

THE GRAPEVINE

Summer | Fall
2024

Newsletter

Issue 37



Teachers College Program in Nutrition

Find out what's *fresh off the vine*

CONGRATULATIONS to all those completing
their MS-RDN requirements this summer!

LETTER FROM THE *Editors*



Dear Students, Faculty, Alumni, and Staff,

Welcome to the Grapevine's Summer Issue! As our final semester as Grapevine co-editors comes to a close, we feel eternally grateful for the professors, classmates and community that has supported us through the past few years. We are excited to welcome Tyra Vanriel and Sarde Gumalo as incoming co-editors, and look forward to seeing the Grapevine thrive under their leadership!

In this issue, Christy, Tyra, Shirley, and Ziyang join us to reflect on their internship experiences during years 1 and 2 of the program.

Students have also been engaged in a variety of endeavors. Jay highlights the TC CQI fair, while Sally Liu discusses her visit to the UN with Alison. In addition, Alison shares about her visit to The Museum of Food and Drink and Sophie discusses her thoughts on food critic Pete Wells' retirement due to food-related chronic diseases.

Thank you all for the opportunity to serve as your Grapevine Co-Editors! We can't wait to see what the future holds for our cohort!

Signing off,



Jay Gendron
CO-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Alison Garbarini
CO-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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INTRODUCING...

THE INCOMING GRAPEVINE CO-EDITORS

Tyra Vanriel & Sarde Gumalo



Tyra Vanriel is a second-year student in the MS-RDN program in Nutrition Education. She earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Nutritional Sciences with a DPD concentration and a minor in Biological Sciences at the University of Connecticut in Storrs. She enjoys traveling, reading, walking in the park, and spending time by the water. Tyra is a strong advocate for increasing diversity in dietetics and medicine.

Tyra also works as a student ambassador for the Office of Admissions and has written informational blogs and filmed reels for prospective and admitted students. She is very excited to apply her skills and knowledge as the new co-editor for the Grapevine.



Sarde Gumalo is a second-year student in the MS-RDN program for Nutrition Education. She went to Montclair State University for her BS in Applied Nutrition with a minor in Public Health. Before TC, Sarde partnered with several organizations to provide cooking and gardening education and maintained urban agriculture spaces throughout NYC. Apart from her passion for food, Sarde has always loved writing and is thrilled to be a new co-editor for the Grapevine.

In her free time, Sarde enjoys watching cooking videos, learning about other cultures, snowboarding, working out, and singing. She has interests in recipe development, community work, and cultural advocacy within nutrition.



The Hidden Health Costs of a Career in Food: Reflections from a Restaurant Critic

By Sophie Noel

Pete Wells, the restaurant critic at the New York Times for over a decade, may only be a household name to some. Prior to my time at TC I was a communications professional for restaurants in the greater NYC area, and my team and I were always on high alert when he came to review our clients' food. We meticulously prepared for a visit that could either catapult us to success or spell disaster. His work guided diners and shaped the industry, making him a pivotal figure in our field. Now, with years removed from working in Wells' industry and a new acronym to my name, his writing remains relevant to my career—this time, focusing on his health and how his nutritional patterns and demands of the job have contributed to his health's decline.

On a more personal level, I grew up in a family deeply immersed in the food and wine industry. Famously, my dad would say the best job in the field was to be a food critic: "They pay you to eat the best food in the world!" he'd proclaim enthusiastically, perhaps secretly hoping my brother or I would find our way into this profession, and definitely not anticipating that I would become instead a dietitian, basically the antithesis of his profession. At the time, it was clear that he didn't realize the harsh realities and health detriments of critiquing restaurants at this level, and as Wells confirms in his sign-off letter, neither do most readers of the NY Times Food Section.

Wells discusses the irony of complaining about a job that "sounds suspiciously like what people do on vacation." And it's true, most of us, including my dad it seems, have viewed restaurant critiquing as a dream job. As a graduate of the Program in Nutrition, this job, as coveted as it may be, sounds like a death sentence. And according to Wells, it has been for many of his peers.

Wells openly discusses his health issues, including "technical obesity," food addiction, and the sudden death of his peers. Without naming it, he describes his battle with acid reflux, likening it to "insides burning like a fire at a chemical refinery," and mentions suffering from gout. These descriptions paint a grim picture of how this lifestyle can affect one's health. While many might be quick to criticize Wells for complaining about a career of culinary delights, I thought I would take a deep dive into some of the health concerns he cites with and the science behind them.

"Technical obesity" is a term used by Wells to refer to a slew of conditions related to metabolic syndrome, such as poor cholesterol levels, high blood sugar levels, and hypertension. He describes the daunting experience of hearing terms like pre-diabetes and fatty liver disease so casually thrown around at the doctor's office. These conditions carry significant health risks, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and liver cancer. Are these really the effects of eating out regularly?

It turns out that researchers at Johns Hopkins University have found that people who cook at home consume 12% less sugar, 6% fewer calories, and 6% less fat (1). Fruit and vegetable consumption decreases when dining out, while sodium levels increase according to a study in the Journal of Nutrition (2).

It is easy to assume that fast-food restaurants are the main culprits of these metabolic conditions, not the Michelin-star restaurants frequented by Wells. However, full-service restaurants are also to blame and often get a free pass. One study analyzed dietary recall data and concluded that eating at full-service restaurants is just as unhealthy as eating at fast-food restaurants. Both types of establishments were associated with a daily increase in calories, saturated fat, and sodium. Eating at full-service restaurants was linked to an extra 187 calories per day, compared to eating at fast-food establishments, which contributes an extra 190 calories per day. Interestingly, full-service restaurants added an extra 412 mg of sodium, 58 mg of cholesterol, and 10g of fat to one's daily diet. Tufts University determined that about 50 percent of full-service restaurants served meals of poor nutritional quality (3).

Excess sodium consumption plagues Americans and is mainly a result of prepared meals – both from restaurants or pre-packaged. Salt encourages your body to retain fluid, which can increase the fluid volume of your blood and raise blood pressure, and this leads to a host of issues, such as

hypertension and cardiovascular diseases (4). Similarly, excessive saturated fat and cholesterol consumption leads to weight gain, high cholesterol levels, and fatty liver disease. Wells was not exaggerating when describing the detrimental health effects of trying 36 different plates at a sitting, multiple times per week.

Wells mentions food addiction, a concept we've discussed in classes such as Food and Nutrition Behavior. Can food actually be addictive? How can we be addicted to something we need to survive? Wells describes this physiological battle, supported by scientific evidence that sugar can trigger an addictive response in the brain similar to drugs. Studies suggest that foods high in fats and/or refined carbohydrates, such as sugar, are commonly associated with addictive symptoms. Studies have also found that exposure to highly palatable food in an intermittent eating pattern caused increased activation of dopamine (5). It's no wonder Wells struggled so much to reduce his food consumption when he was confronted with high-fat and carbohydrate-rich foods daily for 12 years.

Finally, Wells indirectly brings up intuitive eating when discussing his post-surgery experience. According to Elyse Resch and Evelyn Tribole, pioneers of the movement, intuitive eating is when you tune into the intuition that governed eating as a toddler. Normally, intuitive eating conjures associations with diet culture and a philosophy adopted to lose weight. In reality, it is about

strengthening your relationship with food and listening to what, when, and why you want to eat. It can include “feeling your fullness (and pausing mid-meal to assess it)” and “savoring, even seeking pleasure from, food” (6). This is a practice Wells recognizes he has had to completely ignore due to the demands of the job, a comped reservation, a tight deadline, or group dining etiquette. Wells first acknowledges this moment of eating intuitively when he describes his lack of hunger the day following an operation and how he listens to his desire to eat soup and salad, and nothing more. Shifting away from his typical diet for just two short weeks provided him with the luxuries of sleeping through the night and more energy throughout the day. It seems that Wells’ intuition had told him more than just what he wants (or doesn’t want) to eat.

While this is certainly not a call to stop dining out or to stop enjoying meals out with family and friends, it is an exercise in thinking about how the food industry and nutrition are integrated beyond the obvious. This unique connection between my past and current professional life was interesting to explore, and as someone who once anticipated Wells’ reviews, I am curious to read what he writes about next. Take this as a gentle reminder to keep paying attention to what we are eating, how we are eating, and why we are eating, regardless of how many Michelin stars a restaurant may have.

We Recommend Reading the NYT Article

Referenced! Find it here:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/16/dining/pete-wells-steps-down-food-critic.html>

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CQI FAIR AND GRADUATION CELEBRATION 2024

By Jay Gendron

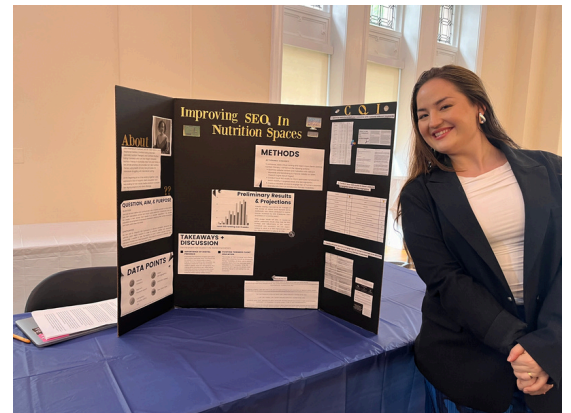
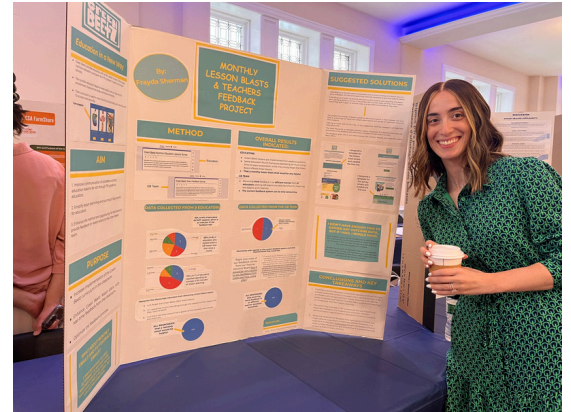
During the summer semester, graduating second years were tasked with designing and implementing a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) project at a chosen internship site. We began looking for our CQI project topics when we began internships, and asked preceptors if they had projects we could complete that would improve operations at the site.

At the fair, students, professors, and TC community members came together to discuss the CQI projects and enjoy one another's company. Second year students shared their experiences with each other. First year students got a glimpse into their future and inspiration for their CQI projects!

For example, I was able to design a complete run of show to streamline my site's in-school event operations. Alison incorporated DESIGN principles into lesson planning at her site, Freyda strategized to improve client communications, and Anneka helped to implement search engine optimization (SEO) for her site.

After the fair, second year students and faculty had the chance to share memories about the program over a meal! The celebration continued as faculty members shared advice and good wishes for the graduates.

I certainly enjoyed the experience, and was grateful for the opportunity to hear faculty advice and catch up with classmates!



Addressing Global Food Insecurity: Students' Perspectives on Reinforcing Collective Impact

By Sally Liu & Alison Garbarini

Throughout our coursework, we have discussed the importance of food security, sustainability, and early childhood nutrition. While we have learned about these topics in great detail during class, we recently had the opportunity to consider these issues in the context of current affairs at the event:

“Addressing Global Food Insecurity and Famine Risk: Reinforcing Collective Impact.”

This event was a round table policy dialogue co-organized by the Permanent Missions to the United Nations (UN) of Italy, Brazil, the Republic of Uganda, the Delegation of the European Union, the Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the World Food Program (WFP). We obtained special student tickets (through the weekly nutrition update) to observe the proceedings at the UN Headquarters.

The main objectives of this event were to foster a common understanding of the drivers of global food insecurity, promote policy solutions to collectively address food crises, and build upon existing political commitments to promote member state engagement in these processes. As student observers, this provided us with an informed perspective and allowed us the opportunity to reflect on our learnings thus far in the nutrition program.

Alison: While combating world hunger and famine are often discussed, many of the proposed solutions are focused on treating the outcomes, rather than



Alison, Catalina, & Sally at the UN Headquarters

the root causes. Therefore, I appreciated that the organizers of this event spent significant time naming the drivers of food crises, many of which are man-made. Conflict has been the primary driver of food crises since 2018, followed by extreme weather events and economic shocks.

Dennis Francis, president of the UN General Assembly, spoke first about fighting hunger in the context of recent events. He called for increased funding for emergency food operations, as well as safe and unhindered access to humanitarian aid. He noted that international cooperation was needed to break the cycle of food insecurity, and said we must focus on peace, climate resilience, and economics.

It was interesting to hear about different approaches suggested by various countries and organizations to help fight hunger. Sweden emphasized a peace nexus

Addressing Global Food Insecurity (continued):

approach, and moving from a response mindset to a resilience mindset. The Czech Republic advocated for local and regional solutions to enhance efficacy. Senegal suggested assurance for small holder farmers and attempting a cash transfer program in an international setting. Ukraine highlighted their efforts to continue to contribute their support to those in need—despite facing challenging times of their own. I was impressed to learn that they had recently sent 8 vessels of grain to countries facing acute hunger. UNICEF emphasized the need for a wider political peace building process to mitigate famine. The floor discussions concurred that continued hunger fuels further violence and conflict.

Hearing the delegates' perspectives on how to approach food crises reminded me of a recent guest speaker for our Community Nutrition Practicum course. Paul Skoczylas, a Deputy Director from the WFP, discussed with our class his work in Lebanon, Syria, Israel, and Rwanda. He emphasized that the Programme was committed to improving food security not only through cash assistance and special nutrition bars for children—but especially through community-driven solutions. When the WFP engaged directly with individuals facing hunger, they empowered communities to brainstorm solutions that were applicable to their specific needs and sustainable for future generations.

I was impressed to learn about the holistic approaches towards fighting hunger taken by the WFP, as well as those discussed by each country at the UNGA. As we learned in Nutrition Ecology, all too often we jump into new interventions,

technologies, and government policies without full consideration for the future consequences. By viewing issues through a more comprehensive lens, and meeting people where they are at, we can invest in strategies that are beneficial for all people (and the planet) in the long-term. This is an approach that I hope to integrate into my own work as a future dietitian as well.



The UNGA discusses famine and food insecurity

Sally: From this event, I learned that economic shocks and climate extremes have limited the accessibility of food. Nutrition has a huge impact on the economic system, national security, sustainability in climate change, and many more areas. Because these issues are so interconnected, it is important to take an approach that allows us to solve these issues coming from different categories together.

The drivers of food crises remind me of what I learned in the Nutrition and Human Development course: the importance of good nutrition during the first 1000 days. The “1000 days” refers to the time

Addressing Global Food Insecurity (continued):

between a woman's pregnancy and a child's 2nd birthday. Good nutrition is essential for the first 1000 days, as this is an important time for brain development and eating behavior formation. However, there is very limited information and support in the public to reiterate the importance of nutrition during the 1000 days. As a result, many people are failing to meet essential nutritional goals during this period. Geopolitical tensions have intensified structural issues rooted in the food system. The rise of acute food insecurity has prevented children's ability to go to school.

During the panel, UNICEF noted that children are disproportionately impacted by hunger. Children who face severe wasting have an increased risk of physical and cognitive development issues. UNICEF stated that in recent months, there has been an unprecedented increase in childhood wasting. They believe that urgent action is needed to make sure children across the world are able to get nutrition supplies, immunizations, clean water, and early detection for severe wasting.

Although there are nutrition programs that aim to raise food accessibility and affordability, malnutrition is still a common problem around the world. As poverty has expanded, hunger and food insecurity have also magnified. According to Hedda Samson (Delegation of the EU to the UN), there is a need for concerted action. Despite increasing needs, funding to fight world hunger is decreasing. We must consider the role of international financial institutions and look at providing food assistance more efficiently and with limited resources.

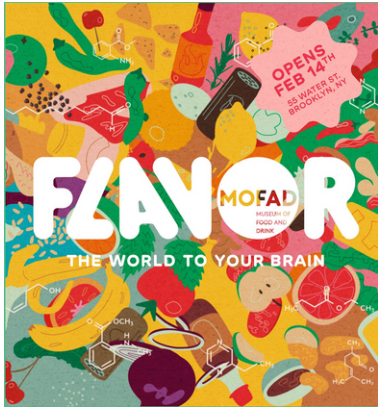


TC students explore the UN Headquarters

In addition, more coordinated diplomacy is needed to prevent conflict, as well as unhindered humanitarian access. Finally, we must address the root causes of food insecurity by building resilient food systems, making the humanitarian peace nexus a reality, and creating a global network to promote food security.

Understanding food crises is not an easy task, because the interconnected components form a complicated relationship. However, discussing the problems helps to identify the most influential outcomes and make it less paralyzing. I appreciated the opportunity to listen to each speaker's plans and thoughts during this event. I believe their immediate actions can help their local communities and reverse the burning threat of hunger. Overall, this event gave me hope that a sustainable and healthy food system is possible if we are willing to work together!





Investigating Food & Behavior in Brooklyn

By Alison Garbarini

Inspired by Dr. Pam Koch's course in Food, Nutrition and Behavior, former Grapevine co-editor Thu Thu May Oo and I paid a visit to the Museum of Food and Drink (MOFAD) in Brooklyn, NY. We toured the new exhibit, *Flavor: The World To Your Brain*, which was created by food scientists and culinary anthropologists.

This small exhibit provided a largely interactive sensory experience. We reviewed how the 5 senses work together to create flavor, and why our sense of smell is especially important. We also used the "Smell Synthesizer," which allowed us to combine scents like lavender, almond, hazelnut and more to create new aromas.



Thu Thu testing out the "Smell Synthesizer"

However, our favorite part of the exhibit was the "Brainwave Bloom," in which you wore a headset to measure the activity of different brainwaves. Candy is provided, so you can visually see the impact of food on your brain.

Thu Thu and I decided to measure our brainwaves before and after eating a piece of chocolate. Before eating chocolate, my alpha waves had the highest activity, meaning my brain was in a calm state. However, after trying the chocolate, the activity of these waves decreased, while activity increased for my beta, gamma, and theta waves. Theta waves are associated with deep relaxation and memory, while beta and gamma waves mean your brain is engaged and processing information.

With all we have learned about our body's response to ultra-processed foods, I would be curious to return to MOFAD and see how my brainwaves respond to eating whole foods. I look forward to more research in this area in the future!



Alison's post-chocolate brain waves

STUDENT INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCES:

“As the lead instructor, I developed and delivered a ten-week, hands-on nutrition curriculum for 2nd and 3rd graders, focusing on nutrition education and food equity. This experience significantly contributed to my growth as a future dietitian, emphasizing the critical responsibility of communities in providing a healthy and equitable food environment. It also reinforced my obligation to empower individuals in making informed, healthy lifestyle choices. Additionally, it highlighted the dedication and selflessness of those in the non-profit sector, such as Nancie Katz – the organizer for Seeds in the Middle, who tirelessly advocate for essential social change despite the challenges they face on a regular basis.”

Christy Daughterty

SEEDS IN THE MIDDLE (PS 289)



Shirley Song

NYC MAYOR'S OFFICE TO END DOMESTIC & GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

“My experience offered deep insights into working with populations facing food insecurity and resource challenges. I was responsible for creating an event focused on the connection between mental health and nutrition, addressing the unique needs of individuals already dealing with the burdens of domestic violence.”

My favorite aspect of this experience was organizing the event and providing valuable resources, which deepened my understanding of the community and the complexities of delivering nutrition education in the context of food insecurity. It was an eye-opening experience that underscored the importance of tailored support in these settings and meeting individuals where they are at.”



Tyra Vanriel

HUNGER FREE AMERICA- NUTRITION EDUCATION GROUP

“My internship allowed me to understand the background research required for policy initiatives. Our research write-up took into account the most current eating patterns and food trends in the U.S., which we discussed during our biweekly meetings with the HFA team. I was able to attend the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health

Monthly meeting as a part of this internship, which was a fascinating experience. HFA intends to use the research my group reviewed for a state-level policy framework to provide realistic solutions to combat hunger in America.”

“I had the opportunity to participate in a week of staff relief, during which I saw patients independently and completed their clinical notes. I was responsible for 4-6 patients each day. This was my favorite experience, as it greatly enhanced my skills and prepared me for future work.”

Ziying Zhang

MOUNT SINAI INPATIENT



Whether you are an avid writer or new to writing, this is a great opportunity to experiment, learn, and get involved. Let us know what you are interested in and we'll help you to turn your idea into a story.

Email us at grapevineditor@gmail.com to get involved!

Join the Grapevine!