Introduction

McDonald’s is a popular destination for fifty million customers every day. We highly value that level of trust, just as we value the feedback we get from our unique, face-to-face relationship with local customers the world over.

Our business realizes our corporate responsibilities and stands behind our Golden Arches. Today, consumers expect more from corporations. They are relying less on governments to lead, and instead, they’re looking to companies for positive change. Retail is not just about revenue – it is about responsibility.

We welcome this new dynamic because it is in line with our heritage to be leaders on issues that are important to our customers and to society. We know we are not perfect, and we don’t have all the answers. However, we look for continuous improvement. We listen to our customers and work with the experts in science, health, and agriculture.

That’s why our leadership position in the foodservice industry demands that we take a seat at the table for solutions to nutrition and obesity challenges.

Amidst all the studies, data, and news coverage on these issues, it is sometimes hard to separate science from sensationalism.

A leader of McDonald’s once said, “I don’t know what we will be serving in 50 years, but we will be serving more of it than anyone else.” Although these words were shared more than two decades ago, they still ring true.

I wonder if anyone ever believed that McDonald’s would one day serve more salads than anyone else in the world. Or that McDonald’s would be the number one buyer of apples in the United States. Or that McDonald’s would serve more than 3.7 billion servings of fruit and vegetables in just one year.

These numbers say that McDonald’s is listening and evolving.

Sure, McDonald’s sells lots of chicken, hamburgers, French fries, Egg McMuffins, drinks, and desserts. However, customers tell us that they want choice and variety, and we have responded by adding more choice and variety to our menu than ever before.

Take a look.

We invite you to learn the real story about our food through the nutrition information found on our packaging, on tray liners in our restaurants, and on our innovative website (www.mcdonalds.com).

Our Food

McDonald’s has always served safe and high quality food. Why wouldn’t we? Ultimately, customers decide what brands stay and what brands disappear, and the starting point for them has to be “Can we trust the safety and quality of the food we are buying and serving to our families?” That’s a pretty powerful incentive for a restaurant business to get it right every time.

One of McDonald’s real advantages to getting it right is the purchasing power of our substantial global supply chain. It helps us to have cost-effective access to the highest quality products available anywhere. Our beef is 100% ground beef, free of additives or fillers.

Catherine Adams, Ph.D., R.D. is Corporate Vice President, Worldwide Quality, Food Safety and Nutrition for the McDonald’s Corporation. She is responsible for corporate strategies and policies relating to the quality, safety and nutrition for the global business.
Our chicken is primarily white breast meat. Our eggs are from laying hens. Our salads and yogurt are from the same suppliers who provide food to your grocery store.

In addition, our position within the food industry allows us to raise the bar on industry practices regarding animal welfare and antibiotic use in poultry. We dictate that suppliers optimize energy and water use and we routinely score our suppliers on their stewardship for the environment and the well-being of animals that are part of the food chain. We have a “Code of Conduct” for our suppliers that demands their commitment to fair labor practices, and we monitor their compliance. We demonstrate our sense of responsibility to the environment, animal well-being and social responsibility everyday. Are we perfect? No, but we are working on it and remain dedicated to a path of continuous improvement and industry leadership.

The food McDonald’s serves provides essential dietary nutrients, and the truth is, it tastes good. Our beef is an excellent source of protein and iron. Salads at McDonald’s have become a popular menu choice, and our numbers prove that we provide good sources of nutrients to our customers. McDonald’s served 2.5 billion servings of vegetables in 2005, including 1.7 billion servings of mixed greens, 580 million servings of tomatoes, and 51 million servings of carrots. We became the largest purchaser of apples in the restaurant business in 2005, buying more than 34 million pounds of apples in the United States. McDonald’s purchased a total of one billion servings of fruit in 2005. Our cut apples are preserved for color and freshness with ascorbic acid, providing an excellent source of vitamin C to our customers in addition to the natural nutrients in apples.

McDonald’s routinely employs the advice of third-party experts to help direct our food programs, including our Global Advisory Council for Nutrition and Balanced Active Lifestyles. This global group of clinicians and academics has an open view to our business and freely directs our priorities for food and nutrition. We are serious about our commitment to this group of experts. We routinely seek their guidance, and they have been impressed with our receptivity for their ideas and adoption of their recommendations.

Menu Choice

We stand behind our menus around the world, and work continuously to provide food choices that meet every customer’s desire and dietary needs. We have introduced a range of premium salads and chicken sandwiches, yogurt parfaits, and fruit salads; and in some countries, yogurt and fruit smoothies that appeal to a range of individual tastes and nutrition preferences. Worldwide, we continue to add more choice to our menus. People still think of McDonald’s as a “burger place,” but in many countries, we sell more chicken than beef. We sell salmon and couscous in salads in Europe. We sell dinner entrees with chicken, vegetables, rice, or pasta in Australia.

Our menu selections are also oriented to regional or local tastes. For example, we offer coconut water in Brazil, rice burgers in Taiwan, and porridge in the U.K.

Today, our focus is on the foods that experts around the world generally agree people should eat more often – fruits and vegetables. We are measuring our progress with these foods by presenting key performance indicators (KPIs) developed from an international panel of experts as part of the development of the World Health Organization (WHO)/Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health. We have begun to report on our website and our bi-annual Corporate Social Responsibility Report the number of menu items with at least one or one-half a serving of fruits and vegetables. In 2005,
the first year that this metric was reported, there were 58 menu items in our nine major markets that provided at least one serving of fruits or vegetables, and 88 menu items with at least one-half a serving of fruits or vegetables.

McDonald’s is actively promoting more choices in our meals for children. Our Happy Meals were originally designed to provide portion sizes suitable for young children. This continues to be the case today. They also provide essential nutrients for growing children, including protein, iron, calcium, vitamin E and B vitamins.

There is a strong focus today on providing an increasing number of choices for Happy Meals. In many of our major markets, customers can mix and match their selections for the entrée, side, beverage and dessert. These customized Happy Meals optimally meet the nutritional needs and preferences for children and their parents. In France, for example, we offer a choice of five sandwiches, three side dishes including carrots, ten beverages, and two desserts. Beverage choices include bottled water (flavored and unflavored), two fruit juices, and soft drinks without added sugar. The dessert options include a yogurt drink. Many countries, including Brazil and the United States, offer a fruit bag, semi-skimmed milk, or an apple or fresh fruit salad as Happy Meal sides. These options enjoy a prominent place in our menus, and we will continue to provide more choices for children and parents in the future.

Nutrition Information

McDonald’s has provided nutrition information since the early 1990’s through a variety of mechanisms, including printed brochures and more recently through websites in all of our major markets. In 2005, we started printing nutrition information for the more popular menu items on the back of tray liners. We have diligently worked to provide nutrition education for children and adults through multiple channels. Knowing that not everyone orders their foods with all components listed in the ingredients, we created a unique customizable website tool in the United States, called “Bag A Meal,” enabling individuals to learn the nutrition content of their meals as they order them – for example without the sauce on a Big Mac or the pickle on a hamburger.

Building on the leadership role McDonald’s took over a decade ago, we began printing nutrition information on our packaging in 2006. McDonald’s is the first major restaurant business to voluntarily place nutrition information on food labels, making it easier than ever for our customers to know what they are eating and to make personal food choices as well as choices for their families.
In order to meet our global standards, we developed a novel form of labeling that conveys nutrient information without depending on language. Using nutrition experts and consumer research as our guides, we created icons as symbols for calories, protein, fat, carbohydrates, and sodium. We present nutrient content for each of these elements as a bar chart based on the percentage of the recommended daily intake in the respective country or region of the world. As a responsible global citizen, we elected to present nutrition information in the local government's format wherever applicable. In Europe, we are the first restaurant company to use the new pan-European nutrition reference values – the Guideline Daily Amounts (GDAs). In the United States, we include on our packaging the same nutrition fact panel that is required on retail packages so that consumers can build on the nutrition education tools with which they have already become familiar.

We are already using the latest technology to convey nutrition information in countries where such tools are available and popular. For example, in Japan nutrition information is accessed via the customer's preferred method. Food packages carry special bar codes which are read by web-enabled cell phones. Nutrition information from Japan's McDonald's web site is then displayed on the customer's cell phone.

McDonald's is committed to informing our customers about food choices and what is in our food. We believe that those already interested in and familiar with nutrition information will appreciate this transparency from McDonald's. We encourage those who have not yet elected to learn about nutrition to become motivated by the access to information that we provide.

We also believe that we have a responsibility to our customers to remind them that health is the result of food intake and exercise. It is not possible to “eat your way” to good health. Health and an appropriate weight may only be achieved through a balance of energy intake and expenditure. Therefore, McDonald's voluntarily elected to include a public education campaign as part of our global advertising strategy. We bring this concept to life in a brief and personally engaging message – “It's What I Eat and What I Do.” The campaign began in March 2005 and has been seen in television, print and outdoor advertising, tray liners, packaging, and a variety of other communication vehicles around the world.

Conclusion

McDonald's is a restaurant business dedicated to feeding people today and tomorrow. We make deliberate choices concerning our food quality, available menu choices, and visibility of nutrition information and educational messages on energy balance. We believe that these choices demonstrate our sincere commitment to our customers' health and well-being. We do not offer “fast food;” rather, we provide “good food fast.”

Do these facts surprise you about McDonald's? We hope that as much as you have always “known” about McDonald's, you will want to know more about us, including our food and our values. You are invited to explore our business through the multiple channels through which we open our doors to customers and the public everyday.

McDonald's has taken a seat at the table of the obesity discussion, but our role is not apologetic – it is as a partner equally dedicated to sensible, responsible, and sustainable solutions.