

CACFP 101- Navigating Nutrition Facts Labels

This webinar is also one of my close favorites to discuss because it makes many people stumble when they try to understand it over the years. While looking at the past 20 years, our food labels have become drastically better, but I still would like to mention that while I was abroad in Europe, I really enjoyed all their food labels and the systems they use. For example, I never once had an issue with finding an expiration date on a food item, while in America, it's like playing where's waldo. However, getting back to the topic, it was focused on understanding and applying nutrition facts labels to make sure they are compliance with the child and adults care food program meal pattern requirements. The webinar also had a lot of information on the history of nutrition labeling, how to read them and the practical tips to how to read them with different foods.

There is plenty of history to our food labels in the United States and I think they did a great job breaking it down. The first big step was in 1906, which enforced pure food and drug act, but I think this was well before its time. The next big change was in 1938, this included setting the standards for food identity, quality, and canned products. I will not go step by step in what they mentioned but I think the next big step was in 1990 when they mandated nutrients and labels to reflect portions. However, a lot of these things have their pros and cons, and they could be better or worse, but I think as of today we have a pretty good system in place. Lastly, the FDA did their first major update over 20 years later using evidenced based research and improved the labels by adding more emphasis on calories and nutrients that included added sugars. I think adding added sugars is a large step forward and I think this gives the labels more momentum forward to make even bigger changes. They also break down the nutrition fact labels step by

step and I think this would be useful to introduce to the public because it makes it very simply to understand. There is a lot going on within the food labels but if you take a microscopic view at each category, I think its easier to digest, rather than looking at the entire label.

As I move on from the nutrition fact label, I think they get into a topic that is a little more complicated. While reading it may be confusing, once you understand it, using it for other uses is quite simple. They mention how to apply these labels in CACFP and how to use it to help identify foods for its meal components. If applied correctly, they should be able to be within compliance with ease. On another note, by being well read with these labels anyone could sue it to their advantage. If a person has an underlying health condition, they could be able to interpret food that may put them more at risk, and this could by HPB, diabetes, food allergies or juts the persons personal preferences towards food ingredients. They also dive into what are acceptable ingredient levels within food to be acceptable for CACFP and by reading the ingredient list and understanding how to interpret that list is extremely helpful. While they are focusing on CACFP, this is also every helpful for the average parent as well and using these labels as tools to choose foods for your children and household. I like to say almost anything in this world can be used as a tool or a weapon and if we don't know how to interpret the labels it could be misleading but if done correctly it's a great tool to have.