

# **Ignorance is not bliss when eating out**

**The need for nutrition labelling at fast food  
and other chain restaurants**

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## Summary

### • Obesity and overweight levels are soaring

- ✗ 24% of adults in England are obese. For men this figure has nearly doubled since 1993.
- ✗ More than 55% of adults in Wales are overweight or obese.
- ✗ If no action is taken, by 2050, 60% of men and 50% of women, and 25% of children will be obese.
- ✗ 58% of Type 2 diabetes, 21% of heart disease and between 8% and 42% of certain cancers (endometrial, breast, and colon) are attributable to excess body fat.
- ✗ The cost of dealing with the many effects of obesity runs into billions of pounds each year.

### • Food eaten out of the home is contributing to poor diet in the UK

- ✗ Menu items in popular UK chain restaurants are often high in calories, saturated fat, salt and sugar.
- ✗ The nutritional content of similar food items on the same menu can vary widely.
- ✗ Portion sizes are increasing, which means even higher calorie intakes.

### • More people are eating out

- ✗ Almost 30% of household expenditure on food is allocated to eating outside the home.
- ✗ 30 % of people eat out at least once a week.

### • 3 Food Commission surveys demonstrate that nutrition experts, and members of the general public are unable to guess the nutritional content of fast food menu items

- ✗ Overwhelmingly, respondents cannot identify from their menu descriptions which items from fast food chain menus have the highest calorie, salt or fat contents.
- ✗ Of the members of the general public questioned, more than 90% got 3 or fewer correct answers from 7 questions.
- ✗ Of parents and childminders quizzed about children's menu items, 82% failed to get more than 1 correct answer in our 6 question survey.
- ✗ Of the experts, not one got all the answers correct.

- **Menu board labelling in food outlets would help consumers make healthier choices**

- ✘ The UK Food Standards Agency has been asked by the Government to assist consumers in making healthier choices when eating out and with helping businesses improve the nutritional status of food offered but so far UK regulators are failing to insist companies provide prominent labelling of nutritional information on menu boards.
- ✘ No food chains in the UK show nutritional information on their menu boards, menus or food tags.
- ✘ Some restaurants provide information on napkins and food packaging, or on their websites. Evidence shows that consumers do not find this as helpful.
- ✘ To help tackle obesity in the U.S., the state of California and local health authorities in Philadelphia, New York and Seattle have passed laws to force fast food outlets to show calorie information on menu boards.
- ✘ Yum Brands! has agreed to post nutritional information on menu boards in their restaurants in the USA (including Pizza Hut and KFC) but so far there is no sign of such action in the UK.

- **UK consumers have a right to information**

We propose that nutritional information, including calorie content, should be posted clearly at the point of sale as a mandatory requirement in UK food service chains as part of Government strategies to save lives lost to diet-related disease.

## 1. Introduction: Poor diets and ill health in the UK

In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of people classified as obese. Around one in four adults is now obese, with a body mass index (BMI) of 30+. Between 1993 and 2005, the percentage of people classified as obese rose from approximately 13% to approximately 24% in men, and from more than 16% to greater than 24% amongst women (McPherson et al., 2007). According to predictions in *Tackling obesities: Future choices – modelling future trends in obesity and their impact on health* (McPherson et al., 2007), if no action is taken, by 2050, 60% of men and 50% of women, and 25% of children will be obese.

Obesity, a health risk in itself, is associated with many other health problems such as diabetes, heart disease, some cancers and high blood pressure (McPherson et al, 2007; Field, 2001). Associated illnesses are rising alongside obesity. For instance, between 1993 and 2006, the prevalence of Type 2 diabetes in women in England more than doubled from 1.9% to 4.2%, (NHS Information Centre, 2006 and NHS Information Centre, 2008). According to the Department of Health's online information about obesity, ([http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publichealth/Healthimprovement/Obesity/DH\\_078098](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publichealth/Healthimprovement/Obesity/DH_078098)), around 58% of type-2 diabetes, 21% of heart disease and between 8% and 42% of certain cancers (endometrial, breast, and colon) can be attributed to excess body fat.

***Obesity levels in the UK have almost quadrupled since the early 1980's, when only 6% of men and 8% of women were classified as obese (British Nutrition Foundation, 2005).***

As levels of obesity and dietary related diseases continue to rise, so do health and economic costs, but these can be difficult to measure exactly. Costs, both personal and societal, can accrue in a range of ways – due to treatment for physical or mental ill-health, including for example, absenteeism at work. In 2007, *Tackling Obesities: Future Choices*, predicted that, by 2050, obesity-related diseases could cost society an extra £45.5 billion per year (McPherson et al., 2007).

In January 2008, the Government announced its ambition to become the, “first major nation to reverse the rising tide of obesity and overweight in the population by ensuring that everyone is able to achieve and maintain a healthy weight.” (Cross Government Obesity Unit, 2008, *Healthy Weight Healthy Lives*) Diet is central to this public health challenge. An estimated 70,000 premature deaths in the UK could be avoided each year if diets matched nutritional guidelines in terms of consumption of more fruit and vegetables and reduced consumption of salt, saturated fat and added sugar (The Cabinet Office, 2008).

In July 2008, The Strategy unit of the Cabinet Office released, *Food Matters: Towards a strategy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, which argued, “Given the evidence on the impact of diet on British public health, a collective effort to speed up the UK's

transition to a healthier diet has to be a key focus for policy in the years ahead.” Part of the strategy should include, according to the report, supporting the consumer to make healthier food choices when eating both in and out of the home (The Cabinet Office, 2008). Consequently, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) has been charged with expanding its work programme with food businesses and consumers to understand what nutritional information consumers would find helpful when eating out; and to help food businesses to improve the nutritional quality of the food served. This has led to chain restaurants, including Burger King, McDonalds, KFC and Subway, committing to taking steps to offer more healthy options and to provide nutritional information to consumers, however none of these chains will offer information on menus (Food Standards Agency, 2008, *High street restaurants sign up to healthy eating*)

There have recently been moves in the USA to force better disclosure of nutrition information at so-called chain restaurants. California recently became the first state to legally require calorie counts on chain restaurant menus and menu boards (CSPI Newsroom, September 2008). The local health authorities for New York City and Seattle have also enacted legislation requiring nutrition information to be available at the point of sale on the menu boards in food service chains with a number of outlets that offer standard menus. Exemptions are made for small firms with few outlets, and for companies that have non-standard menus.

This report looks at how the provision of similar information in the UK would help consumers make healthier choices and recommends that the FSA require mandatory nutritional disclosure at point of sale, in a range of formats.

## 2. British eating habits: too much salt, sugar and saturated fat

An average British adult consumes too much salt, sugar and saturated fat, and too little wholegrain, oily fish and fruit and vegetables (NHS Information Centre, 2008; National Statistics 2003). Despite the UK's daily salt intake falling from 9.5 to 8.6 grams (g) (Food Standards Agency, 2008, *Salt Levels Continue to Fall*), the reduction falls a long way short of the recommended 6g a day maximum intake for adults. Sugars, other than those from milk and fruits, should only make up a maximum of 10% of daily energy intake (British Nutrition Foundation, 2005). Yet, according to the *National Diet and Nutrition Survey* (National Statistics, 2003), in adults surveyed, sugar made up an average of 13.4% of men's energy intake and 11.9% of women's. The average in some age groups was even higher. There is some evidence that for certain individuals from low income groups, almost 50% of dietary energy intake could be down to sugar (Nelson et al. 2007, *Low income diet and nutrition survey*). Current population average intakes of saturated fat also exceed public health recommendations and it has been estimated that a reduction in average saturated fat intakes from the current level of 13.3% to the recommended 11% of food energy would equate to approximately 3,500 annual UK deaths averted (Food Standards Agency, 2007, *Draft Saturated Fat and Energy Intake Programme*).

## 3. Eating out trends

Eating out has become a major part of everyday life in the UK. Almost 30% of household expenditure on food is now allocated to eating outside the home (Cabinet Office, 2008). Exact figures are hard to obtain, but a report by the Institute of Grocery Distribution recorded that on average, 30% of people surveyed eat out at least once a week. This figure has doubled since 2003, when the average was 13%. Within the 18-24 age group the average number of people who eat out at least once a week is even higher, at 61% (IGD, 2007).

**Restaurants, cafes, and other food outlets provide one in every 6 meals and capture 27% of money spent on food (*National Statistics Family Food Survey, 2005-2006*).**

## 4. Nutritional quality and impact of restaurant foods

With the increased frequency with which people eat outside the home, there is now more reason than ever to consider the nutritional quality of the foods available. Restaurant foods are often high in calories, saturated fat, sugar and salt; served in large portions; and priced in a way that makes large serving sizes more appealing (**Appendix F**).

### 4.1 Nutritional quality of popular restaurant foods



A recent Which? report (*Pilau Talk, 2008*) surveyed calorie, sugar, fat, saturated fat and salt content of Indian, Chinese and Pizza takeaways and found that a single Indian takeaway could contain 23.2g of saturated fat, higher than the recommended 20g maximum daily allowance for women. The survey also found that some Indian and Chinese takeaway meals were so high in calories, they would contribute nearly  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an adult woman's daily estimated average requirement of calories (approximately 1950). *The Food Magazine* regularly reports on surveys of nutritional content of meals eaten out undertaken by trading standards departments around the UK (**Appendix F**). These surveys are accessible online through trading standards departments and often show very high levels of saturated fat, salt, calories and sugar.

**Box 1: Nutritional quality of foods varies widely, even between products which appear similar**

<b>McDonald's Chicken Products</b>	<b>Calories</b>	<b>Total Fat</b>	<b>Saturated fat</b>	<b>Salt</b>
Chicken McNuggets(tm) (6 pieces)	250	14.0	2.0	0.6
McChicken(tm) Sandwich	380	16.0	2.0	1.6
Chicken Legend(tm) with Spicy Tomato Salsa	515	14.0	2.0	2.6
Chicken Selects(tm) (5 pieces)	610	33.0	4.0	2.8
Toasted Deli Sweet Chilli Chicken with Cheese (White Roll)	665	20.0	5.0	2.7

When in McDonald's, there is a wide range of chicken products available with varying calorie and saturated fat content. A McChicken Sandwich contains 380 calories and 2g of saturated fat, whereas a Toasted Deli Sweet Chilli Chicken with Cheese has 665 calories and 6g of saturated fat. Nearly double the calories and three times the saturated fat in one chicken burger compared to another.

<b>Pret A Manger Cakes and Slices</b>	<b>Calories</b>	<b>Total Fat</b>	<b>Saturated fat</b>	<b>Sodium</b>
Chocolate Brownie	267	15.7	9.8	0.0386
Chocolate Card Box Cake	354	20.09	6.6	0.241
Choc Bar	555	38.6	22.7	0.611

Each of these might be chosen as a coffee accompaniment, and in a display could look very similar. The nutritional values vary highly however, with the Choc Bar having more than double the amount of fat, saturated fat and calories of a chocolate brownie.

<b>Desserts at a popular pub chain- Wetherspoons</b>	<b>Calories</b>	<b>Total Fat</b>	<b>Saturated fat</b>
Mango & Passion fruit Sorbet	115	0.1	0
Mint Chocolate Ice-cream Bomb	300	13.4	8.4
Warm Chocolate Brownie with vanilla Ice-cream	334	17.5	10.8
Bramley apple, pear and raspberry crumble with ice cream	579	24.4	11.6
Bramley apple, pear and raspberry crumble with custard	642	23.6	11.5

Although the sorbet might be assumed to be the healthiest product, the other items might surprise restaurant goers. For instance, there is an added 63 calories when custard is the crumble accompaniment rather than ice cream, and an added 245 calories when crumble is chosen over the chocolate brownie. **Information collected in spring 2008. Products are regularly reformulated so the nutritional content of items will change.**

Restaurant appetizers and side dishes can account for a surprisingly large proportion of recommended daily calorie intake, and high contributions of saturated fat, even before a main meal is consumed. For example, at pub chain *Wetherspoons*, a side order of half a rack of BBQ pork loin ribs is 819 calories, whilst a meal of chips with chili con carne contains 931 calories. Beer battered onion rings provide 7.3g saturated fat and garlic ciabatta bread would provide 10.4g saturated fat. The nutritional quality of different items on the same menu can vary widely, and unexpectedly. For example at *Wimpy*, a jacket potato and cheese has 1012 calories, 51.3g fat and 33.6g saturates compared to a classic bacon cheeseburger with large chips which contains 745 calories, 37g fat, 11.5g saturates. Even products which appear similar on a menu can have very different calorie and fat content. See **Box 1** for examples.

## 4.2 Portion Sizes.

Larger portion sizes can contribute to higher calorie, saturated fat, sugar and salt intake when eating out. Some items on fast food menus have increased in size since the early 1990s, such as the McDonald's Big Mac (204g in 1993; approximately 216g now) and McChicken Sandwich (159g in 1993; approximately 170g in 2008) and the Burger King Whopper (258g in 1993 to 274g in 2008) and a double Whopper with cheese (359g in 1993 to 380g in 2008) (Church, 2008). In some instances, snacks bought out of the home are much bigger than shop bought alternatives, for example Starbucks cookies which weigh around 120g, compared to Maryland Chocolate Chip Cookies, which have not increased in weight (about 10-12g) since 1993 (Church, 2008).

## 4.3 Portion Size and Price

Alongside portion sizes increasing, many food outlets offer size upgrades at a small price difference. At Burger King, for instance, it costs just 40 pence difference to buy super size fries instead of regular. The extra 40 pence buys an extra 167 calories and an extra 3g of saturated fat. See **box 2** for this and further examples of how different size servings of the same item can vary in calorie, fat, and saturated fat content.

### Box 2 – Portion sizes and Price

#### Starbucks Drinks – Mocha Frappuccino with Whipped Cream

Size	calories	Total fat	Saturated Fat	Price
Tall	283	10.8	6.5	£3.25
Grande	378	14.8	8.8	£3.45
Venti	428	14.9	9.0	£3.65

#### Burger King Fries

Size	calories	Total fat	Saturated Fat	Price
Regular	294	14	5	£1.34
large	363	17	6	£1.54
Super	461	22	8	£1.74

#### McDonald's Coca-cola

Size	calories	Sugar	Price
Small	105	26	89p
Medium	170	42	99p
Large	210	53	£1.29

By upgrading the Frappuccino from a Tall to a Venti for just 40 pence, a woman would be consuming almost ¼ of her estimated average requirement for calories and half the recommended maximum intake of saturated fat in just one drink. At Burger King, “supersizing” fries would mean a woman consuming almost half of the recommended daily maximum intake of saturated fat. At McDonald's, upgrading from a small to a large coca-cola means doubling the number of calories ingested for just 40 pence. **Information collected spring 2008. Products are regularly reformulated so the nutritional content of items will change.**

## 5. The Food Commission surveys

Between May and October 2008, The Food Commission conducted three surveys to establish whether nutrition and obesity experts, members of the public; and parents / childminders could correctly identify which items from fast food menus contained the highest levels of fat and calories. See **Appendix D** for the full *Food Magazine* article on the findings from the first two surveys.

The first survey was conducted in Geneva, at the European Congress on Obesity 2008. 66 nutrition and obesity specialists were asked multiple choice questions about the fat and calorie content of different fast food products, based on the menu descriptions. Of the five questions asked, not one respondent got all the answers correct, with the vast majority getting just one or two correct.

A larger survey, with seven similar questions, was conducted with 220 members of the general public in two street locations in London. Only one person guessed all the answers correctly, while 91% got three or fewer of the answers correct. 11.8% got none of the answers correct. For full details of the questions asked, and the answers to the public survey, see **Appendix A**. Of parents and childminders quizzed about children's menu items in Autumn 2008, 82% failed to get more than 1 correct answer in our 6 question survey (see *Food Magazine* issue 83 for details).

Questions answered in the public survey included the following (the percentages represent the proportion of people who selected each answer):

**Which sub from Subway has the most calories?**

- A tuna salad) = 5.4%
- B steak and cheese = 39.1%
- C Subway melt = 50.9%
- D veggie patty= 4.5% → correct answer

For one question about subs from Subway, only 10 people guessed the correct answer – that a 6 inch veggie patty contained the most calories. At 414 calories this was in fact 63

calories more than the most popular choice, the Subway melt, and 78 calories more than the second favourite guess, the steak and cheese sub.

For another question about fat content of KFC menu items, only 48 people guessed which had the most fat, the coleslaw, which contained 22.4g. Most respondents guessed Popcorn Chicken, which actually contained 17.8g of fat.

**Which item at KFC has the most fat?**

- A large coleslaw = 21.8% → correct answer
- B regular popcorn chicken = 31.4%
- C large fries = 30.5%
- D fillet burger = 16.4%

**Which meal item at Burger King has the most amount of total fat?**

- A double Whopper with cheese = 25.5% → correct answer
- B bacon double cheese burger = 5.9%
- C XL bacon double cheeseburger = 50%
- D smoked bacon and cheddar angus = 18.6%

For a question on Burger King menu items, half of the respondents guessed that the XL bacon double cheeseburger

had the most amount of total fat. Only 25% respondents identified the correct answer, the double whopper with cheese, which at 57g, contained 6 g more fat than the XL bacon double cheeseburger.

## **6. Nutrition information at restaurants**

### **6.1 Nutrition information in the UK: the general context**

Restaurants, fast food outlets and other takeaway establishments are currently excluded from any requirement to provide nutrition information at the point of sale. Voluntary schemes are in place in some areas, but formats vary, as do levels and type of outside assessment. The Food Commission met with the Food Standards Agency in July 2008. The agency is currently conducting consumer research to determine what type of information would be most helpful, and is in discussion with fast food companies. This has led to chain restaurants, including Burger King, McDonalds, KFC and Subway, committing to taking steps to offer more healthy options and to provide nutritional information to consumers, however none of these chains will offer prominent information on menu boards (Food Standards Agency, 2008, *High street restaurants sign up to healthy eating*). The most that restaurants promise is to review the content and format of information available.

There has been little open discussion as to exactly what format menu nutritional information should take; but it is clear that calorie information will not offer support to consumers in avoiding other nutrients that are also the subject of public health campaigns. However, calories are a good marker for sugar and fat content of foods, and calorie information is easy to post on menu boards, at little cost to restaurants. Some high calorie products are low in salt – so, salt information could be a useful addition to prominent calorie labelling.

The Food Commission has written to 14 Head Offices of companies in the UK and Europe. No company has advised us of any plans to provide prominent, nutritional information at the point of sale. This includes *Yum Brands!* – which will offer calorie information at member restaurants in the USA, but not in the UK.

Meanwhile, the Cabinet Office's *Food Matters* report (Section 1) argues that the UK has led the world in the development of front-of-pack nutritional labelling for foods bought for preparation and consumption at home, and that front of pack labelling has driven reformulation to make products more healthy (Cabinet Office, 2008).

There is no single system in place for front of pack labelling in the UK. The system advocated by the Food Standards Agency is the "Traffic Light Labelling" system (Food Standards Agency, 2007, *Traffic light labelling*). The labels represent fat, saturates, salt and sugars, and are presented in red, amber or green depending on whether the product contains high (red), medium (amber) or

low (green) levels of each nutrient. The traffic light scheme has been found to most influence consumer choice (Cabinet Office, 2008). The scheme has been adopted by retailers and companies including Marks & Spencer, Waitrose, McCain, Boots and Bernard Matthews. Other companies such as Tesco and Nestlé have chosen not to follow the FSA's preferred system, opting instead to display the fat, saturate, sugar and salt content present in the product as a percentage of guideline daily amounts (GDA) on the front of pack (Food Standards Agency, 2007, *Traffic light labelling*). The Food Commission backs mandatory traffic light labelling.

## **6.2 Nutrition information at UK restaurants: present situation**

No UK restaurant visited during the preparation of this report, provided nutrition information on menu boards, food tags or menus. Some companies do make this information available in restaurants either on food packaging, trays and napkins for perusal whilst eating or on leaflets available by specific request. The National Consumer Council looked at the availability of nutrition information in 7 major chain takeaways in the UK (Alder, 2008, *Takeaway health*). Nutrition information was frequently found to be either not available, or only available on leaflets, or on tray liners. Informal research conducted as part of this report, whilst gathering information for consumer surveys (Section 5) confirms these findings. Some companies provide nutrition information on their websites. For a list of restaurants that provide information online see **Appendix B**.

## **6.3 Examples of better practice**

### **6.3.1 Healthy Options Award, Wales**

In Wales, a voluntary scheme called the *Healthy Options Award* has been developed by local councils and the FSA. The aim is to recognise and encourage catering premises to provide healthy options to the public by awarding bronze, silver, gold status according to menu composition. The award scheme recognises the provision of meals which are balanced and include fruit, vegetables, complex carbohydrates, and which have decreased amounts of fat, saturated fat, salt and sugar. The scheme also recognises provision of healthy options for children, and rewards staff training and promotion and marketing of these healthier options. Guidance and suggestions of change are made available to restaurants.

### **6.3.2 Healthy Living Award, Scotland**

Another voluntary scheme, the *Healthy Living Award*, was launched in 2006, and is run by the Scottish Consumer Council and funded by the Scottish Executive. The award promotes healthier eating and is open to all kinds of catering places, from sandwich shops to staff restaurants. By July 2008, 870 companies had applied for the award, and over 320 had achieved *healthy living* status, earning

the right to display *the healthy living* green apple logo on menus (Cabinet Office 2008).

As with the Welsh scheme, assessors look at the nutritional balance of meals provided, including whether levels of fat, sugar and salt are acceptable. Companies should provide healthy and nutritious children's food where appropriate, and at least 50 per cent of the food on the menu must be labelled as "healthy living" choices. Companies must also have a sales promotion and marketing strategy which works alongside the general principles of the healthy living award and supports healthier eating.

## 7. Consumer views on information provision when eating out

In 2008, the Food Standards Agency surveyed more than 2,000 people across the UK to try and find out what consumers want when they eat out (Food Standards Agency, 2008, *Consumers views on eating out*). The findings showed that overall 42% bought a meal out at least once a week. 85% of people surveyed agreed that restaurants, pubs and cafes have a responsibility to make it clear what is in the food they serve. **81% of people said they felt nutritional information shown at the point when they order food**, such as on a menu would be useful. Although many companies have nutrition booklets on their company websites, only 2% indicated that they find this useful.

When the National Consumer Council has looked at the availability of nutrition information in 7 major chain takeaways in the UK, it also surveyed the views of 1000 consumers (Allder, 2008, *Takeaway health*). **72% of the 1000 people surveyed, said nutritional information on boards would be helpful.**

## 8. Menu labelling in the USA

California has recently signed legislation making calorie counts on chain restaurant menus and menu boards mandatory. The local health authorities for New York City and Seattle have also enacted legislation requiring nutrition information to be available at the point of sale (CSPI Newsroom, September 2008). Restaurants and fast food chains in LA may soon follow suit (Reuters, 2008). In Seattle, chain restaurants with more than 10 national outlets and \$1million in annual sales must have menus showing calories, saturated fat, trans fat, sodium and carbohydrate. In New York City chain restaurants with 15 or more national outlets must list the calorie content of standard items on menu, menu boards or display tags and information should be at least as prominent as the price. Exemptions are made for small firms with few outlets, and for companies that have non-standard menus. See Appendix C for examples of menu boards from the USA.

According to the Deputy Commissioner in the public health department in New York, Dr. Lynn Silver, prominent, point of sale information on menu boards is

crucial if effects are to be seen with regard to improvements in people's food choices. Early evaluation work in New York city is showing evidence of product reformulation (to reduce calories), and of consumers using available information to make lower calorie choices (Personal Communication, 2008).

Yum! Brands announced in autumn 2008 that it would offer nutritional disclosures at point of sale in its restaurants in the USA. This will include KFC and Pizza Hut, both large chains in the UK. The Food Commission has called for the company to do the same here, but no such commitment has yet been made.

**Picture 1: Subway menu board in the US showing calorie values next to price**



## 9. Discussion and recommendations

In the UK, eating out is a popular pastime with almost 30% of household expenditure now allocated to eating outside the home. It is clear that meals eaten out are often very high in terms of calories, saturated fat, salt and sugar. Evidence about these high levels has been presented in this report, and in the reports of other campaign groups referred to in this report (Which?; The National Consumer Council) and from trading standards departments (see **Appendix F**). It is also clear that obesity is already causing significant suffering for individuals and pain for the UK economy.

However, consumers are still denied nutritional information on menu boards at point of sale in UK restaurants. This report has uncovered no examples of any UK restaurant providing nutrition information at the point of sale. Companies continue to assert that nutritional information is available in other formats, for example: on company websites; on placemats offered with meals served; from staff or on leaflets.



Surveys conducted for this report indicate that neither experts nor consumers are able to guess which menu items at fast food chains are lowest in calories, or fat and sugar. In Food Standards Agency and National Consumer Council surveys (Food Standards Agency, 2008, *Consumers views on eating out*; Alder, 2008), consumers indicated overwhelmingly that they would welcome nutrition information at the point of sale. In the FSA survey, only 2% of people said that they found the provision of nutrition information on company websites useful.

In the U.S.A, action to address the lack of calorie information in restaurants is backed by the Food and Drug Administration's Obesity Working Group, The American Medical Association, the American Public Health Association, The American Cancer Society and the American Diabetes Association (Friedman, 2008). California recently passed legislation requiring calorie counts on chain restaurant menus and menu boards (CSPI Newsroom, September 2008). The local health authorities for New York City and Seattle have also enacted legislation.

In the UK, the FSA is currently engaged in work to consider possible formats for the provision of point of sale nutrition information, and recommendations for rolling out such activity to restaurants. However, although the Agency's most recent release on the subject *High street restaurants sign up to healthy eating* (FSA, 2008) claims success in the form of chain restaurants, including Burger King, McDonalds, KFC and Subway, committing to taking steps to offer more healthy options and to provide nutritional information to consumers, none of these chains will offer prominent information on menu boards.

This report is intended as a campaigning tool, and it is also hoped that it will support the FSA in developing its ideas. Recommendations are made in the light of:

- Rising rates of obesity, and other diet-related chronic health conditions in the UK
- An increase in the frequency of meals eaten out
- Data that shows high levels of calories, saturated fat, salt and sugar in meals eaten out
- Evidence that consumers are unable to guess which menu items are lower in calories, saturated fat, sugar and salt
- Evidence that consumers welcome prominent information at the point of sale, and that very few people find the provision of information on company websites useful

- Evidence from New York that shows calorie labelling has led to product reformulation and to consumers making lower calorie food choices

### **List of recommendations**

- The FSA should call for the mandatory provision of calorie information, per meal item, on menu boards of so-called food service chains. The calorie information should be in text as large as the item price. The FSA should determine a UK definition of a food-service chain, with a focus on the number of outlets for such restaurants.
- The FSA should explore methods for such food service chain menu boards to offer standard portion (100 grams) information about salt.
- The FSA should run a public health campaign to educate people about calories.

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## 11. Appendices

Appendix A: The Food Commission public survey, answers shown in red (note this information was correct in late spring 2008)

### UK Restaurant Quiz



1. Which item from McDonalds has the most calories:
  - a) 1 Large Strawberry Shake (505 cal)
  - b) 1 Big Mac (495 cal)
  - c) 9 piece Chicken McNuggets (390 cal)
  - d) Large French Fries (455 cal)
2. How many grams of fat are in a McDonald's Sausage, Egg and Cheese Bagel?
  - a) 16
  - b) 20
  - c) 24
  - d) 28
3. Which sub at Subway has the most calories: (note: subs are on whole wheat bread with lettuce, tomato, pickles, onions, green peppers, olives and cheese)
  - a) 6 inch Tuna Salad Sub (402 cal)
  - b) 6 inch Steak and Cheese Sub (336 cal)
  - c) 6 inch Subway Melt (Turkey, Ham, Bacon and Cheese) (351 cal)
  - d) 6 inch Veggie Patty Sub (414 cal)
4. Which Grande (500 ml) drink at Starbucks has the most calories:
  - a) Coffee Frappucino (239 cal)
  - b) White Chocolate mocha with semi skimmed milk, no whipped cream (399 cal)
  - c) Cappuccino with semi skimmed milk (115 cal)
  - d) Café Latte with semi skimmed milk (188 cal)
5. Which meal item at Burger King has the most amount of fat?
  - a) Double Whopper with Cheese (57 grams)
  - b) Bacon Double Cheeseburger (27 grams)

- c) XL Bacon Double Cheeseburger (51 grams)
  - d) Smoked Bacon and Cheddar Angus (41 grams)
6. How many calories are in a 6 inch individual pan pizza from Pizza Hut?
- a) 508
  - b) 608
  - c) 708
  - d) 808
7. Which item at Kentucky Fried Chicken has the most amount of fat?
- a) Large Coleslaw (22.4 grams)
  - b) Regular Popcorn Chicken (17.8 grams)
  - c) Large Fries (19.4 grams)
  - d) Fillet Burger (15.6 grams)

## Appendix B - Examples of companies that provide nutritional information on their websites

AMT coffee: <http://www.amtcoffee.co.uk/>

Burger King: <http://www.burgerking.co.uk/nutrition/index.aspx>

Café Nero: <http://www.caffenero.com/NeroFood.asp?Section=NutritionalInfo>

Café Rouge: [http://www.caferouge.co.uk/corp\\_nutrition.php](http://www.caferouge.co.uk/corp_nutrition.php)

Chilli's Grill & Bar: [http://www.brinker.com/gr/nutritional/chilis\\_nutrition\\_menu.pdf](http://www.brinker.com/gr/nutritional/chilis_nutrition_menu.pdf)

Costa Coffee: <http://www.costa.co.uk/coffee/ourfood.aspx>

Dominos: <http://www.dominos.co.uk/about/nutrition.aspx>

Harvester: <http://www.harvester.co.uk/nutritional-information.html>

KFC: <http://www.kfc.co.uk/nutrition/nutrition.aspx>

Krispy Kreme: <http://www.krispykreme.co.uk/Nutritional-info>

McDonalds: <http://www.mcdonalds.co.uk/asp/ourfood/asp/nutritioncounter.asp>

Millies Cookies:

[http://www.milliescookies.com/uploads/doc/605\\_nutritional\\_info\\_cookies.pdf](http://www.milliescookies.com/uploads/doc/605_nutritional_info_cookies.pdf)

Pizza Hut: <http://www.pizzahut.co.uk/restaurant/nutritional-information.html>

Pret a Manger: <http://www.pret.com/menu/sandwiches/>

Starbucks: <http://www.starbucks.co.uk/en-GB/Favorite+Beverages/Beverage+Nutrition.htm>

Subway: [http://www.subway.co.uk/menu\\_nutrition\\_info.asp](http://www.subway.co.uk/menu_nutrition_info.asp)

Wetherspoons:

<http://www.rfbrookes.co.uk/Web/FoodFacts/FoodFacts.nsf/PopUpForm?OpenFrameSet>

Wimpy: <http://www.wimpy.uk.com/nutrition.htm>

YO! Sushi: <http://www.yosushi.com/files/fb506c17-/YO!NutritionalBooklet.pdf>

## **Appendix C – Examples of menu boards in the US**

### **Example of envisaged McDonalds Menu Board**

[http://www.cspinet.org/menulabeling/images/ml\\_mcdonalds.gif](http://www.cspinet.org/menulabeling/images/ml_mcdonalds.gif)

### **Example Starbucks Menu Board**

<http://www.cspinet.org/menulabeling/images/starbuckssandwiches.jpg>

### **Example labelling of fresh food at Starbucks**

<http://www.cspinet.org/menulabeling/images/starbucksfoodtag.jpg>

### **Example Subway menu board**

<http://www.cspinet.org/menulabeling/images/subwaydoublestacked.jpg>



## Appendix D Example of letter written to fast food companies in the UK

Name  
Address

**Date: 30<sup>th</sup> July 2008**

Dear .....,

We are writing to request that your company disclose nutrition information on menu boards and menus immediately adjacent to the name and price of each standardised item. Such requirements are in place in several American cities, and we understand that your company is complying, or about to comply, with such requirements in San Francisco and New York. Health conscious consumers here would also benefit from such information.

Obesity and diet-related diseases have increased significantly as more and more consumers are eating outside of the home. In a major study of 36,894 individuals from ten European countries, researchers found that this shift in dietary habits is directly correlated to increased energy intake and obesity.<sup>1</sup> Studies by the City of Los Angeles and New York City health departments demonstrate that such disclosures help consumers choose healthier options and improve their health. These studies also indicate that disclosures in places such as posters, brochures, tray liners, packages, and www sites do not have a similar impact.<sup>2</sup> See Attachment 1 – Transatlantic Consumer Dialogue Resolution for complete discussion.

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<sup>1</sup> P. Orfanos et al. Eating Out of Home and Its Correlates in 10 European Countries. The European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition (EPIC) Study. *Public Health Nutrition: 10(12)*, 1515-1525. 21 June 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Bassett, Mary et al. Purchasing Behavior and Calorie Information at Fast-Food Chains in New York City, 2007, *American Journal of Public Health*, June, 2008; Simon, Paul et al. "Menu Labeling as a Potential Strategy for Combating the Obesity Epidemic: A Health Impact Assessment," May 2008, County of Los Angeles, Public Health Division of Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention.

Consumers strongly favour disclosure of nutrition information for standardised restaurant foods. According to the results of an Opinion Research Corporation survey commissioned by the Transatlantic Consumer Dialogue, more than 75% of consumers “agree” or “strongly agree” that “fast food restaurants and other chains should list nutritional information, such as calories, fat, sugar or salt content on menus and menu boards.”

We believe that requiring nutrition disclosures on menus and menu boards will contribute to the European Platform on Diet, Physical Activity and Health and garner considerable goodwill amongst consumers.

We thank you for your consideration of this request, and we look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Anna Glayzer  
Campaign Coordinator  
The Food Commission  
[anna@foodcomm.org.uk](mailto:anna@foodcomm.org.uk)

CC: Jessica Mitchell  
Director  
Food Commission

## **Appendix E: Food Magazine Article July/ September 2008**

### **Which fast food meals are healthiest? Anyone's guess!**

When The Food Magazine asked nutrition specialists and members of the public which fast foods were most laden with fats or calories. The results were surprisingly poor.

The lack of clear labelling for fast food meals means that few people really know what they are ordering. We believe it is time to follow the example of cities such as New York and Seattle, and get the fatty facts publicly declared on menu boards.

We are eating out of the home more than ever before, but the food we eat is rarely labelled with nutrition details. In the supermarket, we can look at the labels and make a decision, but in McDonalds, Starbucks, Pizza Hut, KFC or Subway, the display boards show no nutritional information at all. We may find some facts available in leaflets, or on the containers or tray liners, but that information comes after we have made our choice, collected our meal and sat down to eat. All we can do then is say, "I wish I had known before I ordered."

Surveys show that meals eaten outside the home are frequently higher in calories and fats than food prepared and cooked at home. This means that caterers have as much responsibility as supermarkets to ensure we get the facts before we choose.

There are already moves in the USA to force better disclosure. The local health authorities for New York City and Seattle have enacted legislation requiring nutrition information to be available at the point of sale. Exemptions are made for small firms with few outlets, and for companies that have non-standard menus. The fast food outlets are fighting back with legal challenges, but the signs are good that the laws will stick and customers will get the information they surely deserve to have. After all, what are companies trying to hide!

In Europe, no such laws are yet envisaged. The Food Standards Agency is promising to look into the issue in the next year or so, but we believe it is time to press forward now. The logic is clear: customers have a right to know what they are being sold. This is especially true for products that rely for their appeal on salt, fats and sugar to boost the flavours of mass-produced, long-life ingredients. It is not difficult to do in fast food chains as meals are made to standard set recipes.

We believe that fast food is designed to look appealing but can hide a large amount of fat or pack a big calorie punch. To check our beliefs, we went to the experts.

*Three chicken thighs and a large fries from KFC will give you about half your day's calories (over 940), half a day's salt (3 grams) and a whole day's fat (a whopping 57 grams). Or you could go for a Tower Burger, with over 600 calories and four grams of salt in the one item.*

We visited the European Congress on Obesity, this spring, where some 3,000 nutritionists, obesity researchers and clinicians were gathered in Geneva to discuss the latest science on obesity research, the latest ideas for treatment and the policies needed to prevent people becoming overweight. We spoke to 66 of the experts as they looked at the scientific exhibitions, and we asked them to complete a simple questionnaire containing a set of just five questions about the fat and calorie content of fast food, each with four possible answers. For example we asked:

**Which item from McDonalds contains the most total fat?**

- a: Large French fries (170g portion)
- b: Double Cheeseburger (165g portion)
- c: Filet-O-Fish sandwich (143g portion)
- d: McChicken sandwich (147g portion)

*Fewer than half the experts were able to identify the culprit here. Many thought it was the Double Cheeseburger, and several thought the Filet-O-Fish, but in fact the French fries come in at a whopping 30g fat. Then we asked:*

**Which 15 centimetre (six inch) sub at Subway contains the most calories?**

- a: Tuna salad (250g portion)
- b: Steak and Cheese (278g portion)
- c: Italian (Salami, Ham, Pepperoni and Cheese) (243g portion)
- d: Cold Cut Combo (249g portion)

*Most people said the Italian, and some said the Steak and Cheese, but in fact the Tuna salad packs in the energy at 530 calories. Only seven people got this right.*

Out of the 66 specialists, not a single person gave five correct answers. Just five people gave four correct answers. The great majority – three-quarters of the experts – got only two, one or none of the correct answers – little better than pure guess work.

When they were shown the correct answers the experts were surprised, but admitted that if they had a problem making the right choice, then surely the average customer had little chance of guessing which foods were the healthiest.

**Testing the public**

We did a similar survey with a further 220 people on the street, 172 of whom were regular fast food eaters. Again, we asked questions about the fat and calorie content of fast food. For instance:

**Which item from the KFC menu contains the most fat?**

- a: Large Coleslaw
- b: Regular Popcorn Chicken
- c: Large Fries
- d: Fillet Burger

*Only 48 people guessed the correct answer, the coleslaw, which contains 22.4g of fat. Most people guessed Popcorn Chicken, which actually has 17.8g of fat.*

**How many calories are in a six inch individual pan pizza from Pizza Hut?**

- a: 508
- b: 608
- c: 708
- d: 808

*Most people thought the answer was 708 calories, as opposed to the truth that, at 808 calories, one of these pizzas is just over 40% of the average daily recommended calorie total for a woman.*

Out of the 220 people who took part in our street survey, only one person guessed all of the answers correctly. Again, most people only got one or two answers right.

It should not have to be guess work. We have the right to know what is in our food, and to have the information we need to make our choices before we buy.

**The rules in Seattle and New York City**

In Seattle, chain restaurants with more than ten national outlets and \$1m in annual sales must have menus displaying calories, saturated fat, trans fat, sodium and carbohydrate information.

If the restaurant uses a menu board, then this must include calories in each item, and the other nutrient information should be plainly visible at the point of ordering. Only items available on the menu for 60 days or more are required to be labelled.

In New York City chain restaurants with 15 or more national outlets must list the calorie content of standard items on menus, menu boards or display tags. The calorie information should be at least as prominent as the price information.

*Anna Glayzer, with additional research by Tim Lobstein, Nina Sorensen and Hannah Brinsden. Thanks to the Woodcock Foundation for their support of this investigation.*

## **Appendix F: Food Magazine article, July/Sept 2007**

### **Eat out – indulge yourself in salt, mega-calories, sugar and saturated fat**

Published in The Food Magazine issue 78, July/Sept 2007

Early this year, the Surrey Trading Standards Food Team tested 36 meals from pubs and restaurants including Chinese, Italian, Indian, English and Thai style recipes. The team used the Food Standards Agency's (FSA) traffic light system to give the foods red (High), amber (Medium) or green (Low) for each of three nutrients – fat, saturated fat and salt depending upon the levels of these in each meal. The FSA system does not apply to restaurant meals, but to certain categories of packaged foods, but the team found the system useful to judge the healthiness of such meals.

Overall, the team found that, when the whole meal was taken into account, 16 were red in every nutrient category. 23 were red for salt including seven that would take you over the recommended six grams of salt a day; 27 were red for fat, with 23 red for saturates. A whole meal simply means the dish you personally order, and are served. See table for examples.

In 2005, the Surrey team tested 21 typical fast food meals and compared them to dietary recommendations for teenagers. Burgers, pizzas, chips, chicken and a couple of salads were sent for laboratory analysis and received poor results.

Eight samples contained more than 1,000 calories and a further four (double decker meal, mighty meaty pizza, pepperoni pizza and half pounder meal) contained over 1,500 calories. A half pounder meal from a kebab shop provided more than 100% of the recommended amount of calories for a girl aged 14.

According to the Surrey Food Team, "It is very clear that if meals such as these are eaten even just once a week, a significant effort is required for the rest of the week to balance the diet. This means either regular exercise or eating lighter meals."

### **Estimated daily requirements for energy for teenagers are:**

Male 11-14 years 2,220 calories per day

Male 15-18 years 2,755 calories per day

Female 11-14 years 1,845 calories per day

Female 15-18 years 2,110 calories per day

Examples of meals, their nutrients and how they would score using the FSA traffic light system

Dish labelled as:	Mealweight in grams (g)	Fat g/portion	Saturates g/portion	Salt g/portion
Seared salmon fillet, home smoked tomato taglatelli, fresh peas and basil oil	421	31.7 (Red)	9.7 (Red)	1.2 (Green)
Risotto Ai Frutta Di Mare	801	59.9 (Red)	27.4 (Red)	5.0 (Red)
Thai green curry with egg fried rice	709	52.2 (Red)	19.9 (Red)	7.2 (Red)
Shepherds Pie & mixed vegetable	440	17.1 (Green)	7.5 (Green)	2.0 (Green)
Spaghetti Bolognese (Minced beef, tomato sauce & herbs)	759	47.5 (Red)	23.5 (Red)	5.2 (Red)
Lamb jalfrezi & pilau rice	701	55.4 (Red)	13.3 (Red)	5.1 (Red)

All reports by Surrey County Council Trading Standards Department  
[www.surreycc.gov.uk/tradingstandards](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/tradingstandards)