

# THE DEAN'S LETTER FOR TUFTS NUTRITION



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## SOME FOODS CONTAIN MORE CALORIES THAN ADVERTISED, STUDY FINDS

Even as a growing number of fast-food and chain restaurants display the calorie contents of their dishes on websites and menus, eaters should exercise caution. Those meals often contain substantially more calories than advertised, according to a Tufts study.

Professor **Susan Roberts**, Ph.D., and colleagues at Tufts analyzed the calorie content of 18 side dishes and entrees from national sit-down chain restaurants, 11 side dishes and entrees from national fast-food restaurants and 10 frozen

meals purchased from supermarkets. They compared their results to the calorie information provided to the public by the restaurants and food companies.

On average, the researchers found the restaurant dishes contained 18 percent more calories than the eateries claimed. Two side dishes exceeded the restaurants' reported calorie information by nearly 200 percent. The researchers also found that the supermarket frozen meals had on average 8 percent more calories than listed.

"If every time you eat out you get a couple of hundred calories or more than you think, that can add up really easily," Roberts said in an Associated Press article that appeared in hundreds of media outlets. "There's a big drumbeat for people putting calories on menus, but that's only useful if the calories are right."

## FLU FIGHTERS

Professor **Simin Nikbin Meydani**, D.V.M., Ph.D., director of the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging, presented the first in a series of online seminars by Tufts faculty for leadership donors. Titled "No One Is Immune from Nutrition: How Diet Relates to Health," the seminar is an exploration of the relationship among nutrition, immunity and infection.

You'll find great tips for staying healthy this flu season and learn a little more about your body's response to infection.

## RESEARCH UPDATES

The Feinstein International Center has published a new report, "Baseline Report: Africa Community Resilience Project," the first of three reports that center on a project to build capacity for improving resilience through disaster risk management programming and mainstreaming. The report is available for download.

Professor **Alice Lichtenstein**, D.Sc., has been named vice chair of an Institute of Medicine provisional study committee that will look at front-of-package nutrition rating systems and symbols. The project is sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration. The committee expects to release its findings by December 2010.

Associate Professor **Dan Maxwell**, Ph.D., was asked by the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization to serve as external editor of its flagship report, "The State of Food Insecurity," for 2010. The theme of the report will be food insecurity in protracted crises.

Professor **Bea Rogers**, Ph.D., was in India for three weeks in December to initiate work on the latest country to be included in a multi-year study of food aid exit strategies. The study, funded by USAID through the FANTA2 project, will identify actions and strategies that agencies can use to ensure that the benefits of food assistance programs are sustained once the food assistance is withdrawn. Data will be collected at the time of program exit, and again in two years, to determine what activities and impacts are still in effect. **Katie Houk**, N11, who is also working on the project, will spend a few weeks traveling with the data collection team. This study will add to ongoing investigations in Bolivia and in Kenya.

**Kate Sadler**, a senior researcher at the Feinstein International Center, has received a two-year extension of a grant to continue investigating the health and nutritional status of children in pastoral communities. After meeting with project partners in Ethiopia, she traveled to the Somali Region with the Tufts study team to start the process of selecting study communities, defining interventions for the project and piloting and testing nutritional surveillance tools. She also recently returned from a second research project in Bangladesh, where the team has recruited over 400 children suffering from severe acute malnutrition, all of whom are being treated by community health workers in a trial to test the utility of community-based therapeutic feeding.

In December, Assistant Professor **Andrew Wilder**, Ph.D., traveled to Washington, D.C., to testify at a hearing of the House Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs on "U.S. Aid to Pakistan: Planning and Accountability." The focus of his statement and discussion during the Q&A was on the ineffectiveness of securitized aid in winning hearts and minds. The following week, Wilder had his article on "The Politics of Civil Service Reform in Pakistan" published in the *Journal of International Affairs*.

## HERE & THERE

Professor **Allen Taylor**, Ph.D., is founding director of Science Training Encouraging Peace-Graduate Training Program (STEP-GTP), which has received a \$100,000 matching gift.

STEP-GTP is a U.S.-Israeli-Palestinian program that provides graduate-level science and medical training to Palestinian and Israeli students or medical fellows. Fellows are trained together as pairs—one Palestinian, one Israeli—and are required, upon completion of the program, to remain resources to each other and to work together to build and deliver new services in their homelands. The three guiding institutions are Tufts University, Al Quds University in the Palestinian Territories and Ben Gurion University in Israel. STEP-GTP is administered through the offices of the International Nutrition Foundation at Tufts. For more information, visit [www.STEP-GTP.org](http://www.STEP-GTP.org).

The Trek to Talloires is a personal fitness challenge for the Tufts community that runs from now until April 12. The web-based trek is much more than an exercise log, and a lot more fun. By tracking your fitness activities at <http://trek2talloires.org/>, you can make a virtual trip to Talloires, the Tufts European Center in France. The website describes in colorful detail the 13 stages of a virtual route from Medford to Talloires. Progress is measured in time, not distance: you move along the route by logging the hours you exercise, whether walking, jogging, swimming, biking, or engaging in other physical activity. Visit <http://trek2talloires.org/> to start your trek.

## AWARDS & ACCOLADES

Graduate student **Eric Ciappio**, who works in the HNRCA Vitamins & Carcinogenesis Laboratory, was selected as one of 12 winners of the 2009 ASN/NSC Graduate Student Research Award. He will take part in the oral presentation abstract competition to be held at Experimental Biology 2010 in Anaheim, Calif., in April.

Associate Professor **Joel Mason**, M.D., is the recipient of the 2010 Mary Swartz Rose Senior Investigator Award from the American Society for Nutrition. He will receive the award at Experimental Biology 2010 in April.

Assistant Professor **Nicola McKeown**, Ph.D., has been named the new director of the Friedman School's Nutritional Epidemiology Program. McKeown is a scientist with the Nutritional Epidemiology Program at the HNRCA and is active on the national and international level as a member of several editorial boards and working groups. She assumed her role on January 15.

Anthropologist **Ellen Messer** has been awarded the distinction of fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), an honor bestowed upon the organization's members by their peers. The fellowship recognizes her contributions to the field of anthropology, analyzing the relationship between human rights and policies concerning poverty and hunger and food aid and security. "I'm terrifically pleased to receive this honor, which recognizes my lifelong efforts to connect research to action," Messer said. "As a scholar-activist, I always hope that my research on the evolution of food systems and human-rights sensibilities will help improve communications among scholars, policymakers and field practitioners."

Professor **Allen Taylor**, Ph.D., was elected vice president of the International Society for Eye Research, beginning his term this month. The society was founded in 1968 to support

eye and vision research, and members include vision research scientists from more than 34 countries.

## FRIEDMAN FACULTY IN THE NEWS

**Antonio Donini**, a research director at the Feinstein International Center, appeared on Wisconsin Public Radio's "Here on Earth: Radio Without Borders." He was interviewed and took calls from listeners for about an hour on President Obama's decision to send 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan. He discussed civilian casualties, human rights and the perceptions of the Afghan people.

This new year, resolve *not* to diet. That's what Professor **Alice Lichtenstein**, D.Sc., and David S. Ludwig, an associate professor of pediatrics at Harvard Medical School, suggested in their article that appeared in the *Boston Herald*. Instead, they wrote, stop eating when you are full, do something physically active every day and eat foods that look like they came from nature, not a factory.

For Julie Deardorff's blog on ChicagoTribune.com, Assistant Professor **Diane McKay**, Ph.D., explained the significance of the Oxygen Radical Absorbance Capacity (ORAC) scale, which is commonly used to measure the antioxidant power of foods. "It's very misleading for food and beverage manufacturers to state the ORAC value of their product on the label and in advertisements, as this information has little relevance to the health effects of these products," McKay said.

Assistant Professor **Aaron Troen**, Ph.D., was featured in a WebMD article on aging and brain health. "Antioxidants clearly prevent or delay oxidative damage," Troen said. "Again, that may be especially important for brain health. Since the brain is the most metabolically active organ in the body, it is exposed to the most oxidative stress. The brain also contains high levels of lipids, or fats, which are especially prone to oxidative damage."

Assistant Professor **Andrew Wilder**, Ph.D., was a guest on Christiane Amanpour's daily news show on CNN for a segment on humanitarian aid. "We don't have much evidence that aid is an effective counterinsurgency weapon and yet we are pouring more and more of our development aid into achieving security objectives rather than valuing development as a good in of itself," he said.

## COMING RIGHT UP

The Friedman School is co-hosting two events in California in February as part of Food for Thought: The Tufts Food, Wine and Culture Series.

On Thursday, February 4, beginning at 7 p.m., join Tufts Alumni Los Angeles at Spago Beverly Hills for an event featuring a presentation by Associate Professor and New Balance Chair in Childhood Nutrition **Christina Economos**, Ph.D., N96. The event will feature drinks and hors d'oeuvres; remarks from Spago co-owner **Barbara Lazaroff**, A11P, and Spago's executive chef; a presentation by Economos on "Catalyzing Communities for Positive

Change: Preventing Childhood Obesity;” and coffee and dessert. The cost is \$40 per person. Pre-registration is required. Please register online by January 25: [alumni.nutrition.tufts.edu](http://alumni.nutrition.tufts.edu)

On Saturday, February 6, from 2 to 5:30 p.m., join Tufts Alumni San Francisco at the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone in Helena, Calif., for “A Sense of Place—An Afternoon with Artisan Producers and Their Products.” The event features tastings of artisanal wine, cheese and charcuterie and a talk on “Inspiration for Artisan Producers” by **Richard Ward**, E72, the founder of Saintsbury Wines. **Amy Myrdal Miller**, N97, program director for strategic initiatives at the Culinary Institute of America, will host the event. The cost is \$40 per person. Pre-registration is required. Please register online by January 25: [alumni.nutrition.tufts.edu](http://alumni.nutrition.tufts.edu)

Please contact the Alumni Regional Programs Office at [regionalprograms@tufts.edu](mailto:regionalprograms@tufts.edu) or 1-800-843-2586 with questions about either Food for Thought event.

The Friedman School All Alumni Reunion will take place April 10–12 and feature a special tribute to graduates of the Food, Policy and Applied Nutrition (FPAN) and Social Science of Food Policy and Nutrition (SSFPN) programs. Alumni of all programs are invited and encouraged to attend. A complete reunion program is available at: [alumni.nutrition.tufts.edu](http://alumni.nutrition.tufts.edu).

Please join us for the entire weekend and stay for the Gershoff Symposium on Monday, April 12, when the topic will be “Drivers of Food Intake: What’s Behind the Wheel.” To join the reunion planning subcommittee and help recruit your classmates back to campus, e-mail [sean.devendorf@tufts.edu](mailto:sean.devendorf@tufts.edu). United Fresh Produce Association. There will also be a special one-hour reception for Friedman School graduates from the last five years (2003 to 2008) and an all-alumni cocktail party at Vloro Restaurant in Boston. More information is posted at <http://nutrition.tufts.edu/reunion>. Questions? Please email [sean.devendorf@tufts.edu](mailto:sean.devendorf@tufts.edu).

The deadline for the next issue of the *Dean's Letter for Tufts Nutrition* is Wednesday, February 17, 2010. Please send your submissions to Julie Flaherty at [julie.flaherty@tufts.edu](mailto:julie.flaherty@tufts.edu).