

# WN Update

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*Brazilian dietary guidelines*

**At last! A national guide based on meals!**



*In front above are Carlos Monteiro with Patricia Jaime of Brazil's Ministry of Health, colleagues from the Pan American Health Organization, and the teams that drafted and advised on the Guia*

***Jean-Claude Moubarac reports:***

The new official national Brazilian guidelines are now in their final stage of public consultation. Commissioned by the federal Ministry of Health, they have been drafted by a team at the University of São Paulo led by Carlos Monteiro. In the

picture above taken outside the USP School of Public Health, he is in the front row, together with Patricia Jaime of the Ministry of Health, and also colleagues from the Pan American Health Organization. In the picture also are members of the team responsible for drafting the report, and professionals from throughout Brazil who have been part of the consultative process. I have been proud to be a team member during my time at USP and yes, I am in the picture – back row, second from right.

I am now back in my home land of Canada, and here, with a few edits, is the piece I wrote on the guidelines for the [fabulously successful website](#) of Canadian physician, obesity expert and public health activist Yoni Freedhoff, who introduces what I wrote as follows:

A few weeks ago Brazil announced the launch of their new national dietary guidelines. Unlike those from North America, Brazil's focuses on the real issue at hand - we've stopped cooking. At least half of our average food dollar is now being spent on foods purchased outside the home and of the foods we bring in, the amount of processed foods have doubled since just the 1980s.

So how did Brazil do it? How did Brazil, rather than join North America in issuing a misguided, nutrient focused, and food industry friendly dietary guideline, put out an actually useful and thoughtful food guide? Here to explain is Jean-Claude Moubarac who himself was involved in Brazil's guidelines' creation.

So here below is what I wrote, primarily for a North American readership. But Yoni Freedhoff's blogs are read all round the world, and I hope what follows works for WN [Ed: Yes it does, and many thanks Jean-Claude!]

### ***A focus on food and the enjoyment of meals***

On 10 February the federal Ministry of Health of Brazil issued the final draft of a new guide not only to food and nutrition, but also to the enjoyment of healthy meals. The guide has been approved at this stage by the Minister of Health. [It is now out for public consultation.](#)

Announcing the guide on her blog with its 112,000 followers, *Food Politics* author and New York University professor Marion Nestle says: 'Now if only our Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee would take note and do the same. Would you like us to have sensible, unambiguous food-based guidelines like these?'

The guide is designed to prevent and protect against all forms of malnutrition. These include undernutrition, already in sharp decline in Brazil. Its main focus is the same as any guide issued in North America, to prevent and control overweight and obesity, and chronic diseases such as diabetes, all now sharply increasing in Latin America.

This Brazilian guide goes further. It is not just concerned with avoiding obesity and disease. It is also designed to encourage positive good health and well-being among

all Brazilians. It takes into account the latest scientific evidence. It is written in a style attractive to everybody interested in their own health and that of their family and community. It is also designed for use by policy-makers, educators, and all those responsible for food supplies. And as another innovation, it takes as a starting point, what the Brazilian people from all social classes actually eat every day.

All the advice in the guide has been summed up in three 'golden rules'. These are universal. Everybody in the world will benefit from following them:

- Make fresh and minimally processed foods the basis of your diet
- Use oils, fats, sugar and salt in moderation when preparing dishes and meals
- Limit consumption of ready-to eat food and drink products.

Most countries are now faced with rapidly rising rates of obesity and related chronic diseases. The Brazilian guide is a whole new look at food and nutrition. It takes a broad and comprehensive view of health, including the social, cultural, economic and environmental dimensions of food systems and supplies and so of dietary patterns. In particular it examines the central role of different types of processing on the quality of diets.

Patricia Jaime, Ministry of Health coordinator of Food and Nutrition, the pivotal point of contact in Brazil for the guide, makes a statement that resonates in other countries and all over the world. She says:

We need to protect and preserve the Brazilian tradition of enjoyment of meals as a central part of family, social and workplace life. The planning of meals, exchange of recipes with friends, and involvement of the whole family in preparing food to enjoy together, are all part of a healthy life.

Of course it is true that making meals at home takes time. But this is time we can share with our loved ones, including children. Freshly prepared meals are still cheaper than ready-to-consume snack and drink products. Also, protecting personal and family good health and well-being will save time and money spent on health care.

Public health and nutrition professionals in Canada agree that new ways of thinking are needed to face and deal with the obesity and diabetes crises. Our food system is saturated with ready-to-consume ultra-processed food products that are intrinsically unhealthy. We often hear that today people have little or no time to cook 'real' food and to share meals. Maybe this is true. Or maybe it's a question of what we most value in life and to what we choose to give the highest priorities. So here is a whole new idea. Maybe our inspiration to appreciate the value of freshly prepared meals will come from Brazil, and the global South.

*Moubarac J-C. Brazilian dietary guidelines. At last! A national guide based on meals!*  
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