

## A FOOD SYMPHONY: SYNERGY OF SCIENCE AND THE SENSES

by Jackie Newgent, RD, CDN: New York, NY

**F**or this food-focused issue of *Networking News*, we're pleased to have an original contribution by Jackie Newgent. Ms. Newgent is an ADA Spokesperson, chef, nutrition communications consultant and "food composer" in New York City. She is also the communications chair and editor of *Tastings* for the Food & Culinary Professionals DPG. Our thanks to FCP and Jackie for making this article possible.

"Food, Glorious Food": one of the first songs I knew by heart. (I suppose that's typical for a caterer's child.) While food may have just been part of a catchy tune when I was a tike, today it's part of my heart-and soul.

Food has ranges much like a dynamic symphony—from crescendo to decrescendo, A flat to G and Bach to Beethoven. Imagine the concerto of flavors in food. The fine intonations of bittersweet chocolate slowly melting on the tongue; the harmony of the perfectly-ripe tomato fresh-plucked from the vine; the clang of symbols while sipping grappa; or the off-key whiff of spoiled milk. Food, in all its glory, is not just simply sustenance.

But, while most dietitians have a tremendous respect for food, it's often discussed as a science, not a symphony. With its many interpretations, what do we all agree on about food?

"Food", according to Merriam-Webster, is merely a noun. That's about the beginning and end of the agreement about "food". It has quite intriguing roots, dating back before the 12th century. "Food" is derived from the Middle English *fode*, the Old

English *foda* and analogous to the Old High German *fuotar*. And that's just part of its heritage.

Ask a dietitian for the definition of "food" and you might be offered this explanation: "A material consisting essentially of protein, carbohydrate and fat used in the body of an organism to sustain growth, repair vital processes and to furnish energy." That's pretty good, considering that's also Merriam-Webster's definition! But, ask a chef for the definition and you'll no doubt hear an entirely different response. In fact, you'll likely receive a unique definition from every chef. This is where that symphony comes back into play.

While chefs and dietitians may often march to the beats of different drummers, this apparent clash is actually where harmony can happen. This melodious collaboration—it's synergy!

### **The synergy of science and the senses**

Synergy is all about working together. The teaming of dietitians and chefs results in a dazzling duet instead of a straightforward solo. Synergy can also occur as dietitians broaden and hone their own skills, shifting from nutrition educators to food and nutrition educators. The choice on whether to educate yourself about culinary matters is up to you. I became a chef and am also a dietitian, but that's just one way to do it.

With your newfound skills, your food and nutrition lessons might then become food synergy lessons. Food synergy, in this case, refers to the

marriage of the scientific and the sensory aspects of food, where the combination is greater than the sum of its parts. Just like the union of marriage-or at least a storybook one!

To help build this type of synergy into your own teachings, expanding your definition of food is an ideal starting point. Think for a moment; how else (aside from scientifically) might you define food?

Amplifying your understanding of the sensory features of food might be your next step. To help you recognize these sensory aspects, peruse through the following chart. It'll help you begin finding synchronization with the science and the senses-and then put it into practice.

*Continued on page 2*

## INSIDE

Message from the Chair.....	2
Food Symphony: Synergy of science and the senses.....	3
Research Reviews .....	4
Food Synergy: Looking at the "Whole" Picture .....	4
Focus on Resources .....	5
Legislative Update.....	6
Recipes.....	7
Calendar of Events .....	8

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## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Maureen Callahan, MS, RD: Arvada, CO

Hello fellow NEP members. I hope that your summer is off to a good start! I know I'm knee-deep in plans for some much needed rest and relaxation after a busy year as food editor for Health magazine, Chair of NEP, and numerous other freelance projects. But as my tenure as Chair winds down, I want to take the time to thank the many volunteers who have made this year a successful one.

To start, I'd like to bestow thanks to members of the NEP executive committee, those core volunteers who keep our group running like a well-oiled machine. Thanks to Laura Graney, an extremely efficient budget manager. She has the number crunching down to a science. And thanks to new mom Autumn Marshall for keeping the minutes of meetings and for just volunteering to do a whole bunch of things that aren't even related to the job title of secretary. Thanks also to Michele Clancy for her marketing and fund raising expertise, to Barbara Gordon for her thorough management of the Speaker Grant awards, to Kate Ingram for being at the ready to create new PR materials, to Jane Cohen who continues to keep the executive board in touch through an electronic list serve, to Jenni Eich for managing our website, and to Research Chair Tanya Horacek for shepherding our yearly CPE article through a long and involved review process.

Welcome and thanks to Barbara Ann Hughes, our new Legislative Chair. Thanks to Evelyn Crayton for extending a welcome to new members and to our Bylaws Chair Miriam Curry for her tenacity in reviewing and updating the NEP policies and procedures manual. Thank you, too, to Toni Kuehneman and the Nominating Committee for bringing

us a great slate of candidates. We appreciate all your efforts Toni. And a well-deserved round of thanks to our hardworking newsletter editors Kitty Broihier and Maureen Ternus, as well as all of our members who write for the newsletter, for providing a top-notch product that continues to be one of our highest rated member benefits.

And finally thanks to the two people I contact the most regarding NEP business, Susan DuPraw, our ADA practice team manager and a virtual walking encyclopedia of information about everything from budgets to procedures, and Sharon Piano, incoming Chair. Sharon has been a member of NEP since joining ADA and has lots of wonderful ideas about how to move our group forward. Thanks again for the opportunity to serve as Chair of NEP and join me in welcoming Sharon Piano as our new Chair. I know it's going to be another exciting year for nutrition educators!

### A Food Symphony: Synergy of science and the senses

*Continued from page 1*

Whether they're as sweet as lullabies, as intense as operas or as fiery as raps, turn your food and nutrition lessons into food synergy symphonies. No longer just a nutrition educator, you'll be a food composer!

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*Continued on page 3*

