

GMO Labeling Goes DARK

By Linda Townsend

In my recent article in the May/June 2016 Issue of *The Life Line*, “One Little State, One Big Company—The First GMO Labeling Victory!” I had written with so much hope and pride how Vermont, one of our smallest states with a tiny population, had held its ground on its GMO labeling law. It was an amazing victory because companies that sell nationally would not find it feasible to create GMO warning labels just on products going to Vermont to comply with its new law, which went into effect on July 1, 2016. Large food companies, like Mars and Kellogg, appeared to publicly concede that all their GMO foods would be labeled and the term “natural” would be removed from the label as well.

Today, all that is now gone. It is with a very heavy heart that I received the news that little Vermont’s law is no longer of any significance. On July 29, 2016, the President of the United States signed into law what many GMO labeling advocates feel is still inefficiently transparent, therefore barely a shade off of the “DARK Act,” standing for Deny Americans the Right to Know.

What happened? The Senate fast tracked bipartisan Bill S. 764, a new GMO labeling law which would supersede all state laws. It passed easily in the Senate and the House of Representatives being sent to the President’s desk on July 14, 2016. President Obama signed the bill into law on July 29, 2016 contrasting his 2007 campaign promise: “Here’s what I’ll do as President. I’ll immediately implement country of origin labeling because Americans should know where their food comes from. And we’ll let folks know whether their food has been genetically modified because Americans should know what they’re buying.” This law is not exactly what people believed was promised, even so it has come in the last months of his second term.

The new GMO labeling law is a compromise and like any compromise there are some things you might like about it and some you might not. Because of the law, there *should* be some manner of access to disclosure of GMO containing products, but can require the consumer to use a smart phone to scan the QR or UPC code or call an 800 number or go to a website, whichever method the company chooses to use. I personally feel this places far more effort on the consumer than should be necessary for point of decision sales, which typically occur in the shopping aisles of groceries stores. At least one company agrees: Campbell’s, which began clearly labeling its products voluntarily before the Vermont law, has pledged it will continue to do so.

I also find it ironic that Paul Norman, president of Kellogg North America, wrote that having each state make their own laws would be “. . . a confusing patchwork of state-by-state rules,” and I ask do these large food companies have that same passion for the consumer in the confusing patchwork of company-by-company policies that this law has now created?

I just cannot imagine a mother shopping with her young children, juggling her smartphone in one hand (if she has one) and one product at a time in the other to find the label method used on each product and possibly scan the label or type in a website address or call an 800

number to find out whether or not it has GMOs when having it printed on the label can make it known with just a glance! How are people at large to be made aware that they can scan products to know if they have GMOs? Also, how many products actually have QR codes . . . and if they are to be added, wouldn’t it be just as easy to print that the product does or doesn’t contain GMOs? Since the law also allows printing of a website address on the label to direct the consumer to the GMO information—again I am wondering why not just print whether or not it contains GMOs? When a customer is directed to a website, will the GMO information be on the first screen or will a person have to scroll down several screens to see it . . . or will it be in smaller print tucked away in the middle? Was this compromise law really necessary when several polls have shown repeatedly as much as 9 out of 10 of Americans want GMOs labeled?

Above I wrote there “should” be some manner of access to disclosure *because* compliance is voluntary and it would be difficult to check with all these methods. In fact, compliance with the law seems to be self-regulating without penalties for noncompliance at this time. Although the law is vague, lawmakers provided that the USDA has up to two years to devise guidelines for the labeling, which should include penalties. Basically, this law obliterated Vermont’s clear-cut law and the possibility of any other state laws of requiring GMO labeling, so that now we could have yet another two more years of GMO ambiguity!

As much as it may seem to be a drawback in many respects, the law is also broader reaching than Vermont’s.

Since this is a federal law, it includes products of smaller companies that would not have had to comply because their products are not sold in Vermont. In fact, it is estimated that 24,000 more products would require disclosure, according to the USDA. However, there are some questions about processed sugars and fats from GMO sources slipping through the requirements.

Polls have shown that nearly 60% of people would be less likely to buy GMO labeled foods, which is the reason why food companies do not want it on their labels at all. Placing more effort for the consumer to find out about GMOs in their products is to their advantage, because most people do not have the time to scan products or call numbers or look up websites when trying to get their family’s groceries each week. It also would be recommended to look up even the most familiar products from time to time as ingredients can change without notification.

If it is not clearly stated on the label, then it just is not *labeled!* That is why GMO labeling advocates feel this enacted the very DARK Act that they have been fighting against for years and the fight continues as lawsuits are being prepared to challenge the law on a constitutional basis. If you are in favor of GMO labeling, please do not give up. It’s still not over.

Linda Townsend is a freelance writer of health-related issues and can be contacted at 4biohealth@gmail.com.



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Paleo Granola

By Kim Strickland, ND

I have quite a few friends who are eating Paleo these days. That simply means they are eating meat, fruits, vegetables, dairy, and natural sweeteners in limited amounts. The advantage of this is that most processed foods are eliminated from the diet by eating this way. Think about what most people snack on and you probably come up with a list that includes chips, cookies, bars, and sodas. By avoiding grains, all of these are taken away.

While I do not follow a Paleo diet, I do eat quite a few meals that are grain free. What I love most about Paleo cookbooks is that they use real ingredients. To eat a Paleo diet you should keep all kinds of nuts, seeds, coconut oil, butter or ghee, and dried fruits on hand.

My son and I found this recipe from Danielle Walker. It takes time, but is so delicious. The nuts are soaked overnight which makes them easier to digest. They are dried at a low temperature for a long time which preserves the nutrition in them.

Most of the ingredients for this recipe are available in the bulk section of Life Grocery; the butter and vanilla are available in the grocery section. The parchment paper is available in the general merchandise section.

Vanilla Almond Granola

1 c walnuts
1 c almonds
1 c pecans
¼ c pumpkin seeds
1 t sea salt
¾ c melted honey or maple syrup
2 T butter or ghee, melted
1 ½ T vanilla extract

1 T cinnamon
½ c coconut
½ c raisins

- Place all nuts and seeds in water and cover by 1 inch of water with 1 t of salt.
- Soak 24 hours.
- Drain and put on paper towels.
- Process in food processor to the size of oats.
- Add honey, ghee, vanilla, cinnamon, and salt.
- Pulse until combined.
- Pour mixture into a bowl.
- Add coconut.
- Spread on 3 parchment paper-lined baking sheets with sides.
- Place in 170 degree oven and use a wooden spoon to keep the oven door cracked to let the moisture out.
- After 2 hours stir. Cook for another hour. Turn oven off and close the door and keep the granola in the oven for 1 more hour.
- Add 2 T cocoa powder, 1 T flaxseeds, ¼ c chocolate chunks and ½ c freeze-dried strawberries for another option. Add chocolate and strawberries after dried in oven.

[For a raw vegan version, use coconut oil instead of butter or ghee and replace the sweetener with stevia or avoid a sweetener altogether.]

Kim Strickland is a naturopath, a mathematics educator, and a mother of three boys. She homeschools her boys and teaches online. She earned her doctorate degree from Clayton College of Natural Health in 2005.

Set Your Clock

By Sarah Townsend

Some people are determined to get up at 6 AM and go for a jog, while others cannot fathom getting winded before noon, and others stay up late on the treadmill. For instance, my dad likes to exercise at night and my mom prefers morning, as do I. But really, what is the best time to exercise?

There is no evidence to suggest a best time for exercising, but the time of the day can influence how you feel while exercising. People have something called a circadian rhythm, basically a "body clock" that determines whether you are a night owl or an early bird. It is governed by the Earth's 24-hour rotation pattern. It influences your blood pressure, body temperature, hormone levels, and heart rate, all of which play a role in exercising. All the research I found says that everyone's body clock is different. Using your body clock as a guide to know when to hit up the gym is great, but there are other things to consider such as family and work schedules, or a friend's availability to work out with you.

If you have trouble with consistency, exercising in the morning may be for you. Research suggest in terms

of performing a consistent exercise habit people who exercise in the morning tend to do better, so that they can get it done before other pressures start to interfere. Or you might prefer exercising in the afternoon, as you are not fighting your body to wake up. Just make sure not to do rigorous exercise right after eating, as that can make you feel ill.

However, the bottom line is to just choose a time with which you feel comfortable and make it a part of your schedule. If your goal is to make exercising a habit, the best time of day that works for you could be morning, afternoon, or evening. Try all three and see which one feels best. The most important thing is to choose a time of the day you can stick with so that exercising becomes a habit. You can set your own clock!

Sarah Townsend is a teenager keen on healthy living and the daughter of Linda Townsend, a regular contributor to The Life Line. You can contact her at 4biohealth@gmail.com.

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The Raw Doggo

By Sarah Townsend

Recently, our German shepherd dog, Hanah, passed away. We got her after she retired from being a border patrol officer in Texas at six years old. At that point, she had problems with her eyes that my parents associated with too many toxins in her system. We detoxed her and put her on a raw diet, and her vision was saved and she lived with us for eight more fun-filled years. Our commitment to eating healthy is not just confined to ourselves, but includes our pets as well.

If you feel the same, you might want to consider a similar diet to what dogs eat in the wild. The benefits of this diet are shinier coats, healthier skin, cleaner teeth, higher energy levels, and smaller stools. The diet typically consists of raw meats; raw organs, such as livers and kidneys; raw eggs with the shells; some dairy such as yogurt; vegetables, like broccoli, spinach, and celery; and apples or other fruits. In fact, we called our dog Hanah Banana because she loved bananas so much, skin and all. Whole raw bones should also be added, but never cooked because they can splinter possibly

causing internal injuries.

If you are concerned about the risk of bacteria in the raw meat, consider that many types of dangerous bacteria and fungus has been found in commercially processed dog foods. The raw food diet is superior to commercial dog food because the processing cooks out important nutrients and natural occurring enzymes found in raw foods that are needed for proper digestion. Just like us, dogs can have many issues caused by improper digestion, including skin and food allergies.

We do not know what Hanah was fed or what medications she was given for the six years before she became part of our family, but the raw diet really helped her to enjoy better health the last eight years. Don't your furry doggos deserve raw, natural health?

Sarah Townsend is a teenager keen on healthy living and the daughter of Linda Townsend, a regular contributor to The Life Line. You can contact her at 4biohealth@gmail.com.



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Awesome Avocados

By Susan Esposito, DC, DACNB, FABES, FACFN

In my last article, I wrote about many of the beneficial qualities of avocados, along with many reasons why this particular fruit, that is often mistaken as a vegetable, should be part of everyone's diet. I also mentioned that in my next article I would talk about different ways that we can include avocado in our diet, so here we go.

The first thing you want to look for is a ripe avocado. You can tell when an avocado is ripe by gently pressing into the skin. When the avocado is ripe, it should feel like you're pressing on the tip of your nose, it should have a little give. When an avocado is not yet ripe, it will feel hard and firm against your pressure. Often the only way you can purchase an avocado is before it's ripe, because that's all you can find at the grocery store. That's why if you're planning to make an avocado dish, you may want to go shopping for your avocados a few days before you are planning to serve them. If you buy the avocados early when they're still hard, just put them on a plate or in a bowl on your countertop. This will allow them to ripen within 1 to 3 days. If you put them in the refrigerator, it will slow down the ripening process. On the other hand, if you go to the store and you pick up an avocado and you press into it, you may find that it feels extremely soft, such that your thumb can easily depress to it. This usually indicates that the avocado is over ripe. When an avocado is over ripe, it tends to taste bitter, be stringy, and will usually have black spots inside of it.

Once your avocado is ripened, there are many things that you can do with it. Some people like to just cut it in half, pull out the pit, and slice it. Avocado slices are very tasty especially when eaten in conjunction with other fruits, vegetables, or cheese. The slices can also be placed on a sandwich or in salads or soups for its creamy, tasty contribution. Alternatively you can take the avocado flesh out of the skin and mash it with a fork. The creaminess of the mashed avocado is often used as a spread on sandwich wraps or bread instead of mayonnaise. It is also used in place of mayonnaise in dips, dressings, and other spreads.

Avocados work well in smoothies due to their thick and creamy consistency. I like to put it in with frozen fruit for a very tasty smoothie. In a blender I put a cup of filtered water, half of an avocado that's been peeled, pitted, and chopped (make sure it's ripe), 2 cups of spinach, 2 cups of frozen fruit (I prefer pineapple), and if you want to make it sweeter, you can put in 1 or 2 tablespoons of honey. Then just blend it up and sip away at this delicious and nutritious smoothie!

Now if you prefer your avocados hot, I found this delicious avocado and tortilla soup recipe that takes less than an hour to prep and cook on *avocados central.com*:

Avocado and Tortilla Soup

½ c onion, minced
3 cloves roasted garlic
1 T olive oil

1 (15½ oz) can of tomatoes in juice, diced
3 pt chicken broth
¼ c cilantro leaves, coarsely chopped
½ t seasoned salt with red pepper
frying oil
10 corn tortillas (day old) cut in strips
2 ripe, fresh Hass avocados, peeled, seeded,
and cubed or sliced
2 c queso fresco cheese, crumbled
2 limes, quartered

Directions:

- In a skillet sauté onion and garlic in oil 1 to 2 minutes or until onion is transparent.
- Place sautéed onion and garlic mixture with tomatoes in juice in a blender and blend for 30 to 45 seconds.
- In a stockpot combine puree mixture, chicken broth, cilantro, and seasoned salt.
- Bring to a boil; reduce heat, and simmer 10 minutes longer.
- Heat ½ oz oil in a small saucepan.
- When hot, add tortilla strips a few at a time and fry, turn at least once; cook 1 to 2 minutes or until golden brown.
- Remove from oil with tongs. Drain on paper towels.
- Place equal portions of cooked tortilla strips in shallow soup bowls.
- Ladle hot soup over, garnish with avocado, cheese, and lime juice to taste.

Another amazing hot comfort food is Avocado Mac and Cheese. I found this delicious twenty five minute recipe at *twopeasandtheirpod.com*:

Avocado Mac and Cheese

10 oz dry elbow macaroni
salt for boiling macaroni
water for boiling macaroni
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 avocados, peeled and pitted
2 T fresh lime juice
⅓ c chopped fresh cilantro
2 T butter
2 T all-purpose flour
1 c milk
2 c shredded Pepper Jack cheese
salt and pepper, to taste
fresh avocado chunks, for garnish, if desired

Directions:

- Bring salted water to a boil in a large pot.
- Add macaroni. Stir and cook until al dente, about 8-10 minutes. Drain and set aside.
- While the pasta is cooking, make the avocado sauce by placing the garlic, avocados, lime juice, cilantro, salt and pepper into a food processor or blender.

Process until smooth and creamy. Set aside.

- To make the cheese sauce, place butter in a small saucepan and heat over medium heat. When butter is melted, whisk in flour to create a paste. Whisk in milk until smooth. Stir with a wooden spoon until the sauce starts to thicken. Add Pepper Jack cheese and stir until cheese is melted and sauce is creamy.
- Place macaroni in a large bowl. Pour the avocado sauce over it and stir until well coated. Add the cheese sauce and stir until macaroni is coated and creamy.
- Add salt and pepper, to taste. Serve warm. Garnish with fresh avocado chunks, if desired.

Note that the lime juice keeps the avocado from browning. The mac and cheese is best eaten the first day, but it is still good the second day. The pasta may turn slightly brown, but not bad. If you want a milder flavor, you can use Monterey Jack or White Cheddar Cheese.

Guacamole is an extremely popular way to eat avocados. It is also super healthy when made with all fresh ingredients. To make it you can just mash two ripe avocados (remove skin and pit) in a bowl and add 1 chopped ripe tomato, a small chopped onion, 1 clove of minced garlic, the juice of 1 medium sized lime and salt, pepper, and cilantro to taste.

If I'm really pressed for time, I make a super quick guacamole by mashing an avocado in a bowl and pouring in some store bought salsa from a jar to taste. Guacamole in just a few minutes!

References:

<https://www.avocadocentral.com/avocado-recipes/avocado-and-tortilla-soup>
<http://www.twopeasandtheirpod.com/stovetop-avocado-mac-and-cheese/print>

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