

## PERSPECTIVE

# I read before I eat

It started out of curiosity, but soon turned into a rule of my grocery shopping -- I read the nutrition labels on foods before buying them.

Ten years ago, I did not care to decode Nutrition Facts labels. I would just pile up my shopping cart with whatever I wanted to eat -- bread, jam, peanut butter, cereals, cookies, chips, candy, fruit juices, ice cream, frozen dinners-- you name it; I did not care to find out if these were whole-some or not. I ate what I wanted to eat!

Living in a country where grocery stores are giant, food options unlimited and portion sizes huge, overeating is not uncommon. I gained weight in the first few months of my life in the U.S. It was after I put on weight that I began to wonder if I was overeating like many others or, if it was my diet that was unhealthy.

It was during this time that I became curious about the hundreds of words in small font that are printed on any packaged edible item in this country. I learned from those easy-to-understand labels that average Americans consume 2,000 calories a day. As a result, a nutrition label shows percent daily values of different nutrients in a food based on a 2,000-calorie diet. Such a label gives you information about serving size, calories, different kinds of fats, cholesterol, sodium, protein, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals in a food product. A food label also lists all the ingredients used in the food's preparation.

It was these food labels that helped me make positive changes to my lifestyle. I learned that piling up the shopping cart with food was not wise at all. I learned that the fewer ingredients a food item has, the better. I began to spend more time in grocery shop aisles to identify food that was made with healthy ingredients, and were low on saturated fat, trans fat, sodium, sugar and cholesterol, but high on

dietary fibre, polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats or healthy fats, vitamins and minerals. I stopped buying food that contained artificial colours, flavours and preservatives. I began to eat more vegetables, fruits and fish. I could also now calculate how many cookies were safe to eat and how many calories I consumed from one cup of ice cream.

I loved ice cream, I still do, but I do not gorge on ice cream like before, because just half a cup of ice cream can contain 15 grams of sugar and 4 grams or more of saturated fat, depending upon how rich the ice cream is. And people rarely eat just one half cup, most people eat at least a cup of ice cream in one sitting.

I found out that some of my favourite foods do not contribute to my well-being, starting from white bread, pizzas, burgers, sugary drinks (including most fruit juices) to potato chips, cakes, pastries, breakfast cereals and cookies -- they are rich in calorie and laden with sugar, saturated fat, trans fat and/or sodium.

Reading food labels opened my eyes to the truth behind America's obesity problem. I made gradual changes to my daily food intake as an attempt to stay healthy. I still eat burger, fries, pizza, candy, ice cream and cookies, but not often.

Many chain restaurants in the U.S. now give calorie information on their menus and menu boards too, helping people make informed food choices. In Dhaka, the restaurant business has mushroomed. Eating is now a leisure activity. But how many consumers know what they are eating? Can they make informed food and drink choices, if they want to? Obesity among children and young men and women is now a growing concern, not just in Bangladesh, but in other parts of the world as well.

Overweight and obesity are now rising

concerns in middle-income and low-income countries where urbanisation, high economic growth, availability of high-calorie fast/processed food, sedentary lifestyle, better transportation facilities, less outdoor recreational space and intake of more food and beverage as a result of attractive media campaigns are causing this new kind of health concern among children and adults. There is a lack of awareness around health and nutrition, too. Nutrition information about restaurant food is also not available to the public. People relish a wide variety of foods and beverages, but often at the expense of their good health.

A lower-middle income country like Bangladesh, where malnutrition has always been a problem, now bears the "double burden of nutrition," which refers to the coexistence of undernutrition along with obesity and overweight.

Would you eat cheeseburger and fries often, if you knew that the cheeseburger contained 600 calories and the fries another 300? Not to mention the unhealthy saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol and sodium in these foods that are detrimental to your health.

We can make a habit of reading food labels whenever they are available. Restaurants may not provide you with calorie and ingredient information, but a quick search on the Internet can give you some idea about how many calories and how much fat, cholesterol, sugar and sodium your food may possibly contain.

I will not live forever, so whatever number of years I will live, I want to live them in good health. "I read before I eat" is therefore my personal attempt at ensuring good health for me and my family. We are what we eat!

By Wara Karim

## CHECK IT OUT

## Latest KFC endeavours

There has been a big change in the burger game! KFC Bangladesh has recently launched KFC Double Down Burger. This 'All Chicken-No Bun' proposition has materialised into two very juicy and crunchy Zinger Fillets, sandwiching cheese, lettuce, onions and two brand new sauces in between. The burger is a handful to hold and very filling for the stomach, even without sides.



Transcom Foods (sole franchisee of KFC and Pizza Hut in Bangladesh) COO Amit Dev Thapa said, "Double Down has won hearts in many countries worldwide. So, we decided it was time for Bangladesh to taste and enjoy this. Though this is a limited time offer, we are hoping all KFC fans will be able to get a taste of it. And those who aren't yet, will become one after tasting Double Down."

Double Down is priced at Tk 399. For details, log on to [www.kfcbd.com](http://www.kfcbd.com)

### KFC IN CHATTOGRAM

Meanwhile, answering to the avid KFC lovers' demands to open a KFC in the port city, the 21st outlet was opened on 17 December, 2018. It is situated in 1839 Nasirabad, Chattogram (beside Sanmar Ocean City).

## মাদার নতুন নাম



<p>কালার গার্ড</p> <p>কাপড়ের রঙকে রাখে নতুনের মতো ঝকঝকে</p>	<p>মাল্টি বুস্টার</p> <p>কাপড়ের যে কোন দাগ- ময়লাকে নিমিষেই দূর করে</p>
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