Myth: dairy products contain essential nutrients, grains should make up a significant portion of your daily calories, and there is no need to eat fat.

It is important to understand the current dietary guidelines recommended by mainstream sources, because health care practitioners use them as their guide. Inasmuch as doctors don’t consider diet as the core emphasis within their scope of responsibility, in order to preserve and improve our health, we must have the ability to discern between correct and incorrect information.

Most health practitioners, hospitals, and schools use the federal government’s guidelines as their benchmark. In 2011 the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) launched MyPlate, a visual replacement for the previous guidelines known as My Pyramid.

My Pyramid, released in 2005, was an update from the old Food Pyramid, which was first unveiled in 1992. My Pyramid was essentially the old pyramid turned on its side, with the pyramid sliced into colorful, vertical segments, touting itself as an “interactive food guidance system.” My Pyramid was taught in many schools, and displayed on food labels and cereal boxes.
Unfortunately, My Pyramid was built on the wrong foundation – and so is the latest government nutritional guide, MyPlate.

**MyPlate Is Clearly Flawed**

At first glance, MyPlate can look pretty good. It is colorful, heavy on fruits and vegetables, and with no sugar or fat in sight. But on closer scrutiny, MyPlate is not based on sound nutritional science - instead, just like its predecessor, it reflects various food industry interests.

The USDA’s MyPlate is supposed to be based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which by law must be revised every five years. According to the USDA’s own language, the Dietary Guidelines are key recommendations for the general population that “…provide authoritative advice for people two years and older about how good dietary habits can promote health and reduce risk for major chronic diseases.”

Note the word “authoritative.” This terminology does not invite questioning, but when it comes to governmental nutrition advice, questioning is essential, and you’ll soon see why.

**A Closer Look At The Foods Mandated On MyPlate**

Instead of servings, MyPlate recommends proportions, which can be clearly seen in the pie-like divisions on the plate illustration. MyPlate encourages Americans to “focus on making healthy food and beverage choices from all five food groups…to get the nutrients you need.” MyPlate also recommends food consumption that fits each individual’s personal caloric needs.
So far so good. But now, let’s dissect MyPlate further, so we can look at its recommendations in terms of a single meal. Following MyPlate guidelines, a typical meal should consist of the following:

- Half of a meal should be fruits and vegetables. Vegetables should make up slightly more than one-fourth of the total meal, and fruits slightly less than one-fourth. Two-and-a-half to three cups of vegetables and one-and-a-half cups of fruits are recommended each day for adults.

- The amount of protein consumed at each meal should be equal to the amount of fruits (a little less than one-fourth of your total meal). Protein products include meat, poultry, seafood, beans and peas, eggs, processed soy products, nuts, and seeds. Five-and-a-half to six-and-a-half ounce-equivalent servings of protein are recommended each day. An “ounce-equivalent” is basically a new term for a serving, with one ounce of beef and one egg being examples of an “ounce-equivalent.” To get six of these, you’d need to eat two ounce-equivalents per meal.

- The amount of grains consumed at each meal should be equal to the amount of vegetables – slightly more than one-fourth the total meal. Grains include wheat, rice, oats, cornmeal, barley, and any cereal grain; and grain products like bread, pasta, oatmeal, breakfast cereals, tortillas, and grits. The recommended amount is six ounce-equivalents a day of grains, with at least half of those being whole grains. One slice of bread or half a cup of rice are examples of ounce-equivalents. So that means two ounce-equivalents per meal.
• Each meal should include a cup of milk or yogurt, because at least three cups of dairy products (or 2 ounces processed cheese or 1.5 ounces hard cheese) are recommended each day.

3 to 5 servings of vegetables

Looking over these recommendations, one can’t help but get the impression that there’s not really anything new here; it’s just a convoluted rearrangement of the old recommendations, with one notable exception: no fats or oils are mentioned at all.

Given the importance of healthful fats in many biological processes, it’s baffling as to why there is not a small segment on MyPlate that recommends fats like Omega-3 fish oil and olive oil.

Upon closer inspection, there are suspicious omissions and inclusions. For example, when compared to the Harvard School of Public Health’s Healthy Eating Plate, MyPlate is heavier on grains and fruits, and includes potatoes as a vegetable rather than a starch.

In addition, Harvard’s Healthy Eating Plate specifically notes that French fries are not a vegetable, whereas MyPlate is silent in this regard.

And as it relates to dairy, the Healthy Eating Plate doesn’t include it at all, and suggests limiting dairy intake to two servings a day instead of three.

Why the differences between these two organization’s nutritional plans?

This brings us to the shady motivations behind government nutritional recommendations: the financial interests of powerful lobbies.

Lobbyists On MyPlate…And Yours

It’s important to bear in mind that the USDA’s Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) are extremely powerful. Think about it – the Guidelines influence school lunch policies, special assistance programs, food
distribution programs, and any government nutritional venture. The DGA also greatly influences farming practices, and vice versa.

In fact, the DGA has enormous economic impact. By setting the benchmark for federal nutrition programs, the DGA controls how billions of dollars are spent (or not spent) every year. Even small changes in the DGA can translate into millions of dollars gained or lost by food manufacturers and producers. A soybean farmer, for instance, could lose tremendous amounts of revenue if the DGA decided to recommend decreasing or cutting out soy products.

What the general public is often unaware of is that various foods and food groups are represented by extremely powerful lobbies, such as the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association, American Meat Institute, Wheat Foods Council, Soft Drink Association, National Dairy Council, and United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association (to name a few). These lobbyists greatly influence the process of choosing the authors, members, and consultants of the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee, made up of researchers and scientists in the fields of nutrition, health, and medicine.

According to an article published in The Wall Street Journal on August 8th, 2003 by L. Abboud, titled, “Expect a Food Fight as U.S. Sets to Revise Diet Guidelines,” choosing the panel members is a difficult and politicized undertaking. It is difficult to believe that members of the panel can remain truly neutral to the huge financial repercussions their recommendations mean to different sectors of the food industry.

To better understand this, let’s take a quick look at the USDA’s history.

The Original Purpose Of The USDA

The USDA was created way back in 1862, and its original purpose was twofold: to educate the public as to food policy and agricultural issues, and to work closely with food producers so as to promote a consistent food supply.
In other words, the USDA is responsible for creating and developing markets for various agricultural products. And the market consists of everyone who eats food, which is...well, everyone.

So from the USDA’s inception, the stage was set for conflicts of interest between the needs of industry and the public. Invariably, the crops that farmers are given incentive to grow and the foods people want or need to eat will be at odds at one time or another.

So how does the USDA handle this complex balancing act? The answer can be found in the USDA’s history.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, the USDA was given increasing power. With each new piece of legislation that was intended to help feed the poor and boost various struggling agricultural markets, the USDA’s power grew.

In 1937, the USDA was granted the authority to control the markets of milk and various crops, such as peanuts, corn, wheat, rice, tobacco, livestock - to name a few. They did so by imposing price controls and surplus stockpiling.

Amazingly, many of these archaic laws are still in effect today. For example, the foods recommended in government nutrition and distribution programs, such as the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program and the School Breakfast Program, consist of surplus crops for which there is a poor market. Including them in such programs creates a market for them. In other words, these foods are not chosen for their nutritional value.

This brings us to the question of which foods are chosen for the national guidelines, and why. By now, you’re surely getting a pretty good idea of how this process works. To reveal more about the mysterious business of food approval and recommendation, we need to take another look back in time.
Whatever Happened To The Basic Four?

You may remember the Basic Four Food Plan of the late 1970s. At that time, public opinion was that cholesterol and fat were the culprits behind diet-related diseases, such as cardiovascular disease. Scientists called for a revision of the Basic Four Food Plan, and the Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs presented a revised plan that recommended greatly reducing consumption of saturated fat, cholesterol, and total fat. This meant the new recommendations called for less whole milk and less beef, because this was perceived as being in the public’s best interest.

But the cattle and dairy lobbies had financial interests of their own that conflicted with these recommendations, so they pressured government officials to revise them and instead, advise “low-fat/non-fat milk” and “lean beef” instead of “less milk and beef.”

This ties in with agricultural subsidies offered by the government to encourage farmers to grow certain foods. Every five to seven years the U.S. Congress passes another “Farm Bill” that determines which foods will receive subsidies. This necessitates the creation of artificially high markets for whatever foods the government subsidizes, and this practice often results in surpluses. In the last couple of decades, corn, soy, rice, and wheat have been (and still are) the most heavily subsidized crops.

Now it starts to make sense as to why grains are such a large segment of MyPlate, and why soybean oil and high fructose corn syrup are found in so many foods. It also sheds light on the prevalence of grain-fed cattle, and the persistence of obesity and chronic disease in the United States.

1992: The USDA Caves To Special Interests… Again

In 1992, the Food Guide Pyramid was on the cusp of being unveiled. But before the unveiling, a group of food producers, headed by the National Cattlemen’s Association in alliance with the National Milk Producers Federation, met with the Secretary of Agriculture to complain about the
new pyramid's recommendations. They claimed the new recommendations would harm the sale of beef and other products.

The USDA caved under the pressure, and changed no fewer than 33 of its recommendations to accommodate the demands of the meat and dairy associations.

This sheds light on why the public stays confused about what, exactly, constitutes healthy eating. Dr. David Katz, the director of Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center, has expressed. “extreme disappointment in how the political process so thoroughly coopted what begins as science.”

Speaking of science, the financially-driven USDA supports still another food product that has the potential to negatively affect human health and the environment on a significant scale: genetically modified foods or GMOs.

The USDA Has The Power To “Approve” Genetically Engineered Of Seeds

The “Monsanto Protection Act” signed into law in 2015, gives the USDA massive power to grant agricultural companies approval to plant genetically-engineered seeds…and the USDA enjoys federal protection even if the approvals are challenged in court.

Not surprisingly, biotechnology giant Monsanto has a keen interest in protecting GMO crops, because they are much more lucrative than traditional seeds. Farmers must purchase new seeds each year and pay the attenuating royalties, since GMO seeds are patented.

Putting It All In Perspective

Now MyPlate's omission of healthful fats and inclusion of dairy as a food group that should be consumed at every meal begin to make sense. Food items that contain healthful fats, such as flax seeds, are not subsidized by the government, and there is no surplus. And the dairy industry, as mentioned earlier, has successfully convinced the government to legislate in their favor so they can pursue their own financial interests.
So now we have the answer to the reason why healthful foods are more expensive. That’s because we, the consumers, have to “make up” for what “Big Agro” is not reaping in profits through artificially manipulated markets.

**What Does This Mean For Bone Health?**

That brings us back to osteoporosis, osteopenia, and bone health. The bottom line is, you can’t trust the government’s recommendations for optimal nutrition, including bone health.

Here’s a good example. According to the Harvard study mentioned earlier in this chapter, the recommendation of dairy products “ignores the lack of evidence for a link between consumption of dairy products and prevention of osteoporosis.” Additionally, it is a confirmed fact that countries that consume large amounts of cows’ milk have high rates of the calcification form of heart disease and of diagnosed osteoporosis in the hip areas. Countries consuming virtually no dairy products, such as Japan, have lower levels of osteoporosis than the United States, and the lowest rates of heart disease and cancer in the world.

This makes sense if we realize that we are the only living species that drinks the milk of another species. Monkeys don’t drink zebra milk, cows don’t drink goat milk. In fact, if they did, they would get very sick.

Here are more shocking statistics that I found in my research:

1. Americans have one of the world’s highest calcium intakes from dairy products but still have one of the world’s highest rates of diagnosed osteoporosis.

2. African women in the United States eat at least four times more calcium than African women in Africa and have nine times more osteoporosis diagnoses.
3. Asian women in the United States eat at least 60% more calcium than Asian women in Asia, and have nine times more osteoporosis diagnoses.

4. Post-menopausal women in America who consume calcium-rich dairy products have over three times more osteoporosis diagnoses than those who do not.

5. Women who drink two or more glasses of milk per day increase their risk of fractures compared with women who drink less than one glass per week; consumption of yogurt, cheese, and other dairy products also increase the risk of fractures. Something is obviously wrong with this picture.

Yet the USDA persists in recommending dairy products at every single meal. Something is obviously wrong with this picture.
LETS SUMMARIZE

MyPlate, formerly called My Pyramid, has flawed dietary recommendations because instead of relying on the latest nutrition research, the USDA has once again bowed to the pressures of special interest groups associated with the food industry. The guidelines set by MyPlate are not really the answer to achieving good health, and even less so for reversing bone loss. MyPlate’s emphasis on the consumption of dairy products is contradicted by scientific studies.

WHAT THIS CHAPTER MEANS TO YOU

Mainstream dietary guidelines are not based on information that has been proven to support good health. Your best bet is to be open-minded about this and understand that to blindly follow the “official” recommendation is not necessarily the best approach to your health and well-being. Instead, make dietary choices based on sound research and solid evidence-backed data.