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Breaking News on Food & Beverage Development - North America

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Latino food guide promotes healthy eating

By Lorraine Heller

5/8/2007- **A Latino food pyramid and shopping guide was launched in the US last week, as part of a campaign to make the nation's Hispanic population eat better.**

The 16-page pocket-sized bilingual pamphlet, based on traditional Latino eating patterns, is designed to address the individual dietary and health needs of this growing segment of the US population.

Developed by the nutrition group Oldways and its subsidiary Latino Nutrition Coalition (LNC), *Camino Magico* - or Magic Road - emphasizes the importance of daily consumption of fruits and vegetables, as well as beans, grains tubers and nuts. For each food group, the guide recommends products from a variety of traditional Latino cultures.

Examples of Latin American foods in these groups include eggplant, chili, okra, avocado, papaya, maize, amaranth and sweet potato.

The new guide, launched in Fiesta supermarkets in Houston, targets consumers where they make most of their dietary choices. Nationwide launches are expected to follow, in Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, Miami and Boston, with variations of the guide planned for different regional markets.

The guide contains easy-to-understand nutritional tools, such as a newly redesigned Latin American Diet Pyramid, a calorie control guide and a guide to reading food labels. It also provides examples of the types of products that contribute to a healthy diet for Latino consumers.

Latino consumers are being increasingly targeted for their individual nutritional needs, not only due to their taste preferences but also their different health profile.

This population group is twice as likely as Caucasian Americans to develop diabetes, according to the American Diabetes Association. Two million Hispanics currently suffer from diabetes, while over 60 percent are classed as overweight.

This 'genetic predisposition' to health has prompted a number of nutrition groups to encourage good eating habits designed specifically for this segment of the population.

Oldways has been at the forefront of these efforts, establishing its first dietary pyramid for Hispanics in the 1990's. It founded LNC three years ago, which has since been working with industry, scientists and culinary experts to create programs to encourage healthy eating in this population segment. As well as the supermarket guide, other efforts include in-store grocery programs, health clinic programs, school initiatives and product packaging programs.

According to estimates by Hispanic Telligence, based on an analysis of US Bureau of Economic Analysis figures, the Hispanic purchasing power between 1994 and 2004 revealed a compound annual growth rate of 7.7 percent- nearly three times the 2.8 percent total US rate of disposable income.

The buying power of Latinos in 2005 totaled \$768bn, demonstrating the growing importance of this consumer segment. This has resulted in a stream of new foods and flavors appearing on the US market, designed specifically to appeal to Hispanic tastes. But initiatives such as those by LNC are increasingly highlighting the importance of the nutritional value of foods targeting Hispanics.

And in the vein of the functional food trend sweeping the nation, an increased consumer awareness of the nutritional needs of Hispanics will lead to a growing demand for foods that meet

these needs.

To view a PDF version of LNC's *Camino Magico* guide, click [here](#).

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