



# Best food news of '08

by Joanna Prisco

Americans are more interested than ever in making sure that what we're eating is healthy—for our bodies and the environment. This year, new government regulations and innovative products gave consumers greater control over their food choices. Here are some of the breakthroughs of the year.



## Calories Go Public (No More Excuses!)

Restaurant-goers in California may have noticed that menus feature a lot more numbers these days—and we're not talking about higher prices. This year, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed a law that made California the first state to require chain restaurants with more than 20 locations within its borders to post calorie content on menu items. The legislation will affect more than 17,000 establishments by the year 2011. A similar

law was enacted earlier in New York City, and other cities and states around the country may soon adopt similar measures to fight the nation's obesity problem. As a result, American diners can look forward to making more-informed menu choices—once they get over the shock of seeing “450 calories” next to that favorite muffin.



<b>Nutrition Facts</b>	
Serving Size 1 sandwich	
Amount Per Serving	
Total Fat	15%
Total Carb	10%
Total Protein	10%
Actual values may vary. See the back of the package.	

## Where's the Beef...From?

Americans shopping for meat, produce, and some nuts will now be able to know where those items originated. That's because the Agriculture Department is requiring groceries and other retailers to display country-of-origin labeling

(COOL, for short) on these products—an expansion of regulations that went into effect in 2005, beginning with seafood. Consumers now will be able to know if that skirt steak came from Colorado or outside the U.S. With recent health

scares traced to Chinese imports and a growing concern for food safety, this is definitely a cool thing. Some products still are exempt, but if you don't see labels prominently displayed in your grocer's case, speak up.

**COOL labels give food origins**

## Look for the Secret Ingredient



Fortified foods have been around since the 1940s. But recently there has been an explosion of pumped-up products claiming health benefits from ingredients derived from another food.

Some of the resulting combinations are fairly quirky: We now have orange juice infused with omega-3s that came from ground-up anchovies and sardines. Enhanced peanut butter discreetly packs in powdered broccoli, beets, and bananas, while a new iced-coffee drink is laced with pomegranate extract to promote antioxidants. But, thankfully, these guest ingredients remain indistinguishable to the palate. So, basically, you can have your juice and drink it, too.



## Phone For Fish

Spurging on seafood tonight? Don't forget your cellphone. Technology is making it easier to eat your favorite fish eco-consciously. If you text to 30644 with the message FISH and the name of the fish you are considering having (for example, FISH SEA BASS), the Blue Ocean Institute, a nonprofit marine conservation organization, will text you back immediately with any significant environmental concerns about

the fish in question. A red flag is given to any species that is overfished or that contains high levels of mercury, PCBs, or pesticides. Should that be the case with your choice, a better, green-flagged alternative will be suggested.

**Use your cellphone to find an eco-safe fish**

The Blue Ocean Institute currently tracks more than 90 marine species, including oysters and other shellfish, and it is constantly updating its database. A new sushi guide also is available online to download. How's that for a guilt-free sole? Visit [www.blueocean.org](http://www.blueocean.org) for more information.