Mary T's: A Restaurant Providing Healthy Food Options

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MARY T'S: A RESTAURANT PROVIDING HEALTHY FOOD OPTIONS

BY

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Food plays a central role in my life. I love, and I have always loved, food. From a young age I enjoyed not only eating it, but cooking it as well. When I was allowed to use the kitchen, I would actually set up the counter to mimic those seen on the television cooking programs: I would have all of the ingredients out, with all of my equipment, and would talk my way through baking cookies to the “at home audience.” Then, I would serve the food to “patrons” of “Mom’s Kitchen.” I used to pretend that I owned my own restaurant and would serve my sisters and neighbors. I liked to make breakfast, lunch, dinner, and dessert. My mother thought I was nuts. I was just combining my two passions: acting and food.

My love of food goes further than just preparing and baking. I do not think that a day passes when I do not consider what, how much, and where I will eat. I am not particularly picky about what I eat, either: I eat a balanced diet, for the most part, of fruits, vegetables, dairy, protein, and of course, chocolate. I am a connoisseur of all types of foods.

I also come from a family that enjoys food. I am of Eastern European descent, so I was raised to enjoy foods that are full of butter and grease: pieroge, kielbasa, and namely any food that requires at least a pound of butter to cook. My family celebrates with food; food plays an important role in holidays and family celebrations. We have a specific menu for Christmas and Easter, and plan specific menus for all of the holidays throughout the calendar year. There is always a barbecue for Memorial Day, Independence Day, and Labor Day, in addition to Thanksgiving, birthdays, and anniversaries. Certainly, most families of any ethnocentricity can relate.
The fat and the butter were bound to catch up with me at some point. I have never thought of myself as a particularly thin person; while tall, I have what most people would refer to as “meat on my bones.” As a result, from the age of 12, I have tried to improve the shape of my body. From a young age I can remember ordering magic products from the teen magazines that promised quick and permanent weight loss, only to be misguided and disappointed at the results. By the time I reached college, I basked in the freedom of creating my own meals and forgot about the weight loss. My university’s cafeteria offered fast food restaurants for a balanced diet: KFC, Taco Bell, Carvel, Nathan’s, and Pizza Hut. Being a lover of food, I thoroughly enjoyed the menu. My friends and I would spend hours in the cafeteria eating, talking, and eating some more. I found other people who enjoyed eating almost as much as I did, encouraging the habit of eating out of necessity yet also for social reasons.

As one might expect, this diet of fast food quickly caught up with me, and I realized that a permanent change in my eating habits was required. At the end of my sophomore year in college in 2000, I decided to join Weight Watchers. With the support of my mother and sister who joined with me, I enjoyed the “game” of counting POINTS and designing my own menu. I was quite successful at the program, losing 27 pounds in six months and becoming what is referred to as a “Lifetime Member.” As long as I stayed within two pounds of my goal weight, I could enjoy the support of meetings and continue to monitor my weight for free.

By the end of my junior year, I became more lax with my eating; my portions became larger and my meals more frequent. It was just too tempting to be at a school where the staples included hamburgers, pizza, and ice cream. I longed for a more structured environment where the menu told me exactly what I could and could not eat. Moreover, I would have valued some basic nutritional value as a side dish instead of mashed potatoes. Instead, I tried to factor fried
chicken and biscuits into my daily allotment of POINTS. I was destined to put on weight with my food options.

I kept returning to Weight Watchers to try to keep on track. I was never as successful as the first time that I joined; I already knew how to "beat" the system and fudge my way around the POINTS. Any experienced dieter, however, will tell you that in order to keep the weight off, you must adopt the eating habits for the long term. Something in me just could not accept that a bowl of ice cream a night was not going to help me in my quest to keep off the weight.

I am still a Weight Watchers member, returning for the sixth time to lose the weight for my upcoming wedding. There is something quite attractive about having the support and help of other people who struggle with the same food issues. I am no longer in college and surrounded by the temptations of fast food in the cafeteria; instead, I am tempted by fast food as I drive to and from work, in a fast paced and very busy lifestyle. Who has time to concoct healthy meals when every minute of the day is spoken for, between commuting, working, and household duties? I always wished that when I went out to eat someone would just say, "Here is what you should have for dinner. It is eight POINTS, and covers your main food groups." Like many, I would prefer an easier way.

However, this idea has stayed with me for several years. Wouldn't it be nice to go to a diner and have the menu tell you the nutritional value of the meals? In the case of Weight Watchers, a member of the program would still have the option of eating whatever foods fall within their POINTS range, but the hard work of determining the POINTS would be significantly easier. The menu would tell you the grams of fiber, calories, and fat grams in one serving. I want to go to a restaurant, like one of my survey respondents mentioned, and not consider boxing half of my dinner before I even eat it because the portion is double the normal
size. I want to patronize an eating establishment that offers healthy foods, including fresh fruits and vegetables, that are not dripping in butter.

“A staggering 65% of Americans are overweight” is an alarming statistic published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2002. They have labeled obesity an epidemic (Brownell, 3). The report goes on to say that the increase in overweight children is twice that seen in adults. Recently, the United States Senate passed a bill authorizing $60 million toward a pilot project that would educate children and teenagers about good nutrition as a way of fighting the national childhood obesity epidemic (“US Senate allots,” 2003).

The society in which we live is conducive to eating foods that are readily available to consumers. The fast-paced, never-a-spare-moment reality that many of us face does not allow cooking a meal and eating it as a family. Rather, consumers turn to take out and fast food meals. According to an article in Shopping For Health 2003 as reported in an article by Kevin Coupe, 50% of consumers complain that fast-food is “not at all” healthful, yet 70% still buy prepared foods. Working women (33%) and younger shoppers more frequently cited time constraints as a reason for not eating more nutritious meals. Further, consumers who say their diets could be “a lot” healthier also seek healthy packaged/prepared foods, however recognize that they are not only time consuming to prepare, but more costly than less healthy foods (“Study: Consumers identify,” 2003). Moreover, “lower prices permit people to eat for pleasure and even recreation, rather than just survival. Most people treat themselves with foods that are high in sugar, fat, or both. The most heavily marketed foods, and those most convenient and accessible, tend to be the least healthy” (Brownell, 201).

Although our society is on the whole overweight, more and more are recognizing the need to change their diet. Restaurants and supermarkets are also seeing the trend, and have
adjusted their food offerings accordingly. Many fast food restaurants now have specialty salads on their menus, chicken sandwiches, and Jared tells us how he lost weight eating fresh Subway sandwiches for lunch every day. "The threat of lawsuits, and some say, Americans' changing tastes, have sent the fast-food industry scurrying to find alternatives to the high-fat staples on its menus. Almost all are offering main dish salads with low fat dressing. French fry sales are plummeting, while the market for chicken breasts and iceberg lettuce is hot" (Burros, 2003).

Statistics show the increasing interest by consumers in healthy eating options. "The NPD Group says the proportion of lunch orders in which salad was the main course rose to 6% this year from 4.5% last year. And the percent of lunches that included fries dropped to 22% from 25%. Fast-food customers 'are gravitating toward products they perceive as healthier and fresher,' says Andrew Barish, a securities analyst for Bank of America Securities. 'They aren't just talking about being health conscious and weight conscious and then when they go out to eat, they indulge'" (Burros, 2003).

Over the years of being a Weight Watchers member, I considered the other diets that were (and still are) popular. The Atkins Diet and the South Beach Diet are two of the most prominent and popular. There has been a seeming barrage of newspaper articles, television news features, and television programs talking about the battle of the bulge, and specifically these two diet plans. In contrast to other diet programs such as Jenny Craig and Nutri/system, which require you to buy their food, these diets allow you to eat "regular" foods, as long as they fall into the requirements of no carbohydrates. The popularity of these diets has even affected the bread and sugar industries, as sales in these product categories have declined since last year. When I worked as a waitress, I was constantly asked, "Is it possible to just have the meat, no bread? Maybe two cheeseburgers? I'm on the Atkins diet."
Dieters on the Atkins and South Beach diets, as well as other diet programs that permit using regular, supermarket foods, also have to be cognizant of what and how much they eat. Often, it is difficult to discern whether a piece of bread is high in fiber, or if the starchy potato you are craving has too much white sugar. In addition, trying to be creative and imaginative while following the food restrictions of the diets after just a few weeks is very difficult.

As a result, I thought that it must not only be Weight Watchers members who long for a place to eat that makes it easy to put the components of the diet to the test; most dieters want an easier way to attain their weight loss goals. Thus, the premise for my thesis.

Research Question

What would be the consist, culinary components, and critical marketing elements of a vanguard restaurant for the weight conscious and health driven consumer? According to Parade magazine's annual survey of the nation's food consumption and preparation habits, almost one-third of Americans are currently dieting ("What America eats," 2003), so there is an obvious audience for such an eating establishment. What sets this café apart is that the menu is designed to aid followers of three popular weight loss programs: Weight Watchers, the Atkins Diet, and the South Beach Diet. Most diets rely on its followers eating a particular mix of foods, including those rich in fiber and low in calories, or high in protein yet low in carbohydrates. All three diets encourage eating vegetables (to some extent) as well as drinking water. The purpose of the restaurant is to make meal choices easy and convenient for those trying to lose weight, no matter the weight loss program they choose.
Subsidiary Questions

In an attempt to cover the scope of issues that arise when dealing with the design of a restaurant that caters to the weight conscious consumer, this study will also examine several related aspects in the institution of such a restaurant:

1. Why is there a need for such a restaurant?
2. What is the history of dieting?
3. What are possible diet plans?
4. What is the culture of dieters? How does the culture affect the restaurant?
5. What are the components of the restaurant? What are the products and services of the restaurant?
6. What are the current trends in the restaurant industry?
7. Who are the major competitors?
8. How will it be marketed?
9. What are the details of the diets that will be featured on the menu?
10. What will the operation physically look like? What will the menu look like?

Purpose of the Study

"The problem can be stated simply—unhealthy food is convenient, accessible, good-tasting, heavily promoted, and cheap. Healthy food is harder to get, less convenient, promoted very little, and more expensive" (Brownell, 194). The purpose of the study is to combat the first half of this argument, and aid in the creation of a restaurant that made healthy foods more readily available, yet also less expensive and better tasting. Kelly Brownell’s book goes on further to say, “If value existed more often for healthy foods, price incentives would match public health priorities” (194).
The author has experienced first hand that it is all too easy to overeat, overindulge, and eat less healthy foods. While this is partly the consumers fault, an onus of responsibility must be placed on the food industry. It is much too easy and convenient to eat a diet that promotes bad health, such as fried and processed foods. "Modern life places people in situations where this calorie inclined biology is easily activated. People are in repeated contact with supermarkets, convenience stores, work cafeterias, vending machines, gas stations with mini markets and restaurants, most with large portions. The following phenomena then converge:

- Larger portions lead to greater eating;
- Foods offered in large portions tend to be higher-calorie foods;
- Higher calorie foods taste better, also leading to increased consumption;
- Better tasting foods are eaten in larger quantities." (Brownell, 190).

The restaurant in this study will combat these phenomena, and offer consumers:

1) Portions recommended by the USDA;

2) The items featured on the menu will be healthy foods, yet will also provide the consumer with the number of calories per serving;

3) The foods on the menu will not sacrifice taste or flavor, but will be healthy and delicious;

4) While the natural inclination is to eat everything that is put in front of you, customers of the restaurant will not feel guilty since the portion is within recommended daily allowances.

Definition of Terms

> Banking: a term used by Weight Watchers members when they eat less than their allotted number of POINTS per day. Banked POINTS can be used at any time during the week.
Calorie: a unit of energy; the amount of heat needed to raise one gram of water one degree Celsius at sea level.

Carbohydrates: includes sugars and starches that are chains of sugar molecules. Carbohydrates provide the quickest source of energy.

Diet: refers to everything a person eats and drinks at any time, whether or not it follows a plan and is meant to achieve a specific goal.

Fat: provides glycerol and essential fatty acids which the body cannot make. Fat is found in meat, fish, fowl, dairy products and the oils derived from nuts and seeds.

Journaling: writing down the foods consumed per day, and for Weight Watchers members, POINTS values as well. Weight Watchers members also track their water intake, dairy consumption, and number of fruits and vegetables per day.

Metabolism: the sum of the physical and chemical processes by which food is transformed into energy.

POINTS: a measurement used by Weight Watchers calculated by the fiber content, calories, and fat grams in a serving of food. Weight Watchers members are allowed a certain number of POINTS, per day, based on their weight, in order to lose undesired pounds.

Protein: complex chains of amino acids. Proteins are the basic building block of life and essential to almost every chemical reaction in the human body. Foods rich in protein include meat, fish, fowl, eggs, cheese, nuts, and seeds.

Limitations

First it should be noted that this restaurant does not endorse or promote a particular diet; the restaurant merely caters to the growing trend that more and more Americans are conscious of
their weight and choose diets in order to lose excess pounds. There are also certain limitations to
the creation of this restaurant. The most obvious are legal issues, regarding the licensing and
trademarks of the diet plans. Weight Watchers is “a leading global branded consumer company
and the leading provider of weight loss services, operating in 30 countries around the world”
(para 1, “Corporate Information,” n.d.), and thus it may be difficult to have its endorsement.
There are also many diets on the market that Americans follow, and reach far beyond the scope
of just the aforementioned Weight Watchers, South Beach Diet, and Dr. Atkins Diet. In
addition, the three diet plans may lose their appeal to the American public and lose market share
in terms of the diets followed by consumers. Thus, if the restaurant is successful, the popular
diets of the time will constantly be monitored.

The combination of the timeliness of the topic as well as the personal struggles of the
author create a unique perspective and analysis when examining the eating habits and resulting
weight loss of the American public. The next chapter takes a detailed look into the fundamental
reasons of how and why the American society has progressed into a culture that values thin, fit
bodies who count calories and monitor their weight. This analysis also allows one to understand
how different diet options evolved, as well as the culture of dieters.
Chapter II

THE HISTORY AND SOCIOLOGY OF WEIGHT LOSS IN AMERICA

Although dieting and weight loss is the norm in today’s society, a look at the history and culture of America during the past one hundred years tells a different story. The influence of the media and changing role of women in society directly impacted the drive for many to lose weight.

Turn of the Century

A hundred years ago, plump women were beautiful. Having extra deposits in her cheeks, arms, and hips not only indicated that a woman would produce healthy children, but was also an indicator of her class in society. The fatter she was, the more money it was presumed that she had. It was thought that those who were fat had enough money to eat the delicacies and sweets that could only be available to those with money to afford it. In addition, it was a sign that you were healthier, and had a better chance of fighting illness and disease.

However, in the late 1800's the economy was also changing, and more food was available to people from all classes. This food was readily available because of new technology that allowed for better processing and refrigeration of foods, allowing it to keep for longer. Consumers also relied more on store-bought goods instead of growing the food on their property. Since such food was easily attainable and cheaper to acquire, people ate more of it. As a result, even the lower classes were able to achieve the status of “plump.” Subsequently, the upper class did not see having fat deposits as posh and fashionable, and so the trends changed to distinguish the classes once again. “It became chic to be thin and all too ordinary to be overweight” (Fraser, 18).
Due to the European trend that being slender was a "sign that one possessed a delicate, intellectual, and superior nature" (Fraser, 18), Americans soon followed the trend as well. Not only was being thin a sign of class, but it also reflected morality. Not giving in to appetites and gluttony made one more religious and closer to God. Some even used not eating as a way to cleanse themselves of their sins, "turning into an outside reflection of their closeness to God" (Fraser, 19).

Moreover, science aided the trend that being slender was healthier. Doctors advised patients, in essence, to be thin. During this time, physicians learned how to count calories, weigh people on scales, calculate ideal weights, and advise those who deviated from that ideal that they could improve themselves. Furthermore, women also began working outside of the home and in some ways abandoned their role as strictly mother. Instead, they contributed to the family income, and favored a thinner, freer, more modern body (Fraser, 19).

In addition, like today, magazines featured thin models and set the ideal for what women should resemble. "Advertisers learned early to offer women an unattainable dream of thinness and beauty in order to sell more products" (Fraser, 20). Corsets came into vogue, promising women a slender physique, yet many hours of discomfort.

In the early 1890's, Charles Dana Gibson began sketching illustrations of beautiful young women that were published in Life magazine. The drawings were different from the normal picture of the female ideal: they were tall, slender, and "had an air of freedom and vitality about them that was utterly fresh. The women, who were all variations on one type, had upswept hair, dainty facial features, rather broad shoulders, a tiny waist, and a vigorous build. The Gibson Girl was a wholesome, active, well-to-do young woman; she was as relaxed and lovely playing croquet or tennis as she was sitting in the parlors of society's best homes. She wasn't real,
however; she was a pure fantasy, a perfect ideal few women could ever hope to approach” (Fraser, 27). The Gibson Girl was popular from the 1890s through World War I, and appeared in books, magazines, calendars, and wallpaper. The Gibson Girl, although having wide hips and a large bust, was a transitional figure between the plump and slender ideas of perfection. Celebrities resembling the fictional Gibson Girl included British actress Lillie Langtry.

Also, exercising came into vogue for women, shaping their physique into a more muscular, leaner build. The move for physical fitness also took root during this time, as several women’s colleges had organized physical education classes. The bicycle became a popular way to exercise and had a lasting impact on women’s health. Laura Fraser quotes Mrs. Reginald deKoven for Cosmopolitan magazine in 1895 as writing, “To women, [the bicycle] is deliverance, revolution, and salvation. It is well nigh impossible to overestimate the potentials of this exercise in the curing of the common and characteristic ills of womankind, both physical and mental, or to calculate the far-reaching effects of its influence in the matters of dress and social reform” (28).

The Age of the Figure

In April 1914, Delineator Magazine advised its readers that “this is the age of the figure.” It went on, “The face alone, no matter how pretty, counts for nothing unless the body is straight and yielding as every young girl’s” (Fraser, 33). In the early 1920s, a French fashion designer, Gabrielle “Coco” Chanel, emphasized the youthful dress by dropping the waistline of her dresses to the hips, raising hemlines to mid-calf, and creating the image of the new young woman, the flapper. A flapper rebelled against her Victorian mother’s manners and curvy body. She favored, instead, a boyishly straight figure. She dieted in order to appear not only thinner but younger as well.
In the 1920s, advertisers for the first time pointed out and sold products that provided a solution to removing fat. “Advertisers made women feel humiliated that they weren’t as slim as the beautiful women in their illustrations. They sold bath salts, laxatives, reducing brushes, stimulating belts, scales, mail-away diets, and scores of other obesity cures. Every advertisement chided women for being overweight. ‘Overweight these days is a woman’s own fault,’ proclaimed one ad. And every advertisement promised that a woman would not only lose weight with the product, but her life would be better afterward” (Fraser, 38-39).

Due to societal pressures, doctors also began recommending diets and warned of the dangers of being overweight. Women chewed gum laced with laxatives, starved themselves, and began to smoke all in the name of thin. Doctors recommended diets that were a result of alliances between physicians and food producers, such as The United Fruit Company and the citrus growers. Dieting became the norm, although the results were often disastrous. Pressure to be thin also lent itself to eating disorders, such as bulimia, in which women would vomit in order to fit in with the ideal (Fraser, 39-40).

Thin Is In

From the flapper on, the drive to be thin has been unrelenting. In 1959, Barbie was unveiled and her tiny waist, large bust, narrow hips and long legs put a new face on the unattainable ideal of thin. Since then, the female ideal has become thinner each decade. One group of researchers compared the height, weight, and body measurements of Playboy centerfolds from 1959 to 1978, finding that while the height increased by 20%, the body size decreased significantly. In 1959, the playmates weighed 91% as much as the average women; but by 1978, the figure was only 85% of the average weight. When researchers looked at
contestants from the Miss America Pageant, they found a similar trend, although found that contestants’ weights decreased even more (Fraser, 43-44).

The 1960s saw icons like Twiggy as the ideal figure, although most women realized that her figure was unattainable. In the seventies, the importance of succeeding in the business arena became the impetus for being thin: fitting into a man’s world also required having a figure that did not appear to be too feminine, and therefore slender. During the eighties and nineties, women focused more on exercise and gaining muscle to appear leaner and stronger. She exercised, to tapes such as those led by Jane Fonda, in order to achieve good health and a slender body.

Today, being slender is still of utmost importance to many, as evidenced by reading fashion magazines or watching news programs detailing the hottest new diets. With weight loss centers and diets bombarding the market, a new revolution in dieting has also occurred: the low carbohydrate diets. These include those prescribed by Dr. Robert Atkins and Dr. Arthur Agatston. These diets have reached such popularity that a new food category of “low carb” foods is on the market. “More than 600 low-carb products have been introduced into the marketplace this year alone, and sales of these types of products are expected to climb as high as $15 billion for 2003. Next year, it is believed that sales in the category could hit $30 billion” (“High consumption,” 2003). However, Morning News Beat also reports that people who eat a plethora of these low carb alternatives, such as cakes, muffins, bagels, and breads, have calorie consumptions that get to the point where they are not losing any weight. Thus, they are sacrificing their vegetables for low-carb products. The trend has affected the bakery business, with the North American Millers’ Association estimating that annual flour consumption dropped last year to 137 pounds per person after reaching 147 pound in 1997 (“Atkins Mania, 2003).
Healthy Eating

For many years, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has produced guides for healthy eating for the American public. In 1958, the Basic Four was the food guide established to show the minimum levels of daily servings. Each box was roughly the same size, including milk, meat, bread/cereal, and vegetable/fruit. The allocation alluded to consumers that eating the same amount of each food group was permissible. However, in 1991, the Eating Right Pyramid was developed, showing foods in a hierarchy. "It illustrates a dietary pattern in which most daily food servings are to be derived from the grain, vegetable, and fruit groups, with fewer servings from the milk and meat groups, and even fewer from foods high in fat and sugar (Nestle, 51)."

Marion Nestle, Professor and Chair of the Department of Nutrition and Food Studies at New York University, has served as a nutrition policy advisor to the Department of Health and Human Services and as a member of nutrition and science advisory committees to the Department of Agriculture and the Food and Drug Administration. In her book, Food Politics, she tells of how this food pyramid has been changed to appease industry pressure from groups fearing that meat and dairy products would be "stigmatized." Instead of the Eating Right Pyramid, we now use The Food Guide Pyramid, "differing from the original in only minor details," although the details "sufficiently appeased meat and dairy producers who withdrew their overt objections" (Nestle, 52).

Below is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's food pyramid, demonstrating the variety and amounts of food we need to maintain a balanced diet. Consumers are encouraged to eat a variety of foods, including eight to eleven servings of bread, cereal, rice, and pasta per day. This is the base of the pyramid and should comprise the majority of the foods consumed. The next level includes vegetables (three to five servings) and fruits (two to four servings). Above this are
dairy products, including milk, yogurt, and cheese, as well as meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, and nuts. Americans should eat between two to three servings per day. At the pinnacle of the pyramid are those foods that should be eaten sparingly, which include fats, oils, and sweets.

Diet Plan Options

Although there are thousands of possible diets on the market, this section details several of the options that are available. In choosing a safe and effective diet, several keys are important to consider:

- Look for a diet that looks safe; eating the correct amount of vitamins, minerals, and nutrients each day should not be sacrificed to be thin.
- Losing weight at a slow and steadier pace tends to be more effective than rapid weight loss. Often, rapid weight loss is due to water weight rather than true pounds of excess fat. Aiming to lose one to two pounds per week is recommended.
- Consult a doctor, especially if you need or want to lose more than 20 pounds, have any health problems, or take medication.
- Maintaining weight loss is almost as difficult as achieving the initial goal. Choosing a program that teaches lifelong measures is an important consideration. (Adapted from "Choosing a safe and successful weight loss program, 2003).

Weight Watchers

Weight Watchers began in 1961 when Jean Nidetch attended a free diet clinic in New York City determined to lose weight, yet lacking motivation after losing 20 pounds. Her solution to her problem: hold a gathering with friends also struggling with weight loss to commiserate and help one another. Eventually the group of "friends" grew so large that former members, after having completed the program, opened meetings around the country and abroad. Relying initially on the basic Food Plan to reflect current nutritional findings, the plan has evolved over the years to reflect current scientific information on nutrition. In 1978, an exercise plan was added, and a "behavior management program was designed by a leading psychologist,
based on the belief that the best way to control weight is to change bad eating habits ("The history of Weight Watchers, n.d.).

Currently, the Weight Watchers diet offers a program based on POINTS. Every food is assigned a POINTS value, calculated from the fiber content, calories, and fat grams in one serving of food. Based on one's current weight, they are allowed a certain amount of POINTS per day. Members journal their foods in a "checkbook" style book, tracking their POINTS, water, dairy, and vegetable intake as well. Weekly meetings are required for members, and cost on average $12 per week. If a member misses a meeting, they are still required to pay. The meetings are a forum, led by a Lifetime Member, to discuss topics related to the struggles with losing weight. Members are encouraged to share and rely on the support of others to aid in the weight loss, and celebrate when they reach goals such as losing five pounds, 10% of their weight, or reaching their lifetime goal.

Atkins Diet

Dr. Atkins published his first book, *Diet Revolution*, recommending a low carbohydrate diet in 1972, and subsequently in 1992 published a revised and updated version of the book called *Dr. Atkins’ New Diet Revolution*. His plan has created such a phenomenon that it is estimated that 14 million Americans are said to be on the diet at the moment, although this figure is expected to double ("Atkins mania," 2003).

Dr. Atkins' revolutionary approach to weight loss has garnered both acclaim and criticism from the public. Supporters tout the statistics in lowering not only weight but heart disease, diabetes, and cholesterol, while opponents object to eating too many fatty foods. In his book, Dr. Atkins states, "Atkins is the most successful weight loss—and weight maintenance—program of the last quarter of the twentieth century" (Atkins, 6). The Atkins Diet works because
it targets stored body fat, converting it to use this as the body's primary fuel source, resulting in efficient weight loss and weight maintenance. The plan is composed of protein and fat, both essential to the human body, plus controlled quantities of the most nutrient-dense carbohydrates, primarily in the form of vegetables (Atkins, 16).

Followers of the Atkins program eat either three regular-size meals a day or four or five smaller meals, eating a combination of fat and protein such as poultry, fish, shellfish, eggs, and red meat. Also, eating pure, natural fat in the forms of butter, mayonnaise, or olive oil is a necessity. The basis for the diet is only eating 20 grams a day of carbohydrates, which come from salad greens and vegetables. However, no fruit, bread, pasta, grains, starchy vegetables or dairy products (other than cheese, cream or butter) are permitted. Eating when hungry is allowed, yet avoiding coffee, tea and soft drinks with caffeine is not (Atkins, 122-124).

South Beach Diet

Dr. Agatston's diet began in Miami Beach, Florida, and has grown in popularity since. His diet helps its followers lose a considerable amount of weight in the first two weeks alone, also by lowering carbohydrate consumption. A cardiologist, Dr. Agatston originally created this diet to improve patients' health. The diet has become such a phenomenon that it also promotes weight loss for anyone desiring to shed extra pounds. The crux of the diet is that it does not allow carbohydrates, such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Dr. Agatston states in the first chapter, "The South Beach Diet teaches you to rely on the right carbs and the right fats—the good ones—and enables you to live quite happily without the bad carbs and bad fats. As a result you're going to get healthy and lose weight—somewhere between 8 and 13 pounds in the next two weeks alone" (Agatston, 3).
The South Beach Diet allows for fats and animal proteins including lean beef, pork, veal, and lamb. In addition, plenty of healthy mono- and polyunsaturated foods are encouraged: olive oil, canola oil, and peanut oil. The diet prides itself on not being too complicated or strict, anticipating a lower failure rate than other diets. Desserts are part of the diet, although are specially designed to fit within the diet's restrictions.

Phase I of the diet lasts for two weeks and is the strictest. The dieter may eat three balanced meals a day, as well as snacks in the midmorning and midaftemoon and dessert after dinner, eating until they are satisfied. Foods permitted during this stage include vegetables, eggs, cheese, nuts, and salads with olive oil. A program follower must also drink plenty of water. The dieter, however, may not eat any bread, rice, potatoes, pasta, or baked goods during this time, as well as candy, cake, cookies, ice cream or sugar. Beer or alcohol are also not permitted during the fourteen days (Agatston, 3-4).

After the initial two weeks, those following the program may add some foods back into their diet. Such foods may include bread, chocolate, or fruit, for example. However, dieters may not have all of these foods all of the time. Program followers stay in this stage until they reach their goal weight. After the goal weight is met, followers are permitted to eat several more types of food, although still maintaining the goal weight. Dr. Agatston promises that after completion of Phase III, this system of eating will become more of a way of life than a diet (Agatston, 5).

Below is a diagram detailing the similarities between the Atkins Diet and the South Beach Diet, and the main difference between them and the Weight Watchers program.
Different Approaches

While many diets in addition to Weight Watchers, Atkins, and South Beach exist, it is worth mentioning several other options that assist people in losing weight. Jenny Craig is a popular weight loss system which provides members with food instead of preparing it from supermarket foods. Also, other alternatives to traditional weight loss are examined, which make preparing healthy foods consistent with a diet a much easier task.

Made to Order

Three companies featured on an NBC News Channel 4 exclusive have a different niche in the weight loss market. They include Metro Diet, Jenny Craig, and Food for Life. All three programs deliver prepared food to its customers that fit the stipulations of their diet.
Metro Diet, for example, is touted as being “a nutritious, haut cuisine, gourmet food plan” with balanced food “so perfectly conceived, created, cooked, sauced, prepared, presented, delivered, that you lose weight without feeling like you’re on a diet.” Food is delivered daily and includes three meals and two snacks of your choosing. Typically, for a 31-day plan the cost is $29.95 per day (para 1, “Who we are,” n.d.).

“Food For Life is a Queens-based food service delivering to the five borough of New York City and parts of Long Island” (“Get your diet foods delivered,” 2003). The beginner plan includes meals consisting of 40% protein, 30% carbohydrate, and 30% fat, although is modified to suit the needs of the individual customers. Meals are guaranteed by 6am each day, with several programs available for as low as $24.95. They “take the headaches and preparation of dieting while you enjoy the results” (“Food for life FAQ,” n.d.).

Jenny Craig

Founded in 1983 in Australia, Jenny Craig offers prepared meals and personalized weekly consultations. A schedule of a member’s weight loss is produced based on the individual’s caloric intake and the amount of weight to lose. Different from the aforementioned diet plans, most of the food is provided by Jenny Craig in the form of frozen, pre-plated microwavable entrees; shelf-stable reheatable foods; canned items such as chili, soups, and pasta dishes; and snack foods including mousse, popcorn, and peanut butter snack bars (Scanlon, 29-30). Fresh fruits and vegetables are a must, in addition to breads, crackers, and cereals, as well as dairy products such as milk, yogurt, and cheese.

The program is fairly flexible, and allows members with busy schedules the ability to choose their meals ahead of time and not worry about preparation time. Jenny Craig has
allowances for eating outside of the home, such as salads and plenty of vegetables. Moreover, the ability to receive one-on-one counseling is valuable to many members.

Currently, Jenny Craig also offers an at-home option in which the prepared foods are delivered to the member’s home. Foods are shipped in two or four week increments, although in the beginning, a pre-set menu is sent in order to sample different types of foods and to get accustomed to the structure of the program. Still, members have the support of Jenny Craig consultants by way of weekly phone consultations (Jenny direct FAQ, n.d.).

As evidenced, consumers with different dietary needs, as well as preferences and habits, all desire to lose weight. They belong to a certain culture that, for whatever reason, is attempting to lose excess pounds.

Weight Loss Culture

A restaurant of this sort is a viable undertaking for several reasons, including the increasing number of Americans who are attempting to lose weight in conjunction with the amount of Americans who eat meals prepared outside of their home several times per week. As a result, an explanation as to the culture of the consumer attempting to lose weight while eating meals out of the home is an important undertaking.

Of note, dieters are not necessarily overweight by medical standards, yet feel that they need to lose weight in order to fulfill a standard set forth by American society to be thin. Seemingly, the catch-22 in our society is that while we desire to be thin and approve of those who are thin, we are overwhelmingly surrounded by a food and restaurant industry that feeds us foods high in fat and arguably bad for our diets. Some diet because they feel they need to be thin in order to fulfill some need or want in improving their image; some to lose weight; others, to gain confidence. Also, some choose to lose weight for a permanent lifestyle change, although...
some start a weight loss program as part of a New Year's resolution, while others are "short-term dieters," hoping to lose weight for a wedding, anniversary, or reunion.

Because dieters are commonplace in society, their mainstream relevance is in concert with the general public. There are several subcultures of the weight loss culture. They may be divided into those "losers" who are trying to lose weight permanently and for the long term, or those who have a few pounds to lose for a particular event or day, such as a wedding or reunion. Moreover, the culture is divided among the dieters as it relates to the weight loss method that they follow. There are thousands of weight loss programs from which the culture can choose, thus resulting in thousands of subcultures for the dieters to belong. Examples of the programs include Overeaters Anonymous, Weight Watchers, Jenny Craig, South Beach Diet, The Zone, and Dr. Atkins Diet Revolution.

The primary interest of this culture is that of losing weight. Many dieters have attempted to lose weight numerous times, trying organized plans such as Weight Watchers or Jenny Craig; reading books, such as The South Beach Diet by Dr. Agatston or Dr. Atkins' New Diet Revolution by Dr. Atkins; or tried a "fad diet," such as the cabbage soup diet or the grapefruit diet. Dieters may be trying to make a life-long change and seriously attempt to change their eating habits, or they may be trying to lose weight for a particular purpose or event, such as a yearly physical or a high school reunion. In any event, many Americans can relate to the "battle of the bulge."

The key belief of dieters is that losing weight is possible. If they did not believe this, there would be no basis for trying any of the aforementioned weight loss plan examples. The diets have been marketed in such a way that the dieter truly believes that shedding pounds is possible, and are persuaded when hearing success stories. They believe that they, too, are
capable of achieving their goal. In the case of Weight Watchers, the belief is that the program not only aids in weight loss, but should become a long-term eating plan, not just a diet.

The critical incident or defining moment for many people attempting to lose weight is when the dieter realized that they had pounds to lose; perhaps they did not fit into their pants or dress, they broke a piece of furniture, or if a woman is suspected of being pregnant and is really not. The rite of passage of recognizing the need to lose weight is key in becoming part of the culture.

Being overweight and attempting to lose that weight is not indigenous to a particular part of the country or even to one country in particular. Dieting is a phenomenon that stretches around the world, from France to England to the United States. As a result, many of our Americanized institutions to lose weight have also spread across the ocean. Weight Watchers, for example, is located in every major U.S. city and in 30 foreign countries. Jenny Craig has established 100 centers in Australia along with 10 in New Zealand, 30 in England, and more than 450 in the United States (Scanlon, 29), while Nutri/system has centers in the U.S., Canada, Australia, England, and France (Scanlon, 34).

There are many reasons that the popularity of diet centers are so widespread, the most obvious being the type of diet consumed in a fast-paced, fast-food reliant society. "The U.S. is the fattest nation in the world. More than sixty percent of Americans are overweight or obese" (Atkins, 11). However, other countries are also struggling with the problems of obesity. Dr. Stephan Roessner, a scientist from Sweden and President of the International Association for the Study of Obesity, said, "There is no country in the world where obesity is not increasing. Even in developing countries we thought were immune such as Zimbabwe and Gambia, the epidemic is coming on very fast." Moreover, the World Health Organization has declared obesity a global
epidemic. "Escalating problems are clear in China, Canada, and Cameroon; Samoa, Spain, and the Seychelles; Poland, Paraguay, and Palau, just to begin" (Brownell, 54).

Many are quick to blame the United States, however, for sharing bad eating habits with other countries. Many Americans rely on highly processed, highly fattening, highly sugared food for the basis of their diet. We depend on the ease of going to McDonald's for SuperValue combo number two for lunch, complete with french fries and a twenty ounce cola. These poor eating habits have spread across the globe, as many Americanized establishments appear in countries such as Kuwait, Italy, and Iceland. Companies such as Coca-Cola sell their 230 brands in 200 countries, while Frito-Lay sells its snack foods worldwide, as do Mars Incorporated, KFC, Pizza Hut, and Dunkin Donuts. "Perhaps more than any American export, our food has powerful symbolic importance to the world's inhabitants. Both revered and hated, our food represents affluence and innovation" (Brownell, 57).

"Professional" dieters—that is, people who have tried several of the thousands of diet options on the market—share many common experiences that meld them together and give them a common bond to share. Many are "repeat offenders," trying different weight loss programs until they find the magic program that helps them shed the pounds. One book calculated that there are more than 17,000 different diet plans, products, and programs being promoted to Americans. When the book was published in 1991, more than ten years ago, it was estimated that we spend over $35 billion in an effort to lose weight (Scanlon, 1). With the number of overweight Americans increasing, so too is the amount of money spent on efforts to lose the weight. Often, for the long-term dieters, dieting becomes part of their self identity.

The process of gaining weight is actually quite fun. It is far easier to gain one pound than it is to lose one pound. Simply eating the "Americanized" diet, filled with highly processed fast
foods that contain much sugar is quite easy. There are many eating establishments that aid us in the pursuit of tasty, quick and easy food. McDonald's, Wendy's, and Dunkin' Donuts provide foods that make it easy for consumers to gain a few pounds. However, losing those pounds is the more difficult task. Retraining one's brain to think a different way, to eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables and limiting portion sizes, in addition to adding physical exercise into a daily regimen, may be a more daunting task.

The objective of the dieting culture is the same: to shed excess pounds. This task may take several weeks for some, or several years for others. In any case, keeping one's mind focused on the goal of losing weight is the same. Behaviors of this culture include changing their current eating regimen, depending on the diet program that is followed. Dr. Atkins' program will have you control carbohydrate intake, for example. Diet centers such as Nutri/system and Jenny Craig require you to meet weekly with a dieting counselor to help chart your progress. Moreover, the vast majority of diet programs include physical activity in order to obtain weight loss results in the long run.

The argot used by dieters may be directly proportional to their interest in losing weight. Serious dieters' parlance includes terms such as calories, carbs (carbohydrates), protein, fat, and metabolism. Further, Weight Watchers members' argot also includes terms such as POINTS, the Quick Track System for journaling, and banking. The POINTS system relies on an understanding of those terms in order to determine the POINTS value of a particular food. The POINTS for a slice of white bread, for example, is determined by a calculation involving the fiber content, calories, and fat in one serving of the bread. The Quick Track System is a journal, set up to resemble a checkbook, where members write down all the foods they eat in a day, as well as their water, vegetable, and dairy intake.
Icons of the weight loss culture comprise those figures who have developed weight loss programs, for example Jenny Craig, Jean Niedich, founder of Weight Watchers, Dr. Atkins, and Dr. Agatston, developer of the South Beach Diet. In addition, successful losers are also icons. More specifically, people who have lost a significant amount of weight and have kept it off are admired for their stick-to-itiveness and success.

The anti-hero of the culture are people who seemingly eat whatever foods they enjoy, like ice cream, hamburgers, and cake, although do not gain any weight. These anti-heroes do not exercise, yet have thin physiques and no weight or health-related problems. The antipathy of the culture is skinny people, especially those who complain that they are too skinny and cannot gain weight.

Affiliation points of dieters help them to relate to one another. They have weight to lose and it may not be the first time they try to lose it. Therefore, their struggle to lose the weight and keep it off connects one dieter to the next, despite the number of pounds they have to lose. Common values of the dieting population are craving to lose weight, either temporarily or in the long term, and to keep off the weight. They are interested in making a change in their normal behavior to achieve the goal of losing weight.

Dieters are often stereotyped. Outsiders often assume that people who need to lose weight have no self control and bring the extra unwanted pounds upon themselves. Outsiders of the culture may think that dieters have no drive, are uncommitted, and possibly equate the overweight to being a pig. Studies have been done observing negative reactions to overweight individuals. They are often subject to insults and ridicule. However, there is still debate whether obesity is attributed to a particular gene or if the extra weight is a product of weakness.
The primary motivation of a dieter is to shed excess pounds and lose weight. Losing weight is practiced not only to lower the number on the scale, but also helps to gain confidence, improve body shape, improve body image, and to feel better about oneself overall.

There are certain lores associated with losing weight, in addition to legacies and legends. The lore would be that by losing weight, the dieter will transform themselves into a new person, with a new body and new outlook on life. Legacies and exemplars are those participants in weight loss programs who have achieved the goal of losing weight and kept it off, while legends are doctors such as Dr. Agatston and Dr. Atkins who developed successful programs, as well as Duchess Sarah Ferguson, spokesperson for Weight Watchers and a lifetime member who reached her goal. Not only did she achieve success, she is a celebrity, as well as royalty, who has kept off the weight.

Points of pride for a dieter are achieving both short-term and long-term goals, such as trimming five inches from their waist in two months, losing five pounds, or attaining their ultimate weight loss goal. These points of pride may also include the day they decided to lose weight, joined a gym, or passed up a piece of chocolate cake. Rituals of the culture include weighing yourself to track progress, counting calories, tracking POINTS, or eating vegetables, as well as strictly following the diet plan. Norms are eating particular foods as prescribed by the diet, for example protein-rich foods on the Atkins plan, cabbage soup on the cabbage soup diet, or five servings of fruits and vegetables.

Many dieters have an allegiance to the weight loss program they apply to their daily routine because they enjoy the support of others who share the same struggle to keep off the pounds, and are familiar with the battle of the bulge. Certain organized programs provide an outlet for dieters to commiserate over the ups and downs of gaining and losing weight.
Affirmation is received from such programs as Jenny Craig and Weight Watchers, as they offer meetings and consultations for support. As a result, the dieters are committed to the program as they chart their progress and success, and go to the weekly weigh-ins, meetings, and follow-up programs. It incorporates the benefits of strength in numbers, gives members a sense of identity, a feeling of comfort, as well as representation. It helps dieters realize that they are not alone in their struggle. Additionally, it helps build esteem and gives a sense that success is possible. The meetings provide support, encouragement, and pride.

Some overt commonalities of dieters are that they may not appear to be what many would consider fat: not all dieters have layers of fat bulging at the waist, neck, or thighs. Rather, some dieters can hide their excess pounds under sweaters and specially coiffed hairstyles. However, they follow the guidelines of their particular diet and usually drink at least six glasses of water per day. Non evident commonalities are that the dieters may have tried and failed at several attempts to lose weight, yet continue in the pursuit to attain an ideal body image.

In order to educate oneself about the culture, one can read a plethora of literature published on the subject of dieting in general. There is an entire section at Barnes and Noble dedicated solely to losing weight. There are books on eating healthy, as well as books on particular diet plans such as the highly discussed *The South Beach Diet* and *Dr. Atkins' New Diet Revolution*. Books in this genre are often at the top of the New York Times bestsellers list for weeks, indicating that this type of self-help book is very popular literature.

The protocol for being part of the weight loss culture is to follow the guidelines dictated by the weight loss program and achieve weight loss. Ultimately, losers are expected to reach their goal. Whether or not this occurs, however, is arguable.
The Cultural and Sociological Tenets of the Restaurant

When applying the analysis of the culture to the marketing aspects of the restaurant, several keys abound. The culture definition is the weight conscious and healthy conscious consumer seeking a convenient means to stick to a prescribed diet plan and to eat a healthy diet overall. The restaurant provides customers who are attempting to lose weight a place where they can go and realize that they are not alone in their struggle to lose weight and adopt healthy eating habits.

First, the restaurant must be fast and friendly, as this is expected of most eating establishments. Further, this restaurant in particular will provide healthy foods: an abundance of fruits and vegetables will be available. Also, nutritional information will be available on the menu, including fiber, calories, fat grams, carbohydrates, and protein. Also, the menu will carry many food alternatives, for example low carbohydrate breads and pastas, as well as many low fat and low calorie dishes.

Any successful marketing venture will satisfy both the need and the want, and this restaurant is no exception. The restaurant meets the need to eat healthy, while fulfilling the want of providing foods that help individuals lose weight. When considering income, consumers will first spend on their basic needs and use the remainder of money for extra niceties. Moreover, this restaurant fulfills the basic need to eat. Food is one of the weekly items for which consumers set aside money. However, the restaurant also factors in the ease and convenience of eating at an establishment that provides a necessity to live into the budget.

The restaurant will be accessible for the weight conscious and health conscious. As they run their harried schedules, the most accessible place would be to locate the eating establishment near the center of town. The restaurant would ideally be located near a train station, or other
highly trafficked area, therefore being viable for commuters on their way home from work, or perhaps on a lunch break.

The labeling appeals to the culture of weight loss consumers, as it will be clean, efficient, and appear to be upscale. Although it will appeal to the weight and healthy conscious customer as its base, however, it will also spill over into the general population as well. As indicated by survey results detailed in the next chapter, 89% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that having a balanced, healthy diet is important to them, while 93% agreed or strongly agreed that they would be inclined to eat something that tastes good and is good for you. Of note, not all respondents had ever tried dieting: a total of 10% either disagreed, strongly disagreed, or were neutral.

Because of the vast population of dieters, the restaurant is an extremely viable undertaking. Moreover, its product differential is unique in that no restaurant provides all pertinent nutritional value for the foods offered on the menu. It fulfills the trend that one-third of Americans are dieting as well. The cultural customer identification of the restaurant is that it aids in weight loss and eating healthy, while offering convenient and quick food options. It is not designed to be a fancy restaurant with an average dining time of an hour; rather, it is quick and efficient service for the busy customer base.

It is not enough for one person to desire a healthy restaurant. Rather, the idea must be evidenced and validated by data proving both the need and want for such an establishment. The next chapter describes the survey conducted and its results to confirm the author's suspicions.
Chapter III

DETERMINING THE INTEREST IN A RESTAURANT FOR THE WEIGHT CONSCIOUS CONSUMER

One of the many characteristics of people who are weight conscious is their ability to commiserate over stories of losing weight, gaining weight, what they ate (and should not have eaten), as well as the many diets that they have tried. As noted, almost one-third of the country is currently on a diet, and consequently many people have a basis for such a discussion. As a result, developing a survey to gauge the sentiments of the general public was not difficult when considering the number of people who are weight and even health conscious.

Purpose

The survey was developed in order to gauge respondents’ level of interest in a restaurant that is geared toward the health conscious and health driven consumer, yet specifically with the weight conscious consumer in mind. The purpose of the study was to help the author determine the necessary elements in a restaurant attempting to accommodate the needs of consumers trying to eat a healthy, well-balanced diet, yet have difficulty preparing such meals due to time constraints. In the end, the survey would aid the author in developing the consist, culinary components, and marketing elements of such a restaurant.

Description of the Survey

The survey, which is in complete form in Appendix A, consists of ten statements relating to diet and food choice, convenience, and losing weight. The statements were measured using the Likert scale, which calculated respondents’ answers based on a five-point scale. Participants used a rating of five to signify that they strongly agree with the declaration; a four rating equaled agreement; a three translated to a neutral opinion; a rating of two equated to disagreement; while a rating of one signaled strong disagreement. The ten statements were based on the subsidiary
questions chosen by the author at the onslaught of the thesis. The author's intent was to gauge the background of respondents in terms of their opinions on healthy foods, the convenience of these foods, whether respondents had ever tried to lose weight, and ultimately, whether or not they would be interested in a restaurant catering to the weight and health conscious. Moreover, the author was also interested in the background and even demographic information pertaining to those respondents who were not interested in such an establishment.

Methods of Data Collection

A hardcopy of the survey was distributed randomly to potential participants between October 15 and November 27, 2003, to participants over the age of 18, not considering their preconceived notions as to eating and dieting habits. It was given out to participants regardless of age, race, sex, or income. In addition, the survey was also posted on the Internet on the author's homepage (http://pirate.shu.edu/~savnermt). After emailing several contacts from the author's address book, and requesting that the survey be forwarded to others, the author went to Prevention Magazine's message boards on their website. Prevention Magazine's website is an outlet for the health and weight conscious to obtain information on health, fitness, and dieting, and provides message boards for site users to openly discuss "hot topics." On Wednesday, November 12, the author proceeded to post a message in the "Weight Conscious" and "South Beach Dieters" message boards, requesting that interested parties take the survey. The survey was taken off-line on Wednesday, November 26, 2003.

Of note, the author attempted to survey current Weight Watchers members in the Freehold, NJ, meeting location. As the author has attended meetings at this location for several years, it would have been an ideal opportunity to gauge the responses and opinions of other dieters longing for an easier way to eat healthy foods while dining out. However, after seeking
permission from the corporate headquarters of Weight Watchers, they stated, "It is not something that we can do." No further explanation was given as to why this was not something that Weight Watchers could do, although it should be noted that feedback from these dieters would have been invaluable.

Results and Analysis

The survey resulted in 188 complete responses, of which 118 were submitted as a result of the online survey. Eighty one percent of respondents were female, with 69% of respondents preparing the majority of meals for the household. The percentage of respondents in each age demographic is spread: 20% are between the ages of 18-25; 32% between 25-39; 32% of respondents were 40-54; while the remaining 16% were 55 and above. More than half (57%) of respondents are married, while 39% were single, 3% divorced, and 1% widowed. In addition to a range of ages represented, respondents also come from different household sizes. Fifteen percent live alone, while 33% live with one other person. Sixteen percent live in a household of three; 17% live in a household of four; 13% live with four other people, while 6% live in a household of six or more. The majority of respondents do not live with a child under the age of 18 (63%), while 17% live with one child; 13% with two; 6% with three; and 1% with four or more. Most (85%) respondents answered that they are Caucasian, while 6% are black, 4% Hispanic, 3% American Indian, and 2% Asian.

The following is an analysis on each survey question, as well as a comparison of responses to the last survey question, "I would be interested in a restaurant that catered to specific diet/weight loss plans, such as Weight Watchers, South Beach, Atkins, Jenny Craig, Nutri System, LA Weight Loss, etc." to the results of the other nine questions.
With busy schedules and time constraints preventing many consumers from preparing healthy foods for themselves and their family, more than one-third (36%) of respondents strongly agree with this observation, and 43% are in agreement. Of note, close to one-fifth of respondents had a neutral response to the question, although 5% disagree.

Those respondents who agree they would be interested in the restaurant were also in agreement that eating and preparing healthy foods is important to them: 47% strongly agree and 35% agree that they attempt to eat and prepare healthy foods for themselves and their family. This analysis illustrates that an important element of the restaurant is for it to provide healthy foods to customers.
Close to two-thirds of respondents find it difficult to eat healthy because of time constraints in food preparation. More than one-quarter strongly agree and more than one-third agree with this account. Of note, 17% had a neutral opinion, while 17% disagree with this statement. Based on the demographic analysis of the respondents, the high number of neutral answers and disagreement could be attributed to the varied ages of respondents, as well as the high percentage of respondents without children under the age of 18 (63%).

A total of 71% of respondents interested in restaurant also find it difficult to eat healthy because of time constraints in food preparation. One-third strongly agree (33%) and 38% agree. This statistic provides overwhelming support for a restaurant of the nature that the author is designing. Previously, respondents said that they try to eat and prepare healthy foods, yet here admit that it is difficult because of time constraints. The restaurant would solve two of the concerns of the surveyed group: providing healthy, convenient foods.
One-half of those surveyed strongly agree that they would eat a more healthy diet if such foods were convenient to buy and/or eat, while one-third were also in agreement. This result is important in the establishment of a restaurant geared to the weight and health conscious, as it shows that overwhelmingly, consumers would eat a healthy diet if it were easily accessible to them.

Moreover, of those who answered favorably in question ten that they would be interested in a restaurant catering to the weight and health conscious, a total of 89% strongly agree or agree that convenience would play a major factor in eating a healthier diet. Fifty-seven percent strongly agree, and 31% agree. This provides further justification in the establishment of an eating establishment for the health and weight cognizant.
Respondents' answers varied to the question, "Convenience is a major factor in where my family and I eat meals," as there was no response that had the clear majority. More than one-fifth (22%) of respondents strongly agree that convenience is a major factor, while one-third (33%) agree that it is a factor. Conversely, nearly the same percentage of respondents disagree (20%), saying that convenience is not a factor in where they and their families eat meals. Moreover, 4% strongly disagree that convenience is a factor, although close to one-fifth (21%) also are neutral as to whether convenience plays a major factor in where to eat meals. This 21% then, is part of the key target market, since this segment can be swayed to purchase and consume foods that are fast and convenient for their family.

Of note, close to two-thirds (64%) of those surveyed who agree that they would be interested in a restaurant catering to their health and weight concerns also agree that convenience
is a major factor in where they eat meals. Twenty-eight percent strongly agree, while 36% agree. These figures add strength to the argument that the health and weight conscious consumer not only desires, but also requires convenience when considering where they will eat meals.

**Question 6**

"Convenience plays a significant role in what I eat during the day."

![Pie chart showing responses to Question 6.]

- **Strongly Agree**: 30%
- **Agree**: 38%
- **Neutral**: 18%
- **Disagree**: 11%
- **Strongly Disagree**: 3%

This question is similar to the preceding question, although it directly relates to individuals' preferences in what they eat during the day, when they do not necessarily have to concern themselves with preparing meals for a spouse, child, or roommate. Thirty percent strongly agree that convenience plays a significant role in what they eat during the day, while 38% agree. Of note, close to one-fifth (18%) of participants were neutral, 11% disagree, and 3% strongly disagree.
Furthermore, 31% strongly agree and 42% agree that convenience plays a significant role in what they eat during the day, and they strongly agree or agree that they would be interested in a restaurant that catered to specific diet or weight loss programs.

**Question 7**

"Generally, I would be inclined to eat something that tastes good and is good for you."

![Pie chart showing responses to Question 7.]

Overwhelmingly, the majority of respondents (62%) strongly agree that they would be inclined to eat something that not only tastes good, but is also good for you. Additionally, 31% agree with this statement, while a mere 4% disagree or strongly disagree, yet only 3% were neutral on the question. This, too, is a key component in the development of the restaurant: fill the need for nutritional food that also satisfies the want of tasting good.
Moreover, nearly all (93%) of the survey participants who said they would be interested in a restaurant designed to meet their health and weight loss needs also said that they would be inclined to eat something that tastes good and is good for you. Close to three-quarters (72%) strongly agree and more than one-fifth (21%) agree.

**Question 8**

"I am currently, or have in the past, attempted to lose weight."

![Pie chart showing responses to Question 8](image)

Interestingly, close to two-thirds (64%) of participants strongly agree that they have indeed attempted to lose weight, while more than one-quarter (26%) agree. This results in a total of 90% of participants either currently or in the past attempting to lose weight. This question confirms the assumption that many consumers are attempting to lose weight, either successfully or unsuccessfully. It is the goal of the restaurant to aid these consumers in their weight loss.
efforts and provide them with nutritional, good tasting food that falls within the constraints of their diet program, whether they follow Weight Watchers, South Beach Diet, or Atkins. Of note, only 5% disagree or strongly disagree that they have never attempted to lose weight, while 5% answered a neutral response.

**Question 9**

"I am currently, or have in the past, tried a weight loss program, such as Weight Watchers, South Beach, Atkins, Jenny Craig, Nutri System, LA Weight Loss, etc."

Nearly half (47%) of respondents strongly agree that they have tried a structured weight loss program, such as Weight Watchers, South Beach Diet, Atkins, Jenny Craig, Nutri System, LA Weight Loss Center, etc., while 16% agree that they have tried such a weight loss system. While 4% were of a neutral persuasion, 10% disagree with the statement and close to one-quarter (23%) strongly disagree with the question. Although close to 90% of respondents are attempting, or have attempted, to lose weight, only 63% are trying to lose the weight using
weight loss programs that have a specific target in mind, such as eating all proteins and no carbohydrates or eating no meats. Interestingly, then, there is a gap between those who are losing weight and the methods in which respondents choose to lose the weight.

**Question 10**

"I would be interested in a restaurant that catered to specific diet/weight loss plans, such as Weight Watchers, South Beach, Atkins, Jenny Craig, Nutri System, LA Weight Loss, etc."

![Pie chart showing responses to Question 10]

This question is the main crux of the thesis, and the author was particularly interested in the results as it is a good predictor of the success of restaurant marketed to the weight and health conscious consumer. More than two-thirds of respondents strongly agree or agree that they would be interested in a restaurant that catered to specific diet and/or weight loss plans, while only fourteen percent were neutral on the matter. Of note, 90% of those who strongly agree and 74% of those who agree were female. Overall, these results are encouraging, and upon further investigation of the data some interesting results were found on the respondents who answered
that they strongly agree or agree. Moreover, data on those surveyed who did not show interest in the concept of a restaurant servicing the weight and health conscious also follows.

More than three-quarters (76%) of those who strongly agree or agree that they would be interested in a restaurant developed for those trying to eat a healthy diet or trying to lose weight also strongly agree that they are currently, or have in the past, attempted to lose weight. One-fifth (20%) of those who strongly agree or agree that they would be interested in a restaurant geared toward losing weight agree that they are currently, or have in the past, attempted to lose weight. As a result, nearly all (96%) respondents who strongly agree or agree that they would be interested in such a restaurant strongly agree or agree that they are currently, or have in the past, tried to lose weight.
A total of 79% of those surveyed who strongly agree or agree that they would be interested in the restaurant establishment that is being proposed strongly agree or agree that they have tried to lose weight using a structured weight loss program. When dissected, 60% of those who strongly agree that they were interested in such a restaurant also strongly agree that they have tried to lose weight on an organized diet program, such as Weight Watchers, Atkins Diet, South Beach Diet, or Jenny Craig. Further, 19% agree that they have also tried to lose weight on an organized diet program. As a result, this leads the author to observe that there are still some in the population who, although they have not tried to lose weight using an organized weight loss program, would be interested in this eating establishment.

Of Those Who Strongly Agree or Agree They Would Be Interested in Restaurant:

The author was also interested in those respondents who were not interested in the restaurant, comprising 18% (or 34) of the respondents. Of those respondents who either strongly disagree or disagree that they would be interested in a restaurant of this sort, only seven of these
respondents, or one-fifth (21%), strongly agree that they had ever attempted to lose weight, while 14, or slightly less than half (41%) agree that they had ever tried to lose weight. This data leads the author to project that although consumers may have tried to lose weight, they are not necessarily interested in patronizing a restaurant geared toward losing weight.

Moreover, most of the respondents (3%) who strongly disagree or disagree that they would patronize such a restaurant had never attempted to lose weight using a weight loss program such as Weight Watchers or the South Beach Diet. As a result, those respondents who were not interested were less likely to have tried to lose weight using an organized diet program.

In light of these statistics, the next step in developing the restaurant is the actual design and business plan of the establishment. In conjunction with a business approach, relying on survey results for what customers desire is an important consideration. Based on the following comments from the surveys, several ideas from respondents helped to shape the design of the restaurant.

- "Fast and affordable would be great!"
- "I have frequently come home from a restaurant and tried to determine the nutritional value of my meal, sometimes with no avail. I would choose much more wisely if I knew "points" values before I ate, especially since some foods that I found healthy really are not!"
- "While all of the statements (in the survey) are very important to me, they are not always easy to achieve. Anything, such as a restaurant designed especially towards nutrition and weight loss/maintenance, would be a great attraction for me."
- "A restaurant that will cater to all dietary needs is important. It would be phenomenal to see all who are weight conscious able to order their specific food needs. I for one would be appreciative."
- "It would be a wonderful thing to have a restaurant of this type. Even dieters go out!"

- "Yes, I think this would be a great idea. I also think a healthy fast food place with a dine-in section would be a great idea if the food was fresh and delicious, not prepackaged."

- "I would appreciate a restaurant that catered to specific weight loss plans if the food tastes good."

- "I would patronize a restaurant that serves a healthy menu that tastes good and is reasonably priced."

- "I think this would be a great help if I didn't have to worry about the large unhealthy restaurant portions. I would find it easier to watch what I am eating if there were healthy alternatives."

- "A restaurant that caters to food in a weight loss program would make the idea of dining out so much easier while dieting."

- "A restaurant of this type would be great. In a day and age when people have no time and the country is dealing with obesity issues, a restaurant of this kind would be perfect. People can follow specific diets without thinking about it, they could just go to the restaurant and order."

As evidenced by the preceding data and analysis, the general public is in favor of a restaurant that considers the public's health needs when dining out. The research solidifies the argument that fast, healthy, and convenient food is a necessary element in today's culture. Chapter four details the business elements of the restaurant that serves the needs of the ever-expanding population segment. Included in the next chapter are design of the restaurant, business marketing tactics, and the menu, which all keep the respondents' opinions and desires in mind.
Chapter IV
MARY T’S BUSINESS PLAN

*Mary T’s* was decided on as the company name to reflect the creator and developer of the restaurant. In an attempt to appeal to all consumers, not just the weight conscious, words such as “diet” or “healthy” were not included in the name. There are two slogans for *Mary T’s*: “Savor The Flavor” and “We cater to your health needs,” telling our customers exactly what we do and the types of foods we prepare.

Company Description

Established in 2004, *Mary T’s* developed out of a desire for healthy food on the go. *Mary T’s*, a New Jersey based company, is an alternative fast-food restaurant. While a seeming oxymoron, the creator of *Mary T’s* witnessed first-hand the difficulties of maintaining a healthy, well-balanced diet while eating on the run. Resorting to hamburgers, French fries, or anything deep fried is a thing of the past with the inception of the restaurant. *Mary T’s* offers a full line of breakfast, lunch and dinner options, as well as a coffee, smoothie, and snack bar.

*Mary T’s* operates on the premise of offering consumers healthy food whether on the go or to eat in. We appeal to all those consumers desiring fresh, delicious, and affordable meals yet do not have the luxury of time to prepare them. *Mary T’s* offers both dine-in and take out facilities, giving patrons the option of where and when to eat the freshly-prepared, good-for-you menu choices. We use only the freshest ingredients and are constantly adding to the menu.

*Mary T’s* appeals to both dieters and non-dieters alike; to those counting calories, carbohydrates, protein, or anything in between. *Mary T’s* makes a difference because we provide consumers with nutritional information right on the menu. We eliminate the guesswork in determining food values for those patrons sticking to a diet to lose weight, for medical
purposes, or are aware of healthy eating habits. Moreover, the portions we serve are realistic; there are no “super” sizes offered at Mary T’s. Rather, serving sizes are those that are recommended by the USDA, and many of our entree choices contain a mix of vegetables, protein, dairy, and carbohydrates.

**Vision**

To be the leading choice for consumers desiring healthy and fresh food options by offering creative menu options, serving food prepared with the freshest ingredients, as well as providing the nutritional information to make an informed decision for what to feed yourself and your family.

**Goals**

The company’s goals are threefold:

1. Offer consumers healthy and fresh menu options, for those on the go and those taking time to sit, enjoy, and savor the flavor.

2. Educate and inform consumers on healthy eating options.

3. Create a work environment that fosters growth, leadership, learning, and creativity.

**Development and Status**

The proposed location of Mary T’s is on the well-trafficked southbound side of Route 9 in Old Bridge, NJ. This strategic site was chosen specifically because of the considerable business potential. A combination of the dense population of the target market and the amount of commuter traffic that occurs at this location during daily rush hour are key components to the success of Mary T’s. Whether a commuter; parent; spouse or single; the concept of the health restaurant is suitable for consumers wanting more information about the foods they eat. In addition to information, these consumers also want quick and fast service, yet healthy and
delicious food. The location is also near many local and chain retail stores, allowing for patrons to run their errands and stop at Mary T’s for a meal as well.

**SWOT Analysis**

An analysis of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) of Mary T’s follows.

**Strengths:**
- new concept: offer nutritional information
- knowledgeable staff in nutrition and product offerings (available on site)
- employees personally know the struggle of losing weight
- fresh, quality ingredients

**Weaknesses:**
- new business
- requires new customers to buy in
- requires financial backing of investors

**Opportunities:**
- growing number of consumers more aware of health/nutrition
- more consumers who are dieting
- as consumers’ schedules become busier, the more they will rely on fast food/restaurants

**Threats:**
- many established restaurants already offer menus with healthier options
- many established restaurants already offer menus geared toward dieters/weight conscious consumers
- may be difficult to have repeat purchases
The following analysis will provide ways in which to capitalize on strengths and opportunities, while attempting to combat any weaknesses and threats.

Industry Analysis

With the current low-carbohydrate craze and focus on losing weight, consumers crave an opportunity to frequent an establishment that fits within their dietary needs. In conjunction with busy schedules, less time to prepare meals, and dietary constraints of consumers, a restaurant that suits these needs is necessary. Following these trends is the key to success for Mary T's.

The Restaurant Industry Today

The restaurant industry is the largest private-sector employer in the United States, with 12 million employees projected for 2004. The National Restaurant Association projects in 2004 there will be 878,000 locations to serve more than 70 billion meal and snack patrons, representing a sales potential of $440.1 billion. Moreover, the restaurant industry is estimated to grow 4.4% in the next year and equal 4% of the U.S. gross domestic product. "A strong desire by Americans to dine out, coupled with a healthy 3% increase in real disposable personal income, will fuel the industry's growth," said Hudson Riehle, the National Restaurant Association's senior vice president of Research and Information Services (para 2, "Industry's 2004 Growth," December 15, 2003).

Future Trends and Strategic Opportunities

Several statistics on the restaurant industry and eating habits support the launch of a restaurant that provides healthy foods along with nutritional information:

- "Nine out of ten Americans purchase convenience-oriented foods, and 25% of those surveyed said they used more such products than they did two years ago" ("What America eats," 2003)
• A study by Children's Hospital Boston "says that close to one-third of American children between the ages of four and 19 consumer fast food every day—which results in their packing on an extra six pounds per kid per year. Do the math. That means that one of these kids, eating fast food once a day every day for 15 years, gains 90 pounds that he or she wouldn't otherwise gain. The study suggests that fast food consumption levels are highest in children of higher-income parents, older children, African-American children, and children living in the south" ("Board the weight loss express," 2004).

• "Since 1971, the obesity rate in the US has more than doubled from 14.5% of US adults to 30.9% in 2000. Women are consuming on average 335 more calories per day than they did in 1971, from 1,542 to 1,877. Men are eating 168 more calories per day than they did in 1971, from 2,450 to 2,618. According the CDC, the calories are coming from carb-laden products such as breads, pastas, sweets, and sugared soft drinks" ("Why are Americans fatter," 2004).

• "According to the NPD Group, about 10 million Americans, or 3.5% of the population, currently is on a low-carb diet" ("Life in the low carb universe," 2004).

• "Sales of low-carb foods reached an estimated $1.4 billion in 2003 and some believe could eventually reach $5 billion" ("Lower carbs, higher sales," 2004).

As a result of these statistics, Mary T's will also provide a line of low-carb food options to appeal to this growing segment, while providing healthy children's menus that are appropriate and appealing to the age group. Combating weight gain and obesity while young are key to overcoming the problem. Moreover, while busy schedules will not wane in the coming years, neither will the need for fast and convenient food options. To help patrons, the menu at Mary T's will significantly cut calories and aid in the fight against obesity.
"According to the National Restaurant Association 2004 Restaurant Industry Forecast, several developments will shape the restaurant industry in 2004. They include:

- Continued expansion, driven by Americans' need for convenience and socialization, and a healthy increase in disposable income.

Mary T's will also incorporate these trends outlined by the National Restaurant Association. Specifically, Mary T's will continually monitor menu items so as to appeal to diners' "sophisticated tastes and heightened interest in health and nutrition."

Products and Related Services

Mary T's will offer a breakfast, lunch, and dinner menu, in addition to options on a coffee, smoothie, and snack bar. Furthermore, Mary T's is unique to the industry because it will offer several ways of consuming the menu options:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Menu Option</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immediate</td>
<td>Fresh menu option; eat right in the restaurant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Later</td>
<td>Fresh menu option; consumer eats at home, within eight hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One to Two Days</td>
<td>Refrigerated menu option; consumer eats within two days (keep refrigerated)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to One Month</td>
<td>Frozen menu option; consumer can store in freezer up to one month</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Menu

Mary T's menu is moderately sized and priced, offering a variety of food options, from breakfast muffins and omelets, to soups, salads, and sandwiches for lunch, and lasagna, turkey burgers, and beef for dinner. Listed on the menu (both paper copies and overhead on the menu
board) are the fiber content, calories, fat grams, carbohydrates, and proteins listed (where applicable) for each item. The common theme of the foods is that they are fresh, healthy, and easy to fit into any diet plan. The foods have a wide range of appeal, allowing options that appeal to children as well as adults.

Our goal is to create a more informed consumer and to offer them a healthier menu to eat on a daily basis. Foods will appeal to both adults and children alike, without sacrificing taste or quality. The foods fit the need and want for good tasting, convenient, fast, and nutritious food.

Below is an example of Mary T's menu.

**Mary T's Sample Menu**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Calories</th>
<th>Fat (g)</th>
<th>Fiber (g)</th>
<th>Carbs</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>BREAKFAST</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLUEBERRY SCONE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This old time favorite is delicious any time of the day!</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZUCCHINI NUT BREAD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended by the Atkins diet. This warm and moist breakfast treat will fill you for your busy mornings!</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGG WHITE WESTERN OMELET</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Includes egg whites, onions, peppers, and tomatoes.</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUPS, SALADS, &amp; SANDWICHES</td>
<td>Mixed greens, tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, and onions create a flavorful mix.</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIXED GREEN SALAD</td>
<td>A delicious blend of black beans, corn, and salsa for an added zip!</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>54.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLACK BEAN SALAD</td>
<td>Delicious any time of the year. A perfect side for many of our dishes.</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POTATO SALAD</td>
<td>A savory blend of carrots, green beans, zucchini, onion, and cabbage in a chicken broth.</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VEGETABLE SOUP</td>
<td>This creamy and rich soup warms you inside out!</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATKINS AVOCADO ZUCCHINI SOUP</td>
<td>Full of fiber and delicious vegetables, including salsa, black beans, zucchini, and fat free Monterey Jack cheese. This is a filling treat for any time of the day.</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENTREES</td>
<td>LOW FAT LASAGNA</td>
<td>BEEF STROGANOFF</td>
<td>SOUTHWESTERN CHEESEBURGERS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This delicious classic Italian meal has been &quot;tweaked&quot; to allow you to indulge!</td>
<td>An old time favorite, available year-round</td>
<td>We use turkey burgers to create this American treat, minus the bun, with chilies, onions, and salsa.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>254</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>338</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>218</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SNACKS AND TREATS</th>
<th>CANNOLI</th>
<th>DUTCH CHOCOLATE CAKE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A delicious treat! Tastes just like the traditional Italian dessert, yet made with fat-free ricotta cheese. Perfectly suited to fit your healthy lifestyle.</td>
<td>Moist and velvety smooth, perfect for any chocolate craving!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>149</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>192</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BEVERAGES</th>
<th>ATKINS CREAMY STRAWBERRY SHAKE</th>
<th>WEIGHT WATCHERS CHOCOLATE VANILLA PROTEIN SHAKE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great any time of the day. Made with real strawberries.</td>
<td>Fortified with calcium and low in POINTS!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>304</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>240</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Production

Food production will take place on site in the kitchen. Fresh vegetables, fruits, and meats will be obtained direct from the seller to create a cuisine that patrons will recognize for its delicious taste and fresh ingredients. Working with a dietician and master chef, the menu will always reflect the goals of Mary T's.

Service

Patrons have three options in purchasing food. All customers will order their food and pay before receiving their order. Then, they have the option of eating within the confines of the quaint café, with the ambiance reflecting that of a coffeehouse. However, patrons may also choose foods from our prepackaged, refrigerated section, to be eaten at home within the next day. Also, Mary T's provides frozen foods, that can be stored up to one month, that are simple to prepare and available whenever necessary. Employees of Mary T's are those already familiar with the struggles of losing weight. Many of our associates will either have lost weight, or are in the process of losing weight. Therefore, they can commiserate with customers. Customers, in turn, can feel assured of our dedication in helping them achieve their weight loss goals.

Future Opportunities

It is expected that Mary T's will gain in popularity and business. Within five years, and after assessing the need and associated costs, Mary T's will offer a delivery service and catering options for customers.

The Target Market

Based on survey data, the targeted customer are females who prepare the majority of meals for her household. The target market was determined based on the answers of those having a favorable response to question 10 of the survey, "I would be interested in a restaurant
that catered to specific diet/weight loss plans, such as Weight Watchers, South Beach, Atkins, Jenny Craig, Nutri System, LA Weight Loss, etc.” Survey results lead one to believe that there is no specific age group to which the restaurant appeals, as those interested in the concept ranged from 18 to over 55. Rather, it attracts all ages and people of all marital status. Because the majority of survey respondents were Caucasian, the target audience would also be Caucasians. Most patrons would live with at least one other person in the household, including both children and adults.

Because of its location, the primary target market would be suburban commuters in the Old Bridge, NJ, vicinity. However, a substantial amount of commuters who pass by the restaurant on their way home from work are also a target, and may live as far south as Freehold or Howell, nearly 45 minutes away. Mary T’s will be a stand-alone building, set in front of retail stores such as Wal-Mart and Lowes Hardware.

Patrons of Mary T’s value price, as well as quality and service. Because of their age and societal status, the coffee-house setting of the restaurant will also appeal to them. The target market is rapidly growing, as more families move into the area and more businesses develop as well.

The restaurant targets those who find it difficult to eat healthy because of time constraints in food preparation. Sixty-two percent of general survey respondents agree, while 71% of those who expressed interest in the restaurant find it difficult to eat healthy due to time constraints in food preparation. As noted in the survey findings (see page 36), the restaurant solves two of the concerns of the surveyed group: providing both healthy and convenient food.

The restaurant is not only for dieters, however, but anyone looking for healthy food alternatives when eating away from home. The restaurant appeals to anyone who simply wants
to eat healthy food that is good for you. As one survey respondent said, “Although I know several people who follow diet plans, I just try to eat a balanced diet of healthy foods. A restaurant with plenty of healthy (whole grain, veggie based), delicious vegetarian choices would appeal to me more than a specific weight loss plan.” In fact, more than 80% agree they would eat a more healthy diet if such foods were convenient to buy and/or eat, while close to 90% of those already interested in the restaurant validate the assumption that they would eat a more healthy diet if such foods were convenient to buy or eat.

In terms of convenience, the target audience is pressed for time. They juggle their career with family and household responsibilities, and thus do not have much spare time to go out of their way to the grocery store to wait in long lines and then take it home to prepare it. Rather, they need a restaurant that is either near their home or on their way home from work. The site of Mary T’s is convenient to both types of traffic.

The greater majority of survey respondents said they would be inclined to eat something that tastes good and is good for you, while nearly 90% of respondents said they are either currently or have in the past attempted to lose weight. Mary T’s targets these customers by offering food that tastes good, is good for you, and is consistent with healthy eating habits.

The Competition

Competitors of Mary T’s are those who offer healthy food options to their patrons, while targeting the weight conscious/dieting consumers. Because of the heightened awareness of carbohydrate control, many restaurants and eating establishments are targeting this potential customer, from fast food chains such as McDonalds to sit down restaurants such as Applebee’s. However, Mary T’s primary competition stems from the restaurants whose main goal is to serve fresh and healthy meal options, instead of fast food with some healthy alternatives also available.
Following is a chart detailing the major competition in the area.

**Competitor Profile**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Menu Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Panera Bread</td>
<td>Chain</td>
<td>Counter service; eat in and take out available</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Breads, soups, sandwiches, salads, pastries. Fresh ingredients with creative menu options (<a href="http://www.panerabread.com">www.panerabread.com</a>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applebee's</td>
<td>Chain</td>
<td>Full table service; take out also available</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Offers Weight Watchers test menu; variety of meal options including soups, salads, and chicken dishes (<a href="http://www.applebees.com">www.applebees.com</a>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby Tuesdays</td>
<td>Chain</td>
<td>Full table service; take out also available</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>“Smart Eating” menu, offering appetizers, salads, sandwich, entrees, and desserts to aid dieters. Fried foods now cooked in canola oil. Salad bar includes low carb choices (<a href="http://www.rubytuesday.com/SE/default.htm">www.rubytuesday.com/SE/default.htm</a>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TGI Fridays</td>
<td>Chain</td>
<td>Full table service; take out also available</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Offers Atkins approved menu, as well as salad bar, soups, sandwiches, and entrees (<a href="http://www.tgifridays.com/menu/atkins.htm">www.tgifridays.com/menu/atkins.htm</a>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subway</td>
<td>Fast food/sandwich shop</td>
<td>Counter service; eat in and take out available</td>
<td>Inexpensive</td>
<td>“Eat Fresh” – specializes in sandwiches that help count carbs, lose weight, and/or eat healthy (<a href="http://www.subway.com">www.subway.com</a>).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Competitive Strategy**

To differentiate Mary T’s from our competitors, our advantage will be gained in three ways:

- *Serving creative menu options, using only the freshest ingredients*
Dieticians, nutritionists, and chefs will work together to develop the menu at Mary T's to ensure that the options are not only delicious but contain the recommended nutrients and portion sizes.

- **Providing nutritional information on the menu**

  While many restaurants are now beginning to provide customers with nutritional information, often times it is contained in pamphlets that are not visible, easily accessible, or require the patron to ask an employee for the information. Nutritional information at Mary T's will always be visible and easily accessible.

- **Offering fast, reliable service; with a staff cognizant of nutritional information and the struggles of losing weight**

  In addition to the necessary elements of having fast and friendly service, associates at Mary T's will also have an extended knowledge of the menu and can offer information, suggestions, and recommendations to customers inquiring about menu choices for their particular needs. Also, they know how difficult it can be to lose weight, so can offer customers support. An on-staff registered dietitian will also be available to answer patrons' questions.

**Marketing Plan and Sales Strategy**

The marketing strategy of Mary T's is based on four important factors:

- Food items offered meet the basic need of eating, and offer good nutritional value.

- The menu is moderately priced to reflect the freshness of the ingredients used to prepare the foods, as well as the quality of the product. Also, the information available to the customers through our dietician and employees is built into the price of the foods offered. The typical customer comes from a double income household who does not have much
time to spend on preparing meals, so they can afford to pay slightly more when considering their health as well as their family’s.

- It is easy and convenient to purchase foods, whether fresh, refrigerated, or frozen options.
- The product makes the customer feel confident in themselves and the company. They know they are treating themselves well: eating right and getting the proper nutrients, and have confidence in Mary T’s.

**Market Penetration**

Entry into the market should not be difficult, considering both the need and want for a restaurant of this nature, and the location of the restaurant. The store is highly visible from the main highway, and will also receive business from customers of nearby stores. Of note, $15,000 has been allocated for pre-opening and opening advertising and a public relations campaign.

**Marketing Strategy**

A mix of several marketing vehicles will be employed to reach potential customers:

- Brochures, flyers and leaflets will be available both in store as well as at local businesses.
- Newspaper advertisements both leading up to the grand opening of the store as well as during the first three months of the launch.
- Broadcast media will be employed by capitalizing on radio stations, such as WPLJ 95.5 FM (New York), WJLK 94.3 FM (Ocean), and WMGQ 98.3 FM (New Brunswick) to reach the target audience, as well as in movie theatres, shown on the screen before the movie begins.
- Direct mail, coupons, and Val-pak coupons will be sent to the target market.
- Signs both on the store and on billboards.
- Point of sale devices, promotions, and employee practices (ex: suggestive selling).
• Sampling.
• Public relations, for both event planning and to generate publicity for the restaurant.

An advertising firm will be contracted to help develop specific messages, themes, and events to apply to the marketing vehicles.

The campaign will be divided into three phases:

1. Pre-opening: to create awareness of the store. The distribution of brochures, direct mailers with coupons, radio spots, and on store marketing will be used. Budget - $5,000.

2. Opening: a press packet sent out by the advertising agency to all media to attract attention. Billboards, radio advertisements, continued direct mailers will be used, as well as sampling and promotions. Budget - $10,000.

3. Ongoing: Continued target marketing by way of radio spots, movie theatre advertisements, billboards, and on store signs, as well as sampling and in store promotions. Budget - $5,000.

4. Point of sale: staff can increase average order size by their extensive knowledge of the product line by suggestive selling. Also, word of mouth is a key component.

Marketing goals include continuing to spread the message of the restaurant, as well as penetrating 70% of the market at the six month mark. The effectiveness of the campaign will be monitored by in store surveys, as well as analyzing the amount of money spent on advertising versus sales. This analysis will continually be performed, starting after one month of operations, and assessed regularly for effectiveness.
Future Plans

Catering and home/office delivery may be viable options dependent on sales and business growth. Construction of a second restaurant may also be a viable possibility, which would include a drive-up window.

Operations

Facilities

Mary T's will be located on the southbound side of Route 9 in Old Bridge, NJ. Accessibility and visibility from the highway, nearby anchor stores that will provide foot traffic, as well as parking availability are all considerations for the site. In addition, a site that would be easily expanded is desirable. When a lease is signed, a lawyer will be present to ensure all key aspects are accounted for, and that Mary T's is fully protected. The ideal lease will be for five years. Depending on the site, improvements may be necessary, including new floors, walls, and equipment. Furniture, stoves, ovens, and all necessary equipment will be purchased in new or nearly new condition and installed by the general contractor. Offices of Mary T's will be located at Mary Savner's home, although will be moved to the restaurant after opening.

Hours of Operation

Mary T's will open for breakfast at 6am and serve through the dinner hours, while closing at 9pm, seven days a week. The restaurant will be closed on Thanksgiving, Easter, and Christmas.

Layout

A large portion of the restaurant will be designated for the kitchen, front counters with registers, as well as the refrigerators and freezers that offer pre-packaged options. In addition,
Mary T’s has seating capacity for 76 people, on a carpeted section of the restaurant. Plush couches and tables will also be available for a more comfortable, relaxed dining experience.

**Production**

Mary Savner, as well as the head chef, nutritionist, and dietician will work together to create the original menu. Subsequently, menu options may be added or removed, depending on customer opinions and habits. Ingredients will be purchased fresh, although may be frozen afterwards for storage purposes. The head chef will give his expert advice on where and when to purchase the products, specifically perishable items. Training will be available to his staff on how to create each menu item, with each member having a forte for different menu options. For example, Mary T’s will employ a baker for the breakfast and snack bar items, a staff member for salads, soups, and wraps, and a chef for the dinner entrees.

The owner and President of the restaurant is Mary Savner. Of note, all employees will have struggled with their own weight loss issues, including the President. The customer knows that they are dealing with someone equally as concerned with eating healthy and maintaining a healthy diet.

There will be a general manager of the restaurant, along with three assistant managers. The assistant managers will be scheduled throughout the day to oversee the operations of the store. A bookkeeper will oversee the financials of the restaurant. In addition to the chef and his team, a kitchen support staff will be available to the head chef. There will also be cashiers knowledgeable in the products, who not only will ring up orders but provide fountain drinks and items from the smoothie bar. It is also necessary to have two dishwashers and bus people, to clean up the tables. Managers and the bookkeeper will be paid a salary, in addition to the head.
chef, nutritionist, and dietician. The remaining team members will begin at $6.50, although may increase based on performance and previous work experience.

Since food is prepared on the premises, quality control is of utmost importance. Regularly scheduled sanitation checks will be put in place to comply with health standards. Of note, tests of employees and training to ensure knowledge of the products will be put in place. An incentive program will be in place for the front staff, enticing them to increase their point of sale purchases. Rewards programs to create new menu options may also be put in place.

Cost Controls

Inventory will be checked after 9pm on a weekly basis. It will be maintained electronically, with a system in place to alert the manager when an order for new product needs to be placed. Fountain and bottled beverages as well as ingredients for menu choices will be maintained. All four managers will be trained on inventory checks, and the head chef will have input on the amounts of food to be ordered. In addition, food prices will also be monitored to ensure we are receiving the correct market price for the product we obtain.

Continued training is important to the culture at Mary T’s. The goal is to have almost all employees cross-trained on each job responsibility. As the business grows, those employees seeking a management role will be trained appropriately.

Customer Service

All employees will be ingrained with the culture of Mary T’s, including ensuring the happiness of the customer. Customers will come to Mary T’s not only because of our product offerings, but also because of the knowledgeable staff who are able to answer their questions. It is imperative that all team members are not only familiar with the menu and can make sound suggestions, but also do it with an upbeat and pleasant attitude.
Comment cards will be available at the counter as well as at the tables. Customers are encouraged to fill one out, whether they have a pleasant or unpleasant experience. Team members will be rewarded for a certain number of positive comments, while counseled over negative complaints.

**Management and Organization**

*Principles and Principals*

Mary Savner will be the President, while the general manager, nutritionist, and dietician will report directly to her. Miss Savner is the creator of Mary T’s, and brings many valuable years of experience to the restaurant. Her exposure to the restaurant industry while waitressing, her own weight struggle, as well as her work in the food industry help her to run the business. Moreover, her dedication to offering a restaurant with these types of menu offerings has been her dream for many years. Her management style encourages others to be excited about the business venture, always ensuring that the customer and their health come first.

The three assistant managers, in turn, will report to the general manager, as will the head chef. The kitchen staff will report to the head chef, while the remaining employees will report to the assistant managers.

Management style will always reflect the foundation of the restaurant, that of offering customers healthy dining options, as well as provide an environment that fosters growth, leadership, learning, and creativity. Team members will be cross trained on job functions, and managers will be supportive of employees wishing to improve their job function. Managers will observe employees to ensure that they are informed on menu options and able to recommend and sell our products to customers, dependent on their needs and wants.
As noted above, three assistant managers and a bookkeeper will also ensure that the business is run properly and obtains a profit. These team members are yet to be hired.

Compensations and Incentives

A competitive salary will be offered to the management team to ensure their dedication to work and continued success in their job function. Based on net sales, a bonus program may also be put in place.

Consultants and Professional Support Services

Several consultants will be necessary to run the business. A financial consultant will be used to advise the management team on ways to cut costs and assess business growth, while an accountant will work with the bookkeeper to track net losses and gains. An attorney will also be on retainer for advisement on contracts and employee matters. An advertising firm will also be hired to spread the word of the restaurant through several marketing vehicles. Moreover, the expertise of the dietician and nutritionist on staff is imperative to offering fresh and nutritious menu choices. In addition, a design team will help in the layout of Mary T's.

Long-Term Development and Exit Plan

The ultimate goal of Mary T's is to be the restaurant of choice of consumers desiring healthy and fast food, whether they are on the go or able sit and enjoy their meal in house. We target the growing market of consumers not only attempting to eat healthy, but also lose weight, cut carbohydrates, or develop new eating habits. Based on survey analysis, it is assumed that the venture will not only be welcomed, but profitable as well.

Mary T's will be an innovator in the field of restaurants, not only offering healthy food options, but the nutritional information that accompanies it so that consumers have a wide
variety of menu options available to them and can make informed decisions. In addition, the staff of Mary T's will have knowledge of the food and be able to recommend foods to customers. We will develop a reputation for excellence in unique menu offerings, quality, and freshness. While just beginning, the ultimate goal is to become a leader in the marketplace and expand our offerings to include catering and home/office delivery.

Over time, Mary T's will develop its niche as the predominant leader of healthy food options, served by informed employees who respect customers' time and dietary needs. Specifically, in five years we hope to open another location based on the same characteristics of the original Old Bridge location.

Strategies

Goals will be attained by marketing and advertising the restaurant, through the aid of the advertising agency. Business will increase due to promotions, specials, and coupons, although the staple rules of running the business will always be adhered to. As customers gain allegiance to Mary T's, the menu may be expanded as well as the services provided.

Milestones

After assessing the business for one year, in terms of sales and customer counts, expanding the offerings of Mary T's will be considered, such as catering, delivery, take out window, or the establishment of a second location.

By mid year 2004, we plan to have financing secured, the lease signed, and the general manager hired. September 2004 would be an ideal time to open the restaurant, as many people decide to lose weight after Labor Day, and their schedules become more harried when children go back to school. The projected sales level should be reached by March 2005, six months after opening. After three years of operation and based on sales during the first year of the primary
location, a second location may be planned. Additionally, the menu will be evaluated after one year to determine what options should remain, and look to customer comments for any new items.

**Risk Evaluation**

Because this is a new offering to consumers, there is risk involved. The success of the restaurant depends, in part, on the actual product, the strength of the marketing program, the services offered, and word of mouth. Initial buy-in may be slow, but in time it is projected that sales will increase. However, competitors may copy our offerings, although may take time to determine the nutritional information of their current menu options.

**Exit Plan**

In ten years, Mary T’s would consider franchising the business, expanding out of New Jersey and across the United States. If projected sales are not met during the first two years of operations, however, the restaurant should either be sold or closed.
Chapter V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Throughout the course of researching the topic of dieting and eating habits of the American public, many stories and changes occurred. Low carb diets continue to increase in popularity, while the CDC fiercely warned against the perils of obesity and inactivity. While consumer groups threaten to sue the food industry for their weight problems, an underlying problem continues to become clearer: the American public is gaining weight at a rapid rate and in turn, trying to lose this weight. Based on evidence both in the media and from survey results, several conclusions can be made about American society, their eating habits, the way they eat, and how they are all incorporated.

The current trends indicate that Americans are continuing to gain weight and become overweight. In a story reported in March 2004, the Centers for Disease Control warned Americans that they are in danger of eating themselves to death. In an alarming and noteworthy story issued by the CDC, they warned customers of the deadly price of a lack of exercise and poor diet. The CDC found that in 2000, “poor diet including obesity and physical inactivity caused 400,000 U.S. deaths—more than 16% of all deaths and the number two killer. That compares with 435,000 for tobacco, or 18%, as the top underlying killer.” It went on further to explain, “Obesity and inactivity increase the risks for the top three killers: heart disease, cancer, and cerebrovascular ailments including strokes. Obesity and inactivity also strongly increase the risk of diabetes, the sixth leading cause of death” (“CDC: Obesity gains,” 2004).

As detailed throughout the last four chapters, there is a large consumer base aware of the dangers of obesity and being overweight, and are taking up the challenge and either dieting or changing their eating habits. It is a struggle for many that is difficult to overcome. Many
wanting a quick and easy solution turn to diets such as Atkins or South Beach for quick and visible results. Others join organized weight loss programs like Weight Watchers or Jenny Craig for group support. In all cases, however, prescribing to a different style and habit of eating, and being committed to the change, are keys in changing the numbers on the scale.

Moreover, the success of the low carbohydrate diets cannot be ignored. While many nutritionists and health experts debate the benefits and dangers of such a diet, the food industry is catering to the group by offering more products that have reduced carbs or no carbs at all. As noted by Kevin Coupe in his daily Morning News Beat webpage, “the low-carb business was roughly a $1.5 billion business last year, but experts believe it can almost double in 2004, and then double yet again in 2005” (“High business,” 2004). While many food groups such as potatoes and breads suffer, the meat industry benefits as consumers eat more proteins and/or fats to lose excess pounds. Tracking these eating habits and offering foods that appeal to this group will have a large impact on the success of Mary T’s.

While many in the food industry claim to offer products and services aiding in weight loss, it seems in certain instances as though the food industry, more specifically fast food chains and restaurants, is making the task more difficult. Portion sizes are several times of that recommended, while consumers remember from their childhood to “eat everything on their plate” or to “remember the starving people of the world.” It is a habit to eat whatever is in front of you, and a hard one to break. An establishment such as Mary T’s understands this mindset and instead will offer reasonable size portions.

There is a certain culture of the dieting public, as outlined in Chapter Two. Members of this culture have at least one goal: to shed excess pounds. Whether they have a short term goal, such as shedding pounds and inches for a reunion, or are committed to making a lifestyle change
in their eating habits, the goal is the same: losing weight. This is a large culture and one that cannot, and for the most part has not been, ignored. Food manufacturers label their foods "low calories" or "low fat" and now "low carbs" to appeal to this sector. Very few, if any, restaurants are dedicated solely to filling the needs of this population. As a member of the culture, the author understands the struggles of losing weight and the difficulties faced daily in making good choices when eating. As a result, Mary T's can cater to the needs of this growing group of Americans.

Harried schedules and limited family time complicate the task of eating healthy for many. Time constraints and different eating preferences challenge many families who often resort to fast food to fill their family's needs. Through the survey process and by talking to many people throughout the last six months, those who prepare foods for their families desire to give their families balanced meals, yet time to prepare such foods is difficult. Based on survey information, 62% of respondents find it difficult to eat healthy because of time preparation. Eighty three percent also concede that they would eat a more healthy diet if such foods were convenient to buy and/or eat. Mary T's recognizes this need and attempts to solve it. Mary T's is a place where families can go and feel assured they are eating balanced, nutritious meals.

The problem of overeating and being overweight not only has detrimental effects on our own health, but it also teaches children these bad eating habits. While "more than 50% of U.S. adults are overweight, 12% of school-aged children are obese, twice the number reported 20 years ago" (Kozup, 2003). Because of the business of the day, and because many are not able to prepare home cooked meals, children rely on fast food for their nutrition. With larger portions, in conjunction with the number of fat grams, saturated fat, and calories in one portion at McDonald's, the next generation is plagued with the same weight problems as the adults of
today. Twenty years ago Americans ate less than they do today, due in large part to portion size. An article from Jane Andrews reveals, "Even today's cookbook recipes provide larger servings than they did back in the early 80s. Lest you think I'm overgenerlizing, the American Medical Association reported in the January 2003 issue that the portions we now eat have:

- 93 more calories in salty snacks
- 49 more calories in soft drinks
- 50 more calories in fruit drinks
- 97 more calories in a hamburger sandwich
- 133 more calories in Mexican food (Andrews, n.d.)

Many take for granted that there are certain values that many consumers still have, whether or not they are consciously aware of them. For example, having a balanced, healthy diet was important to 89% of survey respondents. Of this same group, 79% do their best at eating and preparing healthy foods for themselves and their family. Further, and most telling, 93% said they would be inclined to eat something that both tastes good and is good for you.

Today's Mary T's

Since the original proposal of Mary T's began in October 2003, many changes and trends have occurred within the food industry, furthering the case for a restaurant appealing to the health and weight conscious consumer. Because the food industry is ever-changing, based in part on the changing needs and wants of the consumer, launching a restaurant such as Mary T's in a timely manner that caters to all of these needs is a difficult task. Already established chains, such as Ruby Tuesdays and Subway, have the name recognition, capital, and facilities to bring about changes in menu options to aid and influence the consumer in their attempts to eat healthy.
The following changes within the food industry and national chains are evidence that support the author’s survey findings.

In an important legislative move, the House of Representatives approved a bill on March 10, 2004 to ban lawsuits by obese customers who say they became overweight by eating at fast-food restaurants (Barrett, 2004). In conjunction with obesity and inactivity being the second leading causes of death in America, these two examples further the case of taking responsibility for one’s own actions. Our country is eating itself to death. Americans must take responsibility for their actions by being aware of the components of a healthy diet, which includes eating fruits and vegetables, less fried food, and exercising portion control. As evidenced in previous chapters, many restaurants in the food industry are not making these eating decisions easier, by offering enormous portions, less vegetables, and fried foods dripping with grease and butter. Mary T’s is designed to help the consumer looking to reduce the risk of obesity by offering healthier food options and more realistic food portions.

In turn, many eating establishments are realizing the importance of appealing to the health and weight conscious, as the popularity of diets such as Atkins and South Beach grow. McDonald’s is phasing out their supersize fries and drink options “in an effort to simplify its menu and give customers choices that support a balanced lifestyle” (“McDonald's phasing out,” 2004). Ruby Tuesday’s is also recognizing the large customer group seeking information about their food choices. The chain will “provide nutritional information about all of its meals directly on its menu as it aims to increase its appeal among health-conscious American diners” (“Ruby Tuesday posts,” 2004).

The task of Mary T’s is not only to provide nutritional information, like Ruby Tuesday’s, or to decrease the size of an already large portion. Rather, Mary T’s main effort is to start with
healthy meals that also include nutritional information and are a reasonable portion size. Furthermore, taste will not be sacrificed in order to garner these results. Fresh and natural ingredients will be used to prepare the foods. Many restaurants have difficulty in using fresh and natural ingredients because of cost, the large quantities of food they are producing, or because of storage purposes. However, eating at Mary T's will be different. It could, in essence, be compared to eating in your own kitchen, using ingredients you could purchase at the supermarket. Customers will recognize this niche and feel assured that if they had the time and resources to cook meals for their families, it would be similar to the menu offered at Mary T's.

The personal relevance of the topic selected for the thesis resonates not only with the author, but any person seeking to lead a healthier lifestyle that includes eating a balanced diet. With harried schedules and the ease and convenience of fast food restaurants, this goal is difficult to attain. The needs of the American public are changing, however, and a restaurant targeting this sector is a viable undertaking. As more consumers become aware of unhealthy eating habits and desire to change, Mary T's will become a success for the long term.
List of References


Appendix A

- Survey
- Demographic Result
Part II: Optional Questions
Please answer any or all of the following questions.

Gender: □ Male    □ Female

Age:    □ 18-24 □ 25-39 □ 40-54 □ 55 and above

Marital Status: □ Single □ Married □ Divorced □ Widowed

Household Size: □ 1 □ 2 □ 3 □ 4 □ 5 □ 6 □ 7 or more

How many people under the age of 18 live in your household? ________

What is your race? (Check all that apply)
□ Asian □ American Indian □ Black □ Caucasian □ Hispanic

Do you prepare the majority of meals for your household?
□ Yes □ No
## Demographic Results

**Base=188**

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