



# Cyndi O'Meara Reports

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## **Nutritionism: The Wrong Way to Health**

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Has the world gone mad? I find it amazing that when people look at the ingredients and nutrition label of a packaged food they are more engrossed in the nutrition label than the actual food content. When I ask people what they look for when they read the label of the food they are buying they tell me they look for the saturated fat content, or the amount of salt, or whether there is enough protein, or what the fat and sugar content is, and even the vitamins and minerals, as is the case with milk and calcium. Very few are interested in the actual ingredients. Modern thinking finds that a food is OK as long as the nutrition label and the components of food are in the right amounts as deemed by the scientific community and taught to the public by propaganda and advertising.

In other words, if you're on a protein diet, you look for high protein foods; and if you're on a low fat diet you look for low fat foods. If osteoporosis is a concern, then foods high in calcium, like milk, is what people consider. If you are a diabetic you make sure there is no sugar in the food and if you have hypertension then salt content is important. Or, if you've been told by your doctor that you should lower your cholesterol and not eat foods high in cholesterol, then you look for the cholesterol content.

To create a nutrition label is really easy. You go to [nutritiondata.com](http://nutritiondata.com) and plug in the ingredients of your food (for instance any recipe you are making), and a nutrition label is produced. It doesn't ask if the food is organic or what type of soil it was grown in or how rich in minerals the soil is, or if you boiled the food to death or if you used sea salt, or raw milk as opposed to modified milk, but merely generalises. So don't ever for a minute think that a nutrition label is accurate; it is usually very general.

But that is not the biggest problem. The problem is that we look at the nutritional facts and we forget to look at the ingredients.

Let me explain with the labels on the following page.

The first food label shows the contents may have too much salt for someone who has hypertension, or too much saturated fat for someone trying to avoid saturated fat. The second food label shows high protein, so for someone who is looking for high protein foods

this may be an excellent food. Now instead of looking at the nutrition facts, let's look at the actual ingredients. The first label could be something that you make at home; most people would have some or most of the ingredients in their pantry. Whereas the second food label is a totally manufactured food; many of the ingredients would not even be found as basic ingredients on the supermarket shelf.

This focus on the nutrition facts rather than the actual food is an ideology that has been making its mark for the past 25 years. Slowly but surely we have dissected food into its component parts and decided that if the food has the wrong balance of the component parts, it's deemed unhealthy. And Science has been the major culprit.

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>		
Serving size: ½ Pack (5 oz/142.5g)		
Servings Per Pack: 2		
	Quantity per serve	Quantity per 100g
Energy	138Kcal	96.6Kcal
Protein	4.3g	3g
Total fat	9.6g	6.7g
Saturated Fat	2g	1.4g
Carbohydrates		
Total	8.6g	6g
Sugars	2.1g	1.5g
Dietary Fiber	4g	2.8g
Cholesterol	2.6mg	1.8mg
Sodium	416.5mg	291.6mg

INGREDIENTS: GREEN PEAS (31%), SPINACH (3.6%), TOMATOES, ONIONS, FENUGREEK, CASHEWNUTS, CREAM, WATERMELON SEEDS, SUNFLOWER OIL, SALT, GARLIC, GINGER, HERBS & SPICES, WATER.

Ingredients: Protein blend (calcium caseinate, whey protein isolate, soy protein isolate, hydrolysed collagen protein), white chocolate coating (sugar, vegetable fat, skin milk powder, emulsifiers (322,492), flavour), Sorbitol, Glycerol, cocoa powder, soy crisp (soy concentrate, malted wheat, flavour), oil, Soy lecithin, flavour, artificial sweetener, (950), colour (155, 122) <b>WARNING: This product could contain traces of nuts. MADE IN AUSTRALIA</b> from local and imported ingredients. Store at or below 25 C		
<b>This High Protein Bar</b> is a Formulated Supplementary Sports Food meaning a food or mixture of foods specifically formulated to assist sports people in achieving specific nutritional or performance goals. This a high protein food bar and is not an "energy" or "snack" bar. It has been formulated as low carbohydrate and truly tastes great! Energise your lifestyle while satisfying your taste buds.		
<b>Formulated Supplementary Sports Food. Warning:</b> Not suitable for children under 15 years or pregnant women. Should only be used under medical or dietetic supervision. Not to be used as sole source of nutrition. For best results consume in conjunction with appropriate exercise program and healthy diet.		
Nutritional Facts	Average Qty Per Serve (65g)	Average Qty Per 100 g
<b>Formulated Supplementary Sports Food</b> Serving size: 65g Recommended consumption in one day: 65g Servings per pack: 1		
	Energy kJ	949
	Providing Calories	227
	Protein (g)	24.3
	Fat, Total (g)	5.6
	- Saturated (g)	4.9
	Carbohydrate, Total (g)	4.5
	- Sugars (g)	4.5
	Sorbitol (g)	8.0
	Glycerol (g)	8.0
	Sodium (mg)	148
	Fibre (g)	0
		14960
		349
		37.3
		8.6
		7.5
		6.9
		6.9
		12.3
		12.3
		227
		0

### **Nutritionism**

We are no longer interested in what the food is, but rather what it has in it. When most people look at a food label, they are more interested in the amount of macro-nutrients (carbohydrates, fats and proteins) than in the actual Ingredients. People select foods on micro- (vitamins and minerals) and macro-nutrient status, even if the food does not resemble real food. Protein bars, breakfast cereals, margarine, modified milks, diet foods and muesli bars are prime examples. These foods look good in the nutrient department, but when you look at the actual ingredients you find there are a bunch of numbers, soy protein isolates, hydrogenated vegetable oils and other non-real food items.

This is not only the case with packaged foods but other foods as well. Tomatoes are now being eaten for their lycopenes rather than as food that tastes good and goes well with many other foods. Carrots are known for their b-carotene status. Avocados are avoided on a strict diet because of fat content, but few people know that when you put avocados in a salad it helps to increase the absorption of many of the minerals and vitamins in the salad. Even wine is being drunk for the antioxidants, while meat is eaten for protein, milk for calcium, bread for carbohydrates and oils for fats. This ideology has been termed 'Nutritionism' and has taken over our way of thinking about the food we eat. To quote a well used phrase: "If it's something your great-grandmother wouldn't recognise as food, don't eat it."

If we look at food in a mechanistic way then food is made up of parts – carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins and minerals – and if we can twist them to be what science deems to be right, then we can make the food better, so science thinks! This is Nutritionism.

### **Vitalism**

I've always lived my life with a 'vitalistic' health point of view, which is, 'the power that made the body will heal the body' as long as there is no interference and the right resources are given (good food, exercise, rest, clean air and sunlight). Health, these days, is practised from a mechanistic point of view, where the body is made up of the sum of all its parts and if a part goes wrong then 'get rid of it' (believing the body will be better off) or 'treat the part that has gone wrong' (rather than the whole person).

It seems now that this view point can be stretched towards food. Real food from nature is vitalistic; it is healthy and there is a symbiotic relationship between all the parts of the food that make it perfect, as long as it has been given the right resources (water, nutrient soil and sunlight) *and not been interfered with.*

### **Organising Your Pantry to Live a Vitalistic Life**

Ingredients are the most important part of any recipe and now you are preparing healthy food at home, you need a constant supply of the right ingredients in your pantry. Just about anyone can knock up a meal, a cake or some biscuits, but whether the result is healthy depends on the quality of the

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ingredients. If you use good ingredients the dish will be healthy even if it's something sweet; but if you cook with substandard ingredients you will get unhealthy results no matter what the recipe is.

My first rule of thumb with cooking is to choose ingredients that are as close as possible to their natural sources. Eat real butter – not margarine, which is an artificial product that scientific studies have implicated in the increasing incidence of some modern diseases. Eat real sugar – not some artificial sweetener created in a laboratory.

My motto comes from my daughter Casie who, when she was seven, said:

*“Nature makes all the healthy stuff and everything else is junk.”*

Buy as many organic and bio-dynamic ingredients as you can, because they contain fewer chemicals and more nutrients. You might think this is a more expensive way to shop, but in the long run it works out to be relatively inexpensive as well as far better for your health. When you start eating wholefoods you won't need to buy prepared and pre-packaged foods any more, therefore you won't fall into the trap of Nutritionism, so you'll find your food bill declining; and your 'sickness bill' will plummet.

Remember that when you eat nutrient-rich foods your body doesn't need as much and you won't be constantly hungry or craving foods.

Chemicals have been implicated in many modern diseases and it is not possible to avoid them all, but when you make a conscious effort you can reduce the amount of chemicals and technology foods you are exposed to and that's not only good for you but also for the environment.

Most of the ingredients I use can be found in grocery shops and health food shops. If you are on a farm, in a remote area, or travelling, don't think that you can't get hold of these foods. It's just a matter of finding a health food shop or grocery shop willing to package up ingredients and send them to you.

If your local supermarket or health food shop doesn't stock the things you're looking for, ask if they can get them in. They might not always agree, but they are far more likely to do so if you ask than if you don't.

Below is a list of foods that I use regularly and always keep in my pantry or fridge so that I am prepared for most meals.

Fruit, vegetables and meat I buy regularly, and organic when available.

Herbs should be fresh (preferably organic) and spices freshly ground if possible; otherwise use the best dried and pre-packaged ones you can find.

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- **Flours** – instead of buying white flour, discover organic white unbleached flour; nothing will be pure white again but the health benefits are far better. There are other flours that are worth experimenting with: besan (made from chickpeas), rice, arrowroot, potato, barley, rye, millet, oat, quinoa, and amaranth. The list is long and the nutrition is abounding when you use a variety of flours.
- **Sweeteners** – Rapadura sugar (also known as Sucanat and Muscovado); this is a sugar which is made by juicing the sugar cane and dehydrating it. It is one of the best sugars available and can be found in most grocery stores. Organic raw sugar, honey and natural maple syrup are all great sweeteners.
- **Salt** – Sea salt; it's grey and it's wet and you need to throw out the salt shaker but it is packed with nutrients and has no additives, unlike white salt. It's available in coarse and fine grind.
- **Vinegar** – apple cider vinegar, wine vinegar or rice vinegar; these three vinegars do not contain wheat and are a healthy alternative to white vinegar.
- **Jam** – The traditional way of making jam has been widely replaced by methods that use artificial flavourings, additives and sweeteners, with only a small amount of real fruit. You can make your own jam, of course, but luckily commercial makers of traditional jams can still be found in most towns. I buy my jam from markets and stalls, and always check that it is made from just fruit, sugar and pectin.
- **Milk** – is it good for you or not? I believe the milk that is least tampered with is the most healthy. If you can buy pasteurised-only milk or, better still, milk straight from the cow, then this is the best. If you're worried about the fat (which you shouldn't be) just dilute it with some filtered water. Avoid the modified and low-fat milks.
- **Milk substitutes** – rice milk, grain milk, nut milk and a good organic soya milk. It is important to read the labels and find ones that are made with only natural ingredients; avoid the ones with additives and those made with canola oil.
- **Cream** – don't buy cream that has sucrose and gelatine added; make sure it is pure.
- **Yoghurt** – read the labels and only buy yoghurt that is made with milk and culture. Watch out for excess additives – you don't need them.
- **Cheese** – I usually buy my cheese at the delicatessen and make sure it has been fermented and made the old-fashioned way, without additives and hydrogenated oils.
- **Butter** – Choose butter, not margarine. Margarine is an artificial product made from hydrogenated fat, one of the most dangerous of all consumable

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fats and worse than saturated fat. If you are put off by the fact that butter can be hard to spread, you can make your own easy-spread butter by combining butter with olive oil.

- **Bread** – Most bread available today should be used to insulate the house rather than eaten to sustain life. When choosing your bread try and find a traditional baker who does not use premixes but creates bread with organic flour, sea salt, compressed yeast, organic raw sugar, and the like.

- **Oils** – it is important to buy only cold pressed oils. I stick to olive and macadamia. Stay away from generic vegetable oils and canola oils – they are not what they seem.

Live a vitalistic non-nutritionism life. A life where you know that the power that made the body can heal the body and that power made real nature-based foods that are perfect for your body.

Happy Changing Habits

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