change can be good”
I was called in to discuss the next year’s opportunities. Nationally McDonald’s was planning to bring in the Premium Chicken Salads. Southern California wanted to do something more, and I was asked to sit in on planning meetings. Salads and More was born and McDonald’s of Southern California would soon offer a broad range of new food choices. The new menu would reflect exactly what I had asked for: more fruits, more vegetables, even a vegetarian protein option and a wheat bun sporting 4 grams of fiber. The tag line: A little change can be good.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15
Amidst all the hype about Jessica Seinfeld’s *Deceptively Delicious* cookbook, I have to admit that I’ve been waiting for someone to stand up and say it. But I’m still waiting. In any of the professional outlets I’m engaged in, I haven’t seen it discussed. So let’s discuss it now. Do we as a nutrition profession believe that the right way to raise kids with healthy eating habits is by sneaking in the good stuff? If you add spinach to brownies at home, as the cookbook suggests, how do children understand that not all brownies are created equal? The brownies at school, the brownies at a friend’s house, the brownies sold at a C-store – kids will be raised to believe these are an okay snack because they look just like the ones made at home. Pureed cauliflower in everything from Mac and cheese to pudding. How does a 13-year-old (who can make Easy Mac in the microwave) understand that this product doesn’t contain a vegetable? No one said it was necessarily easy, and yes, kids can be fussy eaters, but if kids aren’t taught to enjoy the multitude of flavors of foods as well as taught that eating a variety of foods leads to good health, what will their eating habits look like as adults?

In addition to the multitude of new health books in the market, I’m fascinated by the dichotomy of the messages. No where is it more blatant than with Jessica Seinfeld’s *Deceptively Delicious* and Michael Pollan’s *In Defense of Food*. While *Deceptively Delicious* focuses on sneaking the good stuff into kid-friendly foods, Pollan’s message in his newest book is about whole food, primarily plant foods, and less of food in total. While convenience and minimizing power struggles are part of the impetus for Seinfeld’s work, anti-processed food (which for many consumers is in struggle with convenience) is definitely a trend addressed by Pollan. Instead of consumers finding greater clarity in the nutrition messages in the public sector, confusion abounds, but in a whole new way.

At the end of February, the USDA announced renewed focus on *MyPyramid* in the form of Project M.O.M. – Mothers & Others & MyPyramid. The goal is to provide information and skills to help nutrition gatekeepers model healthy lifestyles and make nutritious food choices for their families. USDA is asking for partners to align with this message to make it concrete for mom. The good news about this initiative is that consumers are definitely understanding that “balance” is the only way to find long-term health. Quick fixes and diets don’t work. Balancing good choices with occasional treats is the right answer. Essentially this is the message provided by *MyPyramid* and its support materials. But the method of the message isn’t compelling. The challenge is for innovative partners to get onboard, using their marketing genius, innovative technology tools that talk to mom and kids, and product innovations to really drive a message of balance in a way that resonates for the nutrition gatekeepers.

When it comes to trends, Europe is often watched to generate a sense of what will be hot in the U.S. next season or next year. In fashion, technology, cars, chocolate – we see trends move across the ocean to our culture. But is this also true in food? *Does the food product or trend start with the European palate and then entice the U.S. palate?* Some recent sales data suggests it may not be true. Tesco, a food retailing giant in the UK, entered the US market with their Fresh and Easy Neighborhood Market format with a goal of $200,000 in sales per week. According to an article published in *SuperMarket News* on February 21, sales are only hitting the $50-60,000 mark weekly, well below their original projections. This is definitely a store to watch in 2008 to assess whether what works in the UK and other European countries does drive food trends in the US.

Wondering what other *food topics to watch in 2008?* Meat tops my list. From the debate on the safety of meat from cloned animals (which for many consumers appears to be as much of an ethical issue as a safety issue) to animal welfare claims (and how these claims are validated), meat will be high on consumers’ radar throughout the year. My other favorite? Locally grown, the carbon footprint of your food, the recyclability of the packaging your food comes in. This whole topic will take over where organic has left off.

In both our professional and personal lives, we are continually prioritizing. This priority drives where we spend our time and the energy we expend against projects. Within public health, I am amazed how often salt has been the topic of discussion over the past several months. The Center for Science in the Public Interest is asking the Food and Drug Administration to take salt off the GRAS list and a recent food science Webinar focused on this topic. No matter where you sit on the science behind salt reduction, you’d be hard pressed to say that it’s at the top of the priority list. Obesity, overweight, too many calories consumed – changes here can have more impact on health and are priority. So tell me again, why are we spending so much time on salt?

*Topline* is a column by DBC member Annette Maggi, MS, RD, LD, FADA that highlights the latest hot spots from research, industry and government as a service to DBC members. If you have an idea for *Topline*, send an email to Annette@Annette.Maggi@target.com
U.S. Foodservice
With gross sales in excess of $19.5 billion, and over 29,000 employees in more than 60 distribution centers, U.S. Foodservice is America’s second-largest broadline distributor of food and related products, as well as the leader in serving the healthcare industry. We are designed to help you succeed, whether you’re an individual facility or a national group.

Our system has been fine-tuned to meet the unique operational needs of healthcare organizations of all types, sizes and locations. We are a values-driven organization whose goal is to be the industry leader in customer service, food expertise, innovation, quality, food safety and corporate integrity.

To U.S. Foodservice, the benefits of a DBC sponsorship include the opportunity to network with dietetic professionals from businesses and other organizations in the food, nutrition, communications and healthcare industries.

Dietitians have many roles at U.S. Foodservice that include sales, marketing, consulting and education. Our company recruits dietitians through executive search firms, Web sites and newspapers. U.S. Foodservice believes that we can build stronger relationships with dietitians through participation in healthcare associations and other networking activities.

For more information on U.S. Foodservice, contact:
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Campbell Soup Company
Since 1965, Campbell Away From Home has been a trusted food service partner, committed to providing its customers with great-tasting, nutritionally responsible products that are representative of Campbell Soup Company’s 136-year nutrition and culinary heritage. Campbell Away From Home offerings include our traditional canned soup varieties as well as Campbell’s® Restaurant Quality™ soups, V8® soups and entrees, Campbell’s Well & Good soups, V8® beverages, Pace® and Prego® sauces and Pepperidge Farm® snacks and crackers. As part of our ongoing commitment to health and wellness, Campbell Away From Home has recently relaunched Campbell’s Healthy Request soups. Every soup is created from recipes using high quality ingredients and is now seasoned with lower sodium natural sea salt. There are six varieties: Minestrone, Vegetable Beef, Tomato, Chicken Noodle, Cream of Chicken, and Cream of Mushroom. Campbell’s Healthy Request soups are now certified by the American Heart Association. They meet its criteria for specific levels of fat, saturated fat, cholesterol and sodium. Each 8 oz serving of soup:
  • is 98% fat free
  • has 0 grams of trans fat
  • is low in cholesterol
  • has 480 mg. of sodium or less

Varieties of Campbell’s Healthy Request soup can be served as soup or used as an ingredient in recipes like Quick & Easy Risotto or Sweet & Savory Salmon. Visit the Campbell Away from Home Web site for recipe and menuing ideas. Campbell Soup Company is committed to health and wellness. We have a robust “wellness” section on our operator Web site, www.campbellawayfromhome.com. The Web site includes news, trend information, and a place to “Ask a Dietitian” questions.

In addition, Campbell launched the Center for Nutrition and Wellness. This center uses the expertise of on-site dietitians, food scientists and researchers to provide the most credible, scientifically based information on nutrition, diet and physical activity. The Web site also has a section geared specifically for healthcare professionals. Campbell is a strong supporter of Dietitians in Business and Communications and the American Dietetic Association and recognizes that the registered dietitian is the trusted expert in the field of nutrition and dietetics. For more information on the Campbell Soup Company contact:

Campbell Soup Company
One Campbell Place
Camden, NJ 08103-1799
1-800-TRY SOUP
www.campbellawayfromhome.com

Schwan Food Company
The Schwan Food Company, headquartered in Marshall, MN, is one of the largest, branded frozen-food companies in the U.S. and the second largest privately held firm in Minnesota. Schwan is a global leader in the production of frozen pizza, frozen egg rolls and frozen desserts, and in home delivery of frozen food. Schwan businesses include:

• Schwan’s Home Service, Inc. provides home delivery of Schwan’s® fine frozen foods throughout the continental United States.

• Schwan’s Food Service, Inc. is a leader in frozen food offerings to schools, chain restaurants, vending, hotels, college/university, healthcare and c-stores.

• Schwan’s Global Consumer Brands, Inc. provides branded frozen food products in grocery and retail outlets throughout the U.S. and Europe

• T&N Foods, Inc. provides private-label frozen pizza and bread products to grocery and retail outlets in Canada and the U.S.

• Holiday Foods, Inc. manufactures and markets high end appetizers and desserts in the U.S.

Popular brands marketed by businesses of The Schwan Food Company include: Schwan’s® fine foods, Tony’s® pizza, Red Baron® products, Freschetta® pizza, Mrs. Smith’s® pies and cobblers; Edwards® desserts; Chicago Town™ pizza, Asian Sensation™ appetizers, Larry’s® potatoes, Minh® Asian-inspired products, Heid’s Gourmet Deserts® products; Coyote Grill products; and Schwan’s Food Service2Go™ branded concepts.

Schwan is pleased to sponsor and work with DBC members in building member services. Through DBC, Schwan maintains and creates business partnerships, discusses cutting edge nutrition issues, and builds a network for future endeavors.

The Schwan Food Company is committed to providing high-quality frozen foods that meet the needs of our customers. For more information, please contact

Marie Nelson
at marie.nelson@schwan.com
or check out the company Web site at www.theschwanfoodcompany.com
or www.schwansfoodservice.com
When members were asked to name the DBC benefit that they value most, almost half chose either networking opportunities or options for expanding their careers. However, another fourth picked either the newsletter or the listserv. Both *DBC Dimensions* and DBC’s Web site were listed among the top five benefits by almost three-fourths of those responding to the 2007 DBC member survey. The survey, conducted in July and August and completed by almost 250 members, asked questions about satisfaction with services provided by the practice group, including the newsletter, e-Update, and the listserv. A detailed section asked members to identify their need for specific professional development topics.

Here are highlights of the results:

**Satisfaction with services.** The newsletter rated highest in satisfaction, with nearly 80% of those responding being either satisfied or very satisfied. More than 60% reported being satisfied with the Web site, and slightly more than half said they were satisfied with the listserv and with CPE opportunities.

**Interest in subunits.** There appeared to be some interest in forming subunits within DBC, which would facilitate collaboration among members pursuing similar career pathways. The following areas of interest were mentioned most often:

- author/writing
- business development/consulting
- speaker/media/spokesperson
- supermarket RD
- food industry

**Newsletter.** The survey asked members to choose which newsletter features were important to them (see Figure 1). Almost all those responding (95%) said that educational features were important and most felt that *TopLine* (89%) and the Calendar of Events (82%) were also. The choice of newsletter format was split between those who still want two issues of *DBC Dimensions* mailed (57%) and those who would prefer all newsletters to be Web-based (43%).

**Listserv.** More than half said they are not on the DBC listserv, but most of those were interested in joining. Members gave various reasons for not being on the listserv. More than a third indicated that they were not familiar with the process to get started, but some cited that they already receive too many emails or that it was too time-consuming (see Figure 2).

**Professional education and resources.** Approximately 55% felt that DBC should fund CPE opportunities such as Webinars and, in general, provide more professional resources. More than a third felt that DBC should improve or expand educational seminars (39.1%) and communication with members (33.8%).

Survey respondents named a wide variety of needs for professional development. More than 75% prefer to receive continuing professional education (CPE) via Webinar, and almost as many were interested in teleconferences. Almost half expressed an interest in receiving CPE opportunities in the newsletter.

The top five needs for skills/professional development were, by number of times mentioned:

- author/writing
- New ways to network (e.g., blogging, podcast, YouTube)
- Negotiating and other business skills
- Marketing yourself/your products
- Leadership skills
- Media training

Members are seeking either mid-level or advanced level training in most areas, except for “new ways to network,” legal issues, virtual team development, and how to break into media or prepare for a job in public relations, where respondents cited a need for basic training. Most are seeking advanced training for public speaking, while some wanted advanced CPE for business skills, leadership skills, and marketing themselves.

Many members provided comments regarding what services
Salads and More brought about many changes. McDonald’s stores in Southern California were soon offering a Happy Meal Option. This option meant that parents could order him a hamburger, fruit parfait and milk for the same price as the regular Happy Meal. The Happy Meal Option was made available nationally the very next year using Apple Dippers. And while the vegetarian soy burger and wheat bun were good ideas, they did not sell and were phased out over the next two years. I learned an important lesson. I can not do this alone and not enough of my colleagues knew about these changes at the time they were available. I wonder how much more successful those menu choices would be today.

The nutrition climate has changed over the last six years. Now when I attend CDA and other health care conferences as an exhibitor or speaker, participants recognize and celebrate McDonald’s continued effort to be part of the solution. And their effort isn’t limited to the menu.

Linda Schuessler, MS, RD compiled the survey results and provided this summary. Linda is the Chair of the Marketing Committee for DBC and works as DBC Marketing Team Chair and is Manager of Wellness Promotion at Fiserv, Inc., Brookfield, WI.
Alice Richer, RD, MBA, LD • Norwood, MA

Alice Richer, RD, MBA, LD recently published her new book, *Understanding the Antioxidant Controversy*, which she co-authored with Dr. Paul E. Milbury, research scientist at the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University. This book is an up-to-date reference on the confusing world of antioxidants and a helpful guide through the sea of media hype surrounding them. Dietitians will find the information in this book useful when counseling patients, especially with regard to antioxidant dietary supplements. Alice currently practices at the Spaulding Rehabilitation Framingham and Braintree Centers and is a freelance medical writer. She has published various articles, including *Dietitians and the Law* in the fall 2004 DBC newsletter and the continuing education module *Business Skills: The Dietitian’s Guide to Negotiating and Writing Contracts* for www.CEU4U.com. She is also working on another book. Alice can be reached at a.richer@verizon.net.

Elisabeth D’Alto, RD • NJ/NYC Metro Area

Elisabeth D’Alto, RD is the DBC Regional Networking Coordinator for the NJ/NYC area, as well as a freelance writer and nutrition consultant. In the spring of 2008, Elisabeth will be featured as the on-air nutrition expert for the PBS Network’s new television show “Harvest Eating with Chef Keith Snow.” This healthy cooking show celebrates the enjoyment of eating seasonal, organic, and local foods. Elisabeth also serves on the show’s expert panel, found at www.harvesteating.com, and will be contributing monthly articles relating to seasonal and organic foods to the Harvest Eating Web site. She will bring not only her nutrition knowledge, but also her culinary experience to the site. Please visit Elisabeth’s Web site to find a list of services, such as her *Nutritionella Newsletters* (www.elisabethrd.com.) Elisabeth holds her BS in Nutrition from Montclair State University in New Jersey and completed her Dietetic Internship at UMDNJ. She can be reached at ElisabethRD@gmail.com.

Jo-Ann Heslin, MA, CDN, RD • Douglaston, NY

Jo-Ann Heslin, MA, CDN, RD, world renowned author, has released two new publications. *The Healthy Wholefoods Counter*, co-authored with Annette B. Natow, PhD, helps consumers understand the “greening” of the American food supply as they are walked through choosing planet-friendly, healthy foods while learning how to separate facts from marketing hype and media headlines. The 7th edition of the *The Cholesterol Counter* has been re-released and celebrates its 20th year in print. It was the first cholesterol counter published and has changed as the story on cholesterol has evolved, providing the reader with the latest information to help lower cholesterol and reduce risk for heart disease. Jo-Ann is also the author of the nutrition counter series for Pocket Books (there are 12 active titles on the market) and has written 26 consumer nutrition books and two college textbooks. Jo-Ann is the Food & Nutrition columnist for www.HealthNewsDigest.com and does a weekly feature. For more information visit www.TheNutritionExperts.com.