

# DBC Dimensions

## 2010: The Year of Food Temperance A FoodMinds Survey on the Role of Industry and Government in Food and Nutrition

By Susan Pitman, MA, RD and Howard Goldstein, MS, RD

*Imagine a grocery store that provides real assistance to help shoppers make “better” food choices—a place where shelves are stocked with products emblazoned with front-of-package messages that tell the story about the total nutrient package of products by balancing the communications of both nutrients to encourage and to limit.*



In this world, food manufacturers don't settle for “better-for-you” positioning, but strive for “best-for-you” status; and the focus of nutritional content improvements go beyond the removal of negatives to addressing the under-consumption of key whole food groups and nutrients. Many may consider such a balanced and transparent place as utopist, but in reality, according to a January 2010 Food Temperance survey conducted by FoodMinds, LLC, it reflects the wishes of today's primary grocery shoppers.

FoodMinds' experience in tracking the evolution of food policy and communications has led to the hypothesis that the U.S. is in the middle of a growing “Food Temperance” movement—a landmark redefinition of what qualifies as “healthy” and how food claims and communications are regulated. Registered dietitians, especially those that work for the food industry, will be called upon to play triple duty—as consumer advocates, educators and internal industry leaders.

### **The Rise of the U.S. Food Temperance Movement**

With the obesity epidemic as the unifying call-to-action, a confluence of factors is driving and defining this temperance movement, including:

- Widespread food label reform including the first-ever multi-agency alignment among the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Federal Trade Commission (FTC), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).
- Scrutiny of health claims across the board.
- Increasingly vocal and powerful special interest pressures.

FoodMinds' Strategic Insights experts conducted the Food Temperance survey to look at the opinions of primary grocery shoppers and to measure awareness of, support for and reactions to government activities related to classifying foods as “healthy” and “unhealthy.”

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## Message From The Chair

By Karen L Payne, MS, RD

How business affects our profession seems to be in the air this spring – from “The Stock Exchange Welcomes the American Dietetic Association” to the most significant overhaul in health insurance reform being signed into law. And regardless of your understanding of the stock market, or your political views about health reform, your business will likely be affected by these significant events.

On March 22, ADA’s President Jessie Pavlinac, MS, RD, CSR, LD had the honor of ringing the closing bell at the NASDAQ stock exchange on Wall Street in New York City. ADA has been invited in March of past years, as well, as a way for the Stock Exchange to recognize National Nutrition Month. To me, this signifies the critical role that dietitians and diet technicians play in the business world at large.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act contains 11 key provisions that ADA both supported and helped craft. ADA’s Legislative and Public Policy Committee Chair Jeanne Blankenship, MS, RD was quoted in *On the Pulse* saying “President Obama signed into law the single most significant piece of federal legislation in the history of ADA.” You can learn more about these provisions in ADA’s March 24th Policy Initiatives and Advocacy Report (PIA Report, which can be found at [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org) – enter “PIA Report” in the search bar). But beyond what directly affects the nutritional health of the American population, healthcare reform will also help small businesses offer affordable healthcare to their workers – something that many dietitian business owners have not had the ability to offer with today’s unaffordable insurance premiums.

DBC has also been busy this spring planning our own “reforms.” First, a team of Executive Committee members, led by our Education Team Chair, Laura Last, MBA, MA, RD, LD, FADA, has been working since January on developing the program for DBC’s first ever pre-FNCE workshop! The workshop (scheduled for Saturday, November 6, 2010 in Boston) will feature a leading expert in business and organizational skill development, Shawn Kershaw, and will be called titled, “Your Work, Simplified: 21 Steps to “Un”complicate Your Job.” DBC is in the process of looking for members with strong and unique business backgrounds who are willing to

volunteer to participate in a panel discussion during this workshop (please check the DBC website at [www.dbconline.org](http://www.dbconline.org) for more information, or email your questions to the DBC office at [dbc@quidnunc.net](mailto:dbc@quidnunc.net)).

Another reform underway is DBC’s plans for a “facelift” of our member newsletter, *DBC Dimensions*. As you are all aware, our newsletter has evolved into a 100% online document. This change was primarily sparked due to budget constraints, but is also consistent with DBC’s goal to be more technologically-savvy and environmentally friendly. We are currently seeking applicants for a Newsletter Editor who is motivated to create and support a more e-friendly format, and who can offer ideas and suggestions to take this important member benefit in a new direction. If you are interested in getting involved in this way, please submit your application on the DBC website, or email any questions to the DBC office). Our Newsletter Editor is a paid position, so perhaps it will fit into your business development plans for 2010-2011!

Of course, I would be remiss if I didn’t take a moment to thank our current newsletter editor, Carol Berg Sloan, RD. Carol has done an outstanding job over the past few years of putting together a quality newsletter with interesting articles and vibrant photos. She was involved in our transition from print to online issues, and has done a fantastic job of recruiting for content and coordinating layout and design, including dealing the various rules of engagement on the road to publishing each issue (including having to deal with the not-always-so-timely submissions from yours truly!). Thank-you for your service and dedication to DBC, Carol!

Lastly, I want to thank all of those on this year’s Executive Committee for their hard work and creative energy over my past year as Chair – including Marcia Greenblum, MS, RD, Chair-Elect; Lisa Poggas, MS, RD, Past Chair; Jane Rieger, MS, RD, Treasurer; Rachel Begun, MS, RD, CDN, Secretary; Mary Lee-Chin, MS, RD, Nominating Chair; and Elizabeth Rahavi, RD, Geographic Representative Chair. Additionally, our fabulous Team Leaders have made significant strides in helping DBC evolve as a cutting-edge DPG – Terri Raymond, MS, RD, CD, Membership Team Chair; Laura Last, MBA, MA, RD, LD,



## Combining Credentials to Improve Nutrition Communications

By Robyn Flipse, MS, RD  
Registered Dietitian and Cultural Anthropologist

My decision to pursue an advanced degree in cultural anthropology grew out of my belief after 25 years in a clinical practice that there were forces at work controlling the eating behavior of my clients that far outweighed the nutrition information I provided. In fact, I had pretty much decided that scientifically based facts about nutrition had very little influence over how and what people ate, so I wanted to better understand what did.

Cultural Anthropology includes studies in all of the areas of human and animal behavior that are not governed by genetics. Symbolic thought, such as language, and social learning are a big part of that. The way language shapes and defines our reality has particular significance to the work we do as dietitians.

It is believed that languages evolved

when early humans began to live in larger groups which required the use of more complex forms of communication than grunting and grooming in order to maintain social cohesion. The words making up every language are nothing more than mutually agreed upon sounds or labels used to represent the things we wish to express. And since words are abstract symbols, they are subject to individual interpretation and reinterpretation over time.

The change in meaning for some commonly used words that are part of our "food language" became the basis of some research I began two years ago. My query was to uncover why Americans were not consuming anywhere near the 3 cups per week of legumes, or dry beans, peas and lentils, recommended in the 2005 Dietary Guidelines

for Americans. Given the fact legumes are a low cost, nutrient-dense food that are easy to use, widely available and have numerous well-documented health benefits, it seemed important to know why they were so infrequently eaten by Americans.

The answer, it turned out, was due in part to the language we use to discuss them with consumers.

The terms "legumes" and "dry beans, peas and lentils," along with several other variations of these terms, have a long history of use in government and health care dietary guidance materials. But over the years, research shows these terms are no longer understood, so our messages about them are falling on deaf ears.

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## Message From The Chair

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Education Team Chair; Rayona Baker, RD, LD, Marketing Team Chair; Karen Chowdhury, RD, LD, Sponsorship Chair; Katie Vogel, RD, FNCE 2009 Chair; Marsha Diamond, MA, RD, Legislative Chair; Jill Jayne, MS, RD, eUpdate Editor; Lesley Shiery, RD, Nominating Committee; Jaime Schwartz, MS, RD, Mentoring Chair; and Past Chair Council Members – Maureen Leugers, MBA,

RD, Annette Hinton, MS, RD, LD, CEC, and Hope Hale, MS, RD, CD. And last – but certainly not least – DBC (and I, in particularly!) would have been lost without the guidance, support and expertise of Barb Pyper, RD, DBC's Administrative Manager, and Susan DuPraw, MPH, RD, our DPG Relations Manager. Thank-you ALL for your guidance, support and inspiration!

Congratulations to the incoming 2010-2011 Executive Committee – Chair Marcia Greenblum, MS, RD, Chair-Elect Marsha Diamond, RD, Treasurer Kate Byers, MS, RD, Secretary Rachel Begun, MS, RD (existing), Nominating Chair Kathy Wilson-Gold, MS, RD, and Nominating Committee Katie Vogel, RD.



## Topline

A column by Annette Maggi, MS, RD, LD, FADA

Highlighting the latest hot spots from research, industry, and government, as a service to DBC members.



• The controversial topic of the day? Whole foods. Not the grocery store chain, but foods that are closest to nature, that are minimally processed. As dietitians, I think we would all agree to the health benefits of whole foods. Take the entire category of fruits and vegetables. It's a song that's been sung by dietitians, grocery stores, public health officials, schools, and produce companies for decades. But here are my issues with the topic of whole foods.

1. It's one thing to espouse the benefits of whole foods and another to actual help mainstream consumers build quick, easy, convenient, kid-friendly meal plans completely based on whole foods. Michael Pollan and Marion Nestle are very vocal about the benefits of whole food. But have they translated it all into actionable advice for today's consumers? *"Eat food, not too much, mostly plants"* doesn't exactly get dinner on the table.
  2. I also wonder whether it's a bit of an elitist attitude. I think of the single mom, with two kids and a job. How is she to manage against a life of whole foods, when she's worried about job stability, summer care for her kids, and all her other day-to-day struggles? She cares passionately about her kids and wants to do the right thing, but where does a diet of whole foods fit in on the prioritization list?
- Hats off to Michelle Obama for tackling childhood obesity as her issue as First Lady. While there have been initiatives across the country to address this issue, the leadership provided by Obama will now put this health concern front and center in every federal, state and local discussion. Change will definitely occur with this kind of momentum behind the initiative.
  - On February 23, 2010, the Journal of the American Medical Association released an online article titled "Front-of-Package Food Labels: Public Health or Propaganda?" written by Marion Nestle and David Ludwig. The article goes so far as to suggest a ban on all front-of-package marketing claims. Interesting timing, as the Food and Drug Administration has two studies underway to examine consumer response and understanding of various labeling schemes, and the Institute of Medicine (IOM) has established a Committee on the Examination of Front-of-Package Nutrition Rating Systems and Symbols, with a report expected out this year. This topic is definitely heating up. . .
  - Speaking of the IOM's Committee on the Examination of Front-of-Package Nutrition Rating Systems and Symbols, I attended their first meeting in early February. At the meeting, the project sponsors – the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Food and Drug Administration, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture – each had the opportunity to address the committee. What amazed me most in the comments made throughout the meeting was the continued focus on what they call "nutrients to limit." While we all know that nutrients like saturated and trans fat and sodium negatively impact health, there are many reasons to focus on the positive nutrients. First and perhaps most importantly, we have lost the attention of consumers with all the negative messages. Give consumers some good news about food and offer them options of what they can eat. Second, there is plenty of evidence-based science that supports the impact of positive nutrients on health. Think fiber, omega-3 fatty acids, antioxidants, and calcium and vitamin D. It's time to move beyond the negatives.
  - Speaking of positive messages, my new favorite nutrition book is *The Full Plate Diet* by Stuart Seale, MD, Teresa Sherard, MD, and Diana Fleming, PhD, LDN. The focus of the book is on increasing fiber. The photography is gorgeous, the message presented in a consumer-friendly fashion, and the focus is clearly on "how to."

*Topline is a column by DBC member Annette Maggi, MS, RD, LD, FADA. If you have an idea for Topline, send an email to [Annette.Maggi@nuval.com](mailto:Annette.Maggi@nuval.com).*



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## Breaking New Ground with DBC Member Networking in North Carolina

By Sheree Thaxton Vodicka, MA, RD, LDN and Rene Korpolinski, MBA, RD, LDN

Last fall, the North Carolina regional DBC networking coordinators, Rene Korpolinski, MBA, RD, LDN and Sheree Vodicka, MA, RD, LDN surveyed DBC members state-wide to gauge their interest in participating in regional networking events. The coordinators asked members about their interest in joining with the Nutrition Entrepreneurs (NE) practice group members, who had been meeting regionally in prior years, to earn continuing education credits and share informal networking time.

Members across the state expressed interest in getting to know each other better and learn from each others' expertise. Since then, the North Carolina DBC networking coordinators have been planning and co-hosting networking meetings for DBC in collaboration with NE member leaders in the central part of the state.

Three meetings took place in the last year (September, January and March) that combined a book club activity along with general networking. The first meeting held in Greensboro, featured the book *Me 2.0: Build a Powerful Brand to Build Career Success*. The book focuses on developing and marketing skills and expertise both on and off the Web by providing tips for personal branding. Sheree Vodicka led the discussion. With support from the North Carolina Dietetic Association, members earned 1 CPE for participating in the book club discussion.

The next book discussed was *Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office*. While aimed at women, this book empowers readers to achieve their ultimate career goals by cuing into behaviors that may be keeping them from getting ahead in their

careers. Unfortunately, the day for the networking event seemed ominous as most of North Carolina (not to mention the rest of the east coast) was blanketed in snow. The quick response of North Carolina leadership didn't let the snow ruin their plans. Julie Duffy Dillon, MS, RD, LDN, a Charlotte NE member, led an engaging discussion with members via conference call.

Recently, the two groups met in Winston-Salem to review the book *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die*. This book is a must read for anyone who is trying to make their ideas meaningful to their audiences, and get the desired effect. Sonja Kassis Stetzler, MA, RD, LDN, led this discussion. In April, members will get another chance to network at the North Carolina Dietetic Association's state meeting in Durham.

These networking events have helped both DBC and NE members bond and form lasting friendships, as well as provide opportunities to gain insights into how to navigate the common areas of practice members share. To find out about networking events that may be taking place in your area, contact Elizabeth Rahavi, RD at [rahavi@ific.org](mailto:rahavi@ific.org) or go to the member's section of the DBC Web site.



NC NE and DBC members enjoy networking lunch at Lucky 32 in Greensboro, NC. Sept 2009

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## 2010: The Year of Food Temperance

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Also examined was a carefully defined subset of opinion leader shoppers—grocery decision makers who are registered voters likely to exert their opinions through political, social and economic actions. The intent was to better understand whether these groups think Americans need help from the government in selecting healthy foods.

#### **Tuning into the Consumer Mind: The Power of Promoting Positivity**

While food industry executives and communications specialists are closely monitoring this environment, what about the grocery shoppers? Are they following and do they care about government efforts to label their food options as “healthy” and “unhealthy”? What information do they value most?

Surprisingly, two-thirds of primary grocery shoppers surveyed were not only aware of the government activities within the current food environment, but many have heard or read about issues and actions related to food policy. When asked how much they have heard or read about the government re-evaluating levels of fat, sugar, salt and other nutrients that are considered healthy in foods and beverages,

- 61% of those surveyed said they at least “heard or read some.”
- 66% surveyed said they at least “heard or read some” news about the government placing stricter rules on health and nutrition information on food packages and in advertising to children.

Yet, when it comes to the type of information consumers crave, the survey shows primary grocery shoppers have the strongest interest in the basic Nutrition Facts panel and front-of-pack

labels that call out positive nutrients. When asked to rate the usefulness of information when judging the nutritional value of food,

- 93% surveyed said the Nutrition Facts panel that lists calories and nutrients was at least somewhat useful.
- 85% surveyed said that information on front of package about nutrition, such as “high in fiber,” was also at least somewhat useful.

Is the answer to curbing consumer food confusion and improving overall public health as simple as adopting a balanced and positive approach to food messaging? While “silver bullet” strategies rarely lead to behavior change, it is important to consider the science. A strong body of research supports the success of using positive messaging in social and health marketing campaigns, and so it is fair to say that positive messages can be an important catalyst for improving food purchasing decisions. A potential outcome from this Food Temperance movement is the possibility of government establishing new standards for front-of-package labeling and marketing. It will be key for these standards to incorporate language that strikes a balance between the amounts of *nutrients to encourage* a food or beverage contains, as well as nutrients to limit – essentially a food’s total nutrient package. According to the Food Temperance survey,

- Most shoppers (86%) are very or somewhat interested in labeling on the front of the package that conveys the amount of calories and the amount of beneficial nutrients (e.g., vitamin D or fiber) a food/ beverage contains.

- 77% are interested in front of package labeling that helps them identify products with an “empty calories” symbol that shows the nutritional quality of the calories.

#### **Consumers Want Help with Making the Right Food Choices**

The grocery shopping public, and in particular most opinion leaders, show support for a range of potential policy actions. These include more overt guidance on “healthy” and “unhealthy” foods in government nutrition education programs and a ban on marketing foods to children that does not meet strict criteria for nutrient content. The only potential government action not favored by a majority of either opinion leaders or primary grocery shoppers is the taxation of foods high in sugar and calories but low in nutritional value.

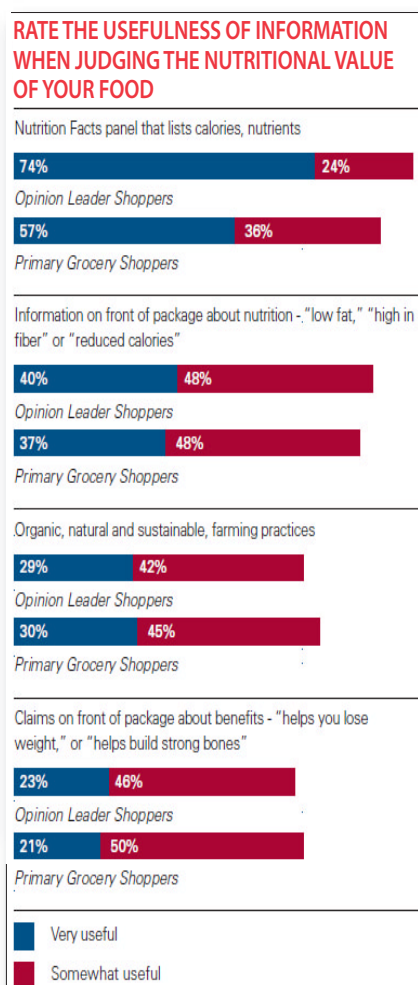
The majority of Americans believe it is their personal responsibility to make the right food choices. As registered dietitians working in the food industry, it is important to recognize this and to help people learn how to make healthful food purchasing decisions. Whether it is encouraging industry to look at a food’s total nutritional quality when developing on-package marketing and labeling initiatives; curb “junk” food marketing to children; or provide on-line resources that teach consumers how to read labels and make the right food decisions, the type of information and industry actions consumers are demanding should not be ignored. Grocery shoppers seem to indicate that if the industry isn’t able or willing to step up to the plate, then they are happy to have the government step in and help.

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## 2010: The Year of Food Temperance

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Susan Pitman, MA, RD is a founding partner and Howard Goldstein, MS, RD is an account supervisor of FoodMinds.

<sup>1</sup> FoodMinds is a food and nutrition company that harnesses science, public affairs and communications. FoodMinds applies knowledge and critical thinking to help its clients tell a better story that makes a difference. Visit [www.foodminds.com](http://www.foodminds.com) to learn more.



## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT ON... Melissa Halas-Liang, MA, RD, CDE

### **Tell us a little bit about SuperKids Nutrition Inc**

SuperKids Nutrition Inc. was founded in August 2006 with a mission to save the world one healthy food at a time™. It provides nutrition education in the community and online with a variety of presentations through partnerships with schools and other community organizations. We also support healthcare professionals, nutrition educators and classroom teachers by providing a variety of learning activities. All of the content on our website centers around a requirement to provide reliable evidence-based nutrition information.

The website, [www.superkidsnutrition.com](http://www.superkidsnutrition.com), provides parents with easy-to-read information, coloring pages, learning activities, expert advice, recommended children's books and book reviews. The site features a multicultural, kid-centric theme called the Super Crew®. The SuperKids Nutrition blog is an extension of the website and provides relevant health and community-based nutrition information.

### **Tell us about your role and some of your responsibilities.**

As any business owner can relate to, it's a lot of work. In addition to SuperKids Nutrition Inc, I am a teacher, preceptor, consultant and co-President for the Los Angeles District of California Dietetic Association. My responsibilities at SuperKids Nutrition include editing, recruiting writers, presenting in the community and answering nutrition Q & A. I develop content for the website and blog while building partnerships to further the reach of our message. Networking also plays a large role in SuperKids Nutrition; I arrange features and interviews for RDs and authors as a way for our readers to learn from their expertise or books. I really enjoy being creative through projects like developing learning activities, nutrition adventures, and visually enhancing the website. I am now working on a family nutrition curriculum that includes a low literacy guide on healthy eating with the Super Crew®. Working with students is a win-win situation that helps me stay current

I have my daily task list, but I never know where the day will lead me. Recently, I was having a crazy, overscheduled day, with several places to be before noon, and received a phone call requesting a children's book on nutrition for a press piece. They needed it immediately with a

corresponding lesson plan. I was so glad I managed to personally hand deliver it because I was able to meet the food service director, who happened to be working on a presentation about her school district's food. I offered to help her with the presentation and came to find out that my first Super Crew® book, *Super Baby Abigail's Lunch*, had been videotaped in the classroom with the teacher reading it to her actively participating class!

### **What led you to your current position?**

Parent feed their kids with the best intentions but many times make poor choices due to lack of information. This inspires me to reach out to parents to improve the healthfulness of what they feed their children, and give their children's taste buds a chance to acquire the taste of whole fresh foods. Young children, especially in the first 6 years of life, are the most impressionable with food habits. This is the perfect time to intervene and teach them healthy eating habits for life, and prevent a life filled with boxed and pre-wrapped foods.

### **What are some key issues facing dietitians in business or communications in today's work environment?**

We are competing with personalities who often have great marketing skills, but lack sufficient education in nutrition. A student in my nutrition course recently asked about a branded fiber supplement after viewing an endorsement from a health celebrity-personality that stated "I recommend this product to all my clients." It is both risky and unfounded as a nutrition expert to make generalized recommendations for supplements; however, this is often what the public wants. As registered dietitians, we have had the training to know that one diet or one supplement will not work for everyone, yet we are stuck competing with over-simplified messages that have mass appeal. Competing with these messages and getting the correct messages out to consumers is definitely a challenging part of our profession.

### **What's up next for our profession?**

The antibiotic-free meat and eating "green" movements are going mainstream. However, these lifestyles only affect a small minority. I believe that once we find a way to have

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## Interview with Melissa Halas-Liang, MA, RD, CDE

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profitable sustainable agriculture there will be more competition between healthy products, resulting in even more opportunities for RDs in marketing.

I recently gave a webinar on careers in dietetics and nutrition communications continues to be an area of interest as a future career choice. This trend will ultimately increase the credibility and recognition of the RD as *the* nutrition expert. RDs who work with PR firms are more likely to push for partnerships and relationships that support nutrition causes. I hope to see more RDs going into this area, especially with companies that don't compromise their nutrition knowledge.

### **What do you see as the biggest challenge to dietitians who are beginning a career in business and communications?**

Balancing a healthy lifestyle of exercise and eating well with a busy career is always a challenge. Nutrition communication is forever evolving and staying on top of the latest news and trends along with your own area of personal expertise is extremely time-consuming. Add exercising, eating right, and a future family to the mix, and you definitely have a full agenda. Learning to balance all of these things takes a lot of discipline and consistency in lifestyle practices.

### **What advice can you offer to new dietitians who chose business and communications as their career path?**

Volunteer! By following my passion and love for a nutrition topic, my volunteer work ended up leading me to my two biggest paying jobs. One of the teaching jobs I started 8 years ago was the result of a presentation I gave at a Women's symposium with key note speaker Suze Orman. Word-of-mouth on my presentation landed me an opportunity to teach an online course. There were many times that I have felt overwhelmed and overloaded with work and wanted to quit the side jobs; However, in the back of my mind, I knew that some day, when I had kids, I would want to have these jobs for flexibility to work from home. To this day I am so glad I pushed through, because the money helped me start SuperKids Nutrition Inc. I am grateful everyday to have the flexibility of getting up and spending many breakfasts and lunches with my daughter, watering my plants, or putting in a load of laundry in the middle of the day.



*Interview by Jill R. Parker MS, RD, LD, SNS: Contributing Editor, DBC Dimensions*

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## Combining Credentials to Improve Nutrition Communications

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For example, data from a bean terminology study done in 2008 by MMR Research found the following when surveying consumers over the 18 years in age:

- 25% never heard of the term legume
- 40% are unclear about the definition of the term legume
- 92 % were not aware beans are a subset of legumes
- 52% believe “dry” and “dried” beans refer to “bagged” beans, peas and lentils
- 78% said “dry beans” were different from “beans” because of packaging or hydration state

These results were supported by other findings that demonstrated the terminology used to describe and/or identify legumes and dry beans in food guidance materials has been both confusing and inconsistent. The evidence supported my hypothesis that beans are under utilized because the language we use

to discuss them is either unfamiliar, unknown or has been redefined to mean something other than we intend.

To determine what we should be calling these foods, another study was conducted by MMR Research in May 2009. They asked consumers what terms had the greatest familiarity, awareness and/or understanding when given these choices.

- Canned and bagged beans
- Cooked or canned dry beans
- Canned dry beans
- Cooked dry beans
- Beans, such as black, pinto and kidney
- Legumes

The term with nearly universal awareness and the greatest familiarity was *Beans, such as black, pinto and kidney*.

Armed with this knowledge, it is then possible to recommend changing the way we communicate about beans in order to help close the gap between

the recommended and actual consumption levels. And it is imperative that we make the changes across the board so consumers see and hear one version of the new “symbol” for this important food group. That means we must revise all of the educational tools and messages we develop for consumers, such as nutrition information web sites, recipes, meal plans, sample menus, shopping tips and similar handouts, change the way we identify beans in retail and food service settings, and finally, revise nutrition policy reports and food intake recommendations about beans.

There are many other potential cases of language “barriers” getting in the way of good nutrition information. As members of the Dietitians in Business and Communications DPG, I hope we can lead the way by reshaping our messages to make use of the terms that correctly reflect the contemporary meanings consumers have assigned to the foods want them to eat.

*Robyn Flipse, MS, RD. Nutrition Consultant -Spokesperson - Author Nutrition Communications Services Bradely Beach, NJ and can be reached at [rflipse@aol.com](mailto:rflipse@aol.com)*

# Mapping Out The Food Environment

By Elise Golan and Vince Breneman

USDA's *Your Food Environment Atlas* is an online mapping tool that compares the food environment of U.S. counties—the mix of factors that together influence food choices, diet quality, and general fitness among residents. Developed by USDA's Economic Research Service, *Your Food Environment Atlas* provides statistics that measure a community's success in accessing and maintaining healthy diets. The Atlas contains 90 food environment indicators—most at the county level—allowing Atlas users to visualize and compare on a map how counties fare on each of the indicators. This new online tool is designed to stimulate research and inform policymakers as they address the nexus between diet and public health.

The *Atlas* assembles statistics on three broad categories of food environment factors:

- **Food Choices**—Indicators of the community's access to and acquisition of healthy, affordable food, such as: access and proximity to a grocery store; number of foodstores and restaurants; expenditures on fast foods; food and nutrition assistance program participation; quantities of foods eaten; food prices; food taxes; and availability of local foods
- **Community Characteristics**—Indicators of community characteristics that might influence the food environment, such as: demographic composition; income and poverty; population loss; metro-nonmetro status; natural amenities; and recreation and fitness centers
- **Health and Well-Being**—Indicators of the community's success in maintaining healthy diets, such as: food insecurity; diabetes and obesity rates; and physical activity levels

With the *Atlas*, users can create maps showing the distribution of and overlap among food environment factors. They can begin to investigate linkages among food environment factors. For example, to begin exploring the connections among food access, affordability, and health outcomes, users could view the maps on household access to supermarkets, concentration of fast-food restaurants, food prices, food purchases, and obesity. They could also create maps showing the overlay of these or any of the other 90 variables included in the *Atlas*.

Price information in the *Atlas* focuses on the price ratios of selected foods to pro-

vide information on the relative price of healthful food choices like low-fat milk and less healthful choices like sodas. The Atlas also provides information on per capita consumption of foods from both the healthy and not-so-healthy side of the diet ledger, including fruit and vegetables, soft drinks, and fats. Health outcomes include low income preschool obesity and adult diabetes and obesity rates, all from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Statistics on household and child food insecurity rates are also included.

The data in *Your Food Environment Atlas* document the situations of real people in real communities. ERS hopes this web tool will contribute to a national conversation on food choices and diet quality, and on some of the social and economic conditions to consider when searching for solutions to diet-related public health issues.

The Atlas is available on the web at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/foodatlas/>



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**New Weblog: [www.EatLikeAnRD.com](http://www.EatLikeAnRD.com)**

As registered dietitians, everyone wants to know what we eat, our favorite new foods or how we eat right when we're traveling or eating out. To meet this growing interest, Julie Upton, MS, RD and Katherine Brooking, MS RD have just launched a new website/blog, [www.EatLikeAnRD.com](http://www.EatLikeAnRD.com). This site discusses bite-for-bite, through words, pictures, recipes, and shopping tips, how RDs strive to eat healthier in the real world of food. EatLikeAnRD shows readers that healthy eating is delicious, satisfying and always possible!

Katherine and Julie are actively seeking out other RDs to share their "real world" experience with food. If you would like to be a guest blogger on the site, please contact them at [julie@julieupton.com](mailto:julie@julieupton.com) or [katherine@katherinebrooking.com](mailto:katherine@katherinebrooking.com).

## DBC at Texas Dietetic Association Annual Meeting

Karen Chowdhury, RD was the speaker for the DBC sponsored session, "Taking Center Stage and How to Become a Dietitian in Business and Communications".

Karen spoke to a packed room and answered numerous questions after the presentation. "I was pleased that so many members and students are thinking outside the box in terms of job opportunities. It's a great time to be a dieitian!", shared Chowdhury.



DBC member and speaker, Karen Chowdhury, RD (second from right) with TDA attendees