

Nutrition and cost analysis for menus available online

A world-first online recipe development site that allows users to analyse the nutritional value of meals could change the way in which menus and meals are developed and presented.

www.myrecipes.co.nz
MyRecipes was developed by Auckland-based menu consultancy company, Menu Du Jour, in conjunction with Dunedin-based dietitian Amber Strong. The site offers users such as chefs, dietitians and nutritionists, a safe and secure environment within which they can enter recipe ingredients by the smallest measurement whilst tracking ingredient costs, produce availability and nutritional value.

MyRecipes also features a unique Menu Guide labeling system which assigns meals special criteria like low sugar, gluten free, dairy free, organic and kosher. These labels can then be incorporated into both menu and recipe cards to be used by both the kitchen and front of house staff.

Strong, who is currently studying towards her Masters Degree in Nutrition at Otago University, believes food outlets and food providers will one day be required to



■ Owner of Menu du Jour, Gavin Lovett

provide more nutritional information on menus - particularly with the current focus on health issues such as obesity and diabetes.

"Currently the American Congress is considering whether or not to adopt the Menu Education and Labeling Act which would require menus to list calories, fat, carbo-hydrates and sodium levels," she says. "The aim is to curb the rising cost of obesity in the States which is estimated to be US\$117 billion in health care and related costs each year. A third of Americans aged 20 plus are

obese while 15 per cent of children aged six to 19 are overweight and unfortunately, a similar trend is occurring in New Zealand."

The Americans have identified restaurants as playing a crucial role in food education given they are dining out twice as much as they were in 1970 when going out to dinner was considered a 'treat'.

"What we eat plays a direct role in overall well-being," says Strong, "and I am finding an increasing number of people are struggling with restaurant menus, or finding food at the supermarket, that meets their dietary requirements."

"MyRecipes is a great tool for those working in the area of menu and recipe development as it not only allows them to cost entire menus in a few hours, it also allows them to easily develop menus that meet a wide range of dietary needs."

Strong specialises in addressing nutrition issues for corporate and non-corporate groups as well as the food industry. She has a particular interest in allergy, intolerance, nutrition and diabetes.