



Take a Cue from New York

Returning from a recent vacation, my wife Jenny and I were forced to spend six hours in the Delta terminal at JFK Airport in New York. The wait turned out to be a revelation.

Hungry and wanting to kill time, we went to eat at Chili's. Two surprises awaited us. The first was that the menu contained calorie counts for every item listed. The second came when we read the counts. The Triple Dipper appetizer alone contained 2,060 calories (approximately the number an adult should consume in a day).

Reading the menu aloud turned into a game—sort of like an auction—with each of us trying to top the other by calling out higher and higher calorie numbers. Even items that would seem relatively healthy had high counts: the grilled chicken sandwich, 1,270 calories; the smoked turkey sandwich, 1,360; and the chicken ranch sandwich, 1,580 (approximately equal in calories to six Snickers bars!).

We both quickly changed our minds from what we had planned to order and chose offerings with fewer calories. That was the idea lawmakers in New York City had in mind when last year they mandated that all chain restaurants list in their menus the calorie counts of every food item and beverage.

They were no doubt motivated by statistics like these (found on webmd.com): One in every three adults in the United States is obese. Another one in three is overweight. Obesity costs the U.S. health-care system up to \$147 billion a year: an extra \$1,429 per year for each obese person. Obesity is a leading cause of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, cancer, and strokes.

By the way, New York is only the 37th fattest state in the union. Indiana is far worse, ranking 16th. Nearly 30 percent of Hoosier children are obese or overweight.

If Bloomington is truly the most progressive community in Indiana, which I think most of us believe it to be, then here is an opportunity for us to take the lead in battling obesity. I would like to see Bloomington pass the same law as New York City. King County in Washington (which includes Seattle) has passed a similar law, and in July California became the first state to require chain restaurants to supply calorie counts for virtually everything they serve.

You might ask why just chain restaurants, why not all restaurants. Two reasons. First it would be prohibitively expensive for individual restaurants to work out the counts. And second, many restaurant chains purposely load their food with sugar, fat, and salt to make their food as addictive as possible. As Dr. David A. Kessler states in his national bestselling book *The End of Overeating* (Rodale Press), "Sugar, fat, and salt make us eat more sugar, fat, and salt." To that end, he writes, "Sugar, fat, and salt are either loaded onto a core ingredient (such as meat, vegetable, potato, or bread), layered on top of it, or both."

Mayor Mark Kruzan and city council would be doing this community a huge service by following New York's example. It would save money and lives.

A first: A Bloomingtonian, who asked to remain anonymous, sent *Bloom* a check for \$500, explaining that she had nothing to advertise but wanted to support the magazine in these tough economic times. We suggested that she pick a charity and the money would pay for an ad supporting that organization, which she did. Our heartfelt thanks.

Malcolm Abrams
editor and publisher