



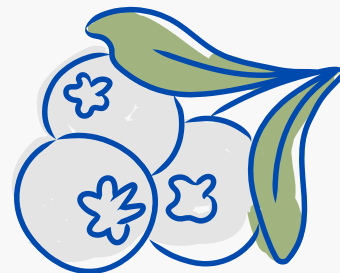
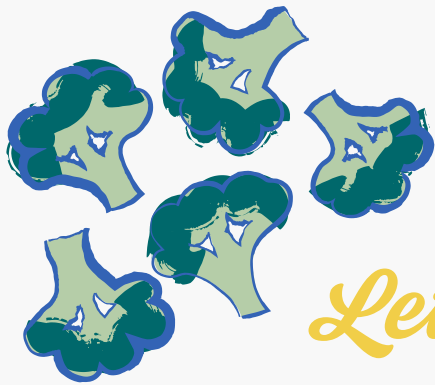
The Grapevine

ALUMNI EDITION



TEACHERS COLLEGE
PROGRAM IN NUTRITION

READ WHAT'S FRESH
OFF THE VINE!



Letter from the Editors

Dear Students, Faculty, Alumni, and Staff,

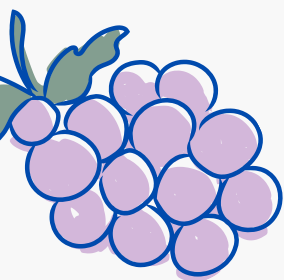
Welcome to our special **ALUMNI EDITION** of the Grapevine! We received an overwhelming response of willing writers for this issue, eager to connect with our esteemed alumni and gain some insight on life after TC.

It's a delight to know that a TC education has opened up doors to a wide range of opportunities within the Nutrition and Dietetics field for our graduates. You'll see highlights of alumni specializing in various areas like diabetes education, pediatric oncology, agroecology, holistic health, and more.

You'll also hear from alumni who have authored their own books, been featured on podcasts, started private practices, and gone on to work in TV and media.

There's something special to take away from every feature - whether it be a thoughtful piece of advice, a peek at their day-to-day life, or insider tips on how to prepare for the RD exam. The biggest take away for us has been the affirmation that our TC community runs *deep* and graduating from this program weaves a golden thread that can be tugged at any time. We thank all our writers and alumni who graciously contributed to this edition.

Warmly,



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Insights and Inspiration: Highlights from the Annual Alumni Panel

BY SARDE GUMALO

Tuesday March 4th was the Program in Nutrition's Annual Alumni Panel where six TC graduates shared valuable insights about their careers, memorable takeaways from Teachers College, and pearls of wisdom for current students. It was a unique opportunity for first-year and second-year students to connect with one another and network with alumni.



From left to right: Eran Li, Nadia Mowszowski, Amanda Wahlstedt, Jayne Cudia, Rachel Longo, Art Gillman, Sacha Sulaiman, & Thulasi Rajasekaran

HealthNuts coordinators, Thulasi Rajasekaran and Sacha Sulaiman, skillfully moderated the evening allowing us to garner helpful knowledge from dietitians specializing in various areas of the nutrition field. Catch some highlights below about the day-to-day life of our panelists and treasured thoughts they had to share.

Jayne Cudia, MS, RD, CDN

The Dorm, Dietitian, with a focus on mental health

- **Primary population:** clients who have eating disorders, executive functioning challenges, and mental health conditions that impact nutrition
- **Typical Day:** conducting nutrition assessments for all clients, follow-ups, and nutrition counseling; one big team meeting in the afternoon; group sessions and supportive lunch groups; holds groups working on body image, food freedom, and cooking
- **Words of Wisdom:** Jayne advised **staying in touch with your TC friends** and the value of having other RD's in your life other than coworkers. She encouraged **keeping group chats with RD friends** and texting each other for opinions on the latest nutrition news.

Art Gillman, MS, RD, CDN

New York-Presbyterian Hospital, Community Nutrition Specialist

- **Primary population:** Culturally diverse communities and older adults
- **Typical Day:** has a hybrid position where he'll prep a monthly workshop for one week at home and "take it on the road" for the rest of the month conducting bilingual workshops at senior centers and food pantries throughout Northern Manhattan and the Bronx
- **Words of Wisdom:** Art emphasized the importance of *maintaining a "zest" and excitement for nutrition* and continually nurturing the *values instilled in us from our TC faculty* as we move on to working in the field.



Rachel Longo, MS, RDN, CDN

Aramark at BronxCare,
Food Service Director

- **Primary population:** oversees managers, kitchen staff, and other food service personnel for multiple locations
- **Typical Day:** manages daily food production for three different locations amounting to more than 2,000 sandwiches, soups, and meals; directs menu planning; conducts hiring, terminations, and other staff meetings
- **Words of Wisdom:** Rachel encouraged us to never hold ourselves back from learning and to consistently put ourselves out there. She emphasized the importance of embracing both the rotation sites you love and those you don't, and finding ways to integrate lessons from both into your work. Rachel also reassured us that the first job after graduation may not be your dream job — but by trying various roles, *you'll become more well-rounded* and better prepared when that dream job does come along.

Nadia Mowszowski, MS, RDN, CDN

Mt. Sinai Hospital, Clinical Dietitian
specializing in GI
(Gastrointestinal conditions)

- **Primary population:** patients with various GI conditions such as inflammatory bowel disease, colitis, diverticulitis, cancer, and pancreatitis
- **Typical Day:** works in a step down unit for patients after they receive GI surgery; screens floors, performs follow-ups and reassessments; conducts rounds with doctors and physical exams; works with interns; refers for outpatient care and provides education for patients; typically sees patients in the morning and writes notes in the afternoon
- **Words of Wisdom:** Nadia encouraged us to be open to all possibilities as far as practicum rotations and work opportunities. Challenging herself to work in a field she didn't expect empowered her to think, *"I've seen everything and I can do anything."*

Eran Li, MS, MEd, RDN

Aramark at BronxCare, Clinical Dietitian with a focus on critical care

- **Primary population:** ICU patients, Enteral and Parenteral nutrition for GI surgeries
- **Typical Day:** covers assigned floors and reviews charts; provides assessments and counseling for patients; writes tube feeding orders for doctors and more
- **Words of Wisdom:** Eran highlighted how a TC education trains us with a *unique learning ability* that helps us equip us for work experiences that may be challenging or overwhelming. She shared that knowledge gained from class frequently translates to “real life” especially with MNT and Advanced Nutrition!

Amanda Wahlstedt, MS, RDN, WIMI-CP

Founder of Roots to Leaves, a private practice focusing on women’s integrative health

- **Primary population:**
Women from every stage of life
- **Typical Day:** having a private practice means no day looks the same and wearing multiple hats; often managing the behind the scenes work of running a business including marketing strategies, content creation, and writing for substacks; takes discovery calls, plans client outreach, and reviews clients’ lab work along with counseling
- **Words of Wisdom:** Amanda advised making the most of our practicum rotations as opportunities for practice and to “*go big*” during our time at TC. She encouraged us to reach out to professionals in our areas of interest to seek mentorship, and emphasized pursuing additional certifications to help differentiate ourselves in the field.



HealthNuts Coordinators Sacha & Thulasi

We are so grateful for the supportive community the TC Program in Nutrition provides among past, present and future students and faculty. It’s recognized that the true strength of our program lies in the diverse perspectives of its members and our mutual commitment to helping one another grow and succeed - before, during, and after TC.



Book Spotlight

Maggie Moon MS, RDN and The Power of the MIND Diet

BY AMELIA COX

Teachers College alumna Maggie Moon, MS, RDN, who graduated in 2007, has dedicated her career to making brain-healthy eating accessible to all. As a registered dietitian and author, Moon has received widespread recognition for her work in nutrition science, particularly her expertise on the MIND diet—a research-backed eating plan designed to support cognitive function and reduce the risk of neurodegenerative diseases.

Moon chose Teachers College in her educational pursuits because of its "holistic approach to nutrition," excited about its emphasis on food systems and public health in addition to having a clinical focus. "I think the biggest benefit I've gotten from Teachers College is an approach," Moon says regarding how her education has helped her tackle the challenges she faces daily in her career. Her "passion for public health..., interest in the global aging shift..., and love for clinical research" drew her to a program exploring nutrition beyond individual health and into broader societal impacts. Courses like Nutritional Ecology, taught by renowned faculty members like the late Joan Gussow, and for the past thirteen years, Pam Koch, reinforced this perspective, and she gained a deeper understanding of the connections between food, environment, and well-being. These classes helped shape her commitment to nutrition as a tool for promoting cognitive longevity—an interest that was also "deeply personal" as she grew up considering her own parents' aging process compared to others and the role diet could play in sustaining brain health.



Her book, *The MIND Diet: A Scientific Approach to Enhancing Brain Function and Helping Prevent Alzheimer's and Dementia*, distills complex nutrition science into practical, evidence-based "applicable advice" for everyday meals. The MIND diet, a hybrid of the Mediterranean and DASH diets, emphasizes brain-boosting foods like leafy greens, berries, nuts, whole grains, and olive oil while limiting red meat, butter, and processed foods. Moon's ability to translate research into actionable tips, recipes, and guidance has resonated with both health professionals and the public, making her book a go-to resource for those seeking to preserve memory and cognitive vitality. "It must start with science, and I approach it as an educator... thinking about our audience and what's most helpful to them. What's most helpful is not a regurgitation of a scientific abstract; it's what they can understand. It's sound and trustworthy information. It's all about the client."

Beyond her writing, Moon continues to amplify the conversation around brain health through media appearances. Recently, she was featured on *Orgain's Nutrition for Modern Living* podcast with host Ginger Hultin, RDN. In the episode,



“What's most helpful is not a regurgitation of a scientific abstract; it's what they can understand. It's sound and trustworthy information. It's all about the client.”



she delves into the science behind the MIND diet, offering practical tips for incorporating nutrient-dense, brain-supportive foods into daily life. She also discusses the broader implications of diet on mental clarity, emotional well-being, and long-term cognitive resilience. Through her work, Moon exemplifies the mission of Teachers College—using education and research to improve lives and create actual change. Her

contributions to the field of nutrition underscore the critical role of diet in lifelong cognitive health, and her insights continue to inspire individuals to make informed, health-conscious choices. Maggie Moon's work is a testament to the power of nutrition science in shaping not only our physical health but also how we think, learn, and age.

From Marketing to Dietetics: A Conversation with Michael McDonnough

Interview by Shirley Song



Michael McDonnough is a proud TC alum who earned his MS in Nutrition & Public Health at Teachers College and completed his dietetic internship at Brigham and Women's Hospital in 2016. A former marketing and retail professional, Michael transitioned into nutrition and later became an Advanced Clinical Dietitian in the Transplant Program at NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell. During our conversation, Michael shared how TC shaped his philosophy, the role of mentorship, and how a deep commitment to community wellness continues to guide his work.



Shirley: What inspired your path toward becoming a registered dietitian, and how did your journey unfold?

Michael: I didn't even realize this was a profession until after undergrad. I was a career changer—I worked in marketing for years and even ran a clothing store. After the store closed, around the time of the financial crisis, it was a pivotal time. Coming out of the business world and wanting to help people more directly, I started learning about nutrition. As I explored the field more, I realized it aligned with my personal interests in wellness and healthy living. Once I found out it was a real career path, it just felt like the right fit, since what we eat can impact our overall health and wellness.

**“Every day we get another opportunity
to do something we’re proud of.”**



Shirley: What led you to choose Teachers College for your graduate program? There are so many other options, what made TC stand out?

Michael: I knew I wanted to be back in New York, so location was a big factor. At the time, I was more interested in community health than clinical work. TC had a strong reputation for public health and community nutrition, so it felt like the best fit for my interests.

Shirley: How did your experience at TC help shape your career now?

Michael: Even though I work in clinical now, the foundation I got at TC, still influences me. My philosophy is deeply rooted in prevention, which is a major focus in community health. Even in clinical settings, I find myself leaning toward more preventative interventions. TC also helped shape my awareness about environmental health and sustainability. That kind of perspective has stuck with me.

Shirley: How did you navigate job hunting after graduating from TC?

Michael: I mostly followed the opportunities that came my way. During my internship at Brigham and Women's Hospital, I had a preceptor who used to work at NewYork-Presbyterian. She shared a job opportunity with me, which was perfect timing since I was moving back to New York. Initially, I wanted to split my time between clinical and community health work, but the part-time NYP role became full-time before I could take on another position. That's how I ended up where I am. It was partly chance, but also about building strong relationships during my internship. That preceptor trusted me enough to recommend me, and that made a big difference.

Shirley: How did you transition into working in kidney transplant nutrition?

Michael: I started in GI surgery because that was an open position. I also worked with the amenities unit (which is the VIP unit) and got to collaborate with chefs on the culinary side, which was fun. After five years, I felt ready for a new challenge. Around that time, the kidney transplant role opened. There are a lot of health disparities in kidney disease, especially in access to living donors. That really resonated with me, and I wanted to make an impact.

Shirley: What advice would you give to students interested in clinical nutrition or specialty areas like gastrointestinal, diabetes, and pediatrics?

Michael: Try things out. If you see a position—even part-time—go for it. The experience is key, and you don't need to have everything figured out right away. I never thought I'd be in transplant, but here I am, and I love it. Be open to what might surprise you. And don't underestimate the power of building relationships. You never know which connection will lead to your next opportunity.

Shirley: What do you wish you had known when you started your career?

Michael: I wish I had known just how important relationships are in this field. If I had, I would have been even more intentional about building them early on.

Shirley: How do you balance your professional and personal life, especially with the demands of clinical work?

Michael: I'm lucky to be in a place that allows for both. Clinical work can be fast-paced, but it's manageable if you're intentional with your time. Being efficient helps a lot. If you can get your work done during your shift, you can protect your time. Communicating with your manager about your work-life balance goals is key too.

Shirley: Are there any mentors or groups that have been meaningful to you in your journey?

Michael: I didn't have many mentors in this field, which is why I try to be one now. I'm a strong advocate for the National Organization for Blacks in Dietetics and Nutrition (NOBIDAN), the member interest group for Black dietitians, and for Diversify Dietetics. Community and representation really matter, especially for dietitians of color. These organizations are important for building that support system. I also do outreach to high school students in NYC, speaking to them about careers in nutrition, the importance of inclusion, and offering mentorship—something I didn't have when I was younger.





Beyond the Classroom: How Teachers College Sparked a Holistic Health Movement

By Paola Hernandez



In this issue, we're spotlighting Amanda Wahlstedt RDN, CDN, CLC, an inspiring alumna of the Nutrition Program at Teachers College who graduated in 2021. Her path into private practice began with a deep curiosity — and was shaped by a pivotal experience at TC.

Amanda is the founder of *Roots to Leaves*, based in NYC, which is a women's health-focused virtual private practice that supports clients navigating PCOS, endometriosis, fertility challenges, and post-birth control symptoms. But before she was building protocols and changing lives, Amanda was working in Communications — until her own health struggles pushed her to seek something deeper.

It was during her time at Teachers College that things began to shift. Amanda describes TC as the place where she began to "put together the pieces" — where science, clinical training, and a deeper purpose collided. She shared that what made TC special wasn't just the rigorous academics, but the space to explore her evolving interest in hormonal health with professors who supported critical thinking and growth.

"Teachers College gave me the foundation I needed — not just to understand the science of nutrition, but to ask better questions, to challenge mainstream narratives, and to follow my curiosity," she said.

She originally planned to work with pregnant clients, but a conversation in class — combined with her own post-birth control symptoms — led her to pivot. That moment was the start of *Roots to Leaves*, and her mission to help women rebalance their hormones and feel at home in their bodies again.



Amanda began her nutrition journey with a fully vegan approach, thinking it was the healthiest path — only to later shift her practice as she dove deeper into the research and clinical realities of conditions like PCOS. Now, she works from a personalized, functional framework, tailoring protocols based on lab work, lifestyle, and each client's unique story.

Her advice for navigating today's confusing nutrition space?

"I always remind my clients that we work with the best research we have — but also lean into ancestral wisdom, clinical experience, and what your body is telling you."

As someone who's also on the path to becoming an RD and specializing in hormone health, I felt so seen in this conversation. It's a reminder that our education is just the foundation — and we get to build the rest through curiosity, experience, and heart.

When I asked Amanda how she stays grounded as a business owner, her answer was refreshingly real:

"So in terms of support, I think there are different kinds of support systems that I find important as an entrepreneur. One is personal development support — I'm big on that. It's different for everyone, but for me, it's an incredible therapist, a business coach, and yoga. Those are my three pillars to stay grounded, connected, and clear on what I want to accomplish and to care for myself in the process."

Professionally, she emphasized the importance of community:

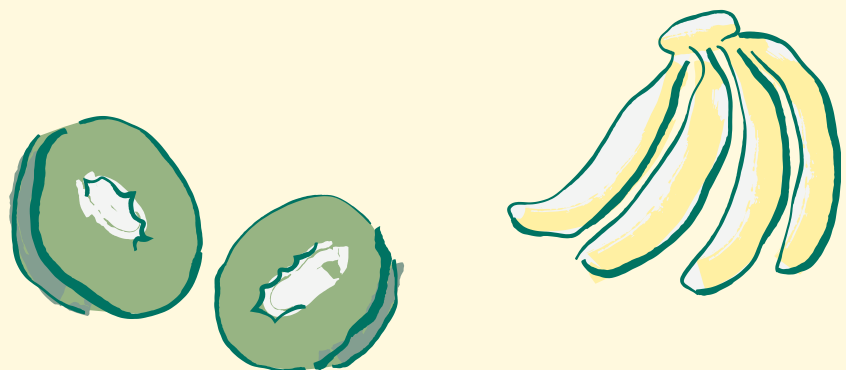
"Networking - network a ton. I have a few friends and even one of my hires from Columbia. These women are so like-minded. For example, I have a colleague from TC who has a completely different approach to nutrition. We actually did back-to-back posts on seed oils — opposite views — and while it can be challenging, it's also a great support system. It pushes me to understand different sides, to grow as a practitioner."

She also highlighted how powerful peer support can be when it's intentional:

"I meet weekly with a friend who's a therapist to talk about client work — she brings a nervous system lens that really helps me support my clients better. Setting up informal practice groups like that is huge. We talk back and forth about cases, and it keeps me sharp and supported."

Other than peer support and networking, Amanda also recommended joining professional groups relevant to your area of interest as they often offer further training, education, and certifications along with community support. A few standout platforms she recommended include:

- [Leveraging Labs](#) – a community-driven space for women in the wellness field
- [Dr. Aviva Romm's Women's Health Program](#) – comes with CEUs and offers access to a broad group including acupuncturists, health coaches, and dietitians
- [FNPI \(Functional Nutrition Alliance\)](#) – an in-depth training program for dietitians with ongoing membership options for case study reviews and expert support



Decoding Diets:

Alumni Spotlight on Casey Seiden in the Healthful Woman Podcast

Review by
Thulasi Rajasekaran

In a 2022 episode of the *Healthful Woman* podcast titled "Dieting: Changing our approach from short gains to the long game," Casey Seiden, MS, RD, CDN, DCES – a proud alumna of the Program in Nutrition, shared valuable insights. She earned her MS in Nutrition & Public Health and completed her dietetic internship at TC in 2016. Alongside host & maternal fetal medicine specialist Dr. Nathan Fox, they discuss a thoughtful and timely conversation on diet culture and weight loss trends.

As we move towards the start of summer, many people commit to dieting in hopes of a "quick fix" or "total reset." Casey challenges this notion, pointing out that 95% of diets fail simply because they are not sustainable. Instead, this often leads to a cycle of yo-yo dieting – doing more harm than good and contributing to negative health outcomes related to blood sugar levels, hormone balance & cardiovascular disease. Casey shares that when people diminish their feeling of self-worth based on the food they eat, it can trap people in the same sticky diet situations. In a world where the wellness space is clouded by social media, celebrities & influencers, it is important to reject the all-or-nothing mindset routinely promoted by diet culture. Casey encourages clients and dietitians alike to recognize that slow, gradual & long-term weight loss is the best way to achieve weight goals.

A key takeaway from the episode is that while weight loss can be a valid personal goal, it's crucial to remember that weight is not only influenced by diet.

Genetics, environment, stress and socioeconomic status all play significant roles. Casey champions a "Health at Every Size" approach, reminding listeners that a thin body doesn't always mean a healthy body, and that metabolic health can exist across many shapes and sizes.

Casey also gives her expert opinions on popular diets & eating patterns, rooted in evidence-based practice and her experience in the nutrition field:

- **Keto:** Overly restrictive of the entire carbohydrate food group. Supports low intake of fiber, fruits and vegetables which can cause nutritional deficiencies & constipation. May be recommended for particular medical conditions such as epilepsy.
 - **Overall rating:** Thumbs Down 👎
- **Intermittent fasting:** Many individuals struggle to maintain intermittent fasting consistently, eventually discontinuing the practice, only to attempt it again later with mixed success. May help lower insulin levels. Limited studies have been conducted particularly among women.
 - **Overall rating:** Thumbs to the Side 👉
- **Apple cider vinegar:** Research is quite compelling for blood sugar control. Inconsistent results in supplement form. May be encouraged to consume in small quantities, once a day.
 - **Overall rating:** Cautious Thumbs Up 👍



- **Intuitive eating:** A practical long-term approach that breaks down diet culture and food rules. Allows one to honor their hunger cues, encourage body trust and most importantly, make peace with food.

- **Overall rating:** Enthusiastic Thumbs Up 👍

- **Mediterranean:** Emphasizes whole foods, limits the consumption of red meat, sugar-sweetened beverages and UPFs (ultra-processed foods) that are high in salts, fat & sugar. Studies show positive outcomes related to blood sugars, cardiovascular disease and cancer.

- **Overall rating:** Gold Star ★

Although a few years have gone by since the podcast, in April 2025 I connected with Casey Seiden, who confirmed that her perspectives remain unchanged and that she continues to agree with the key takeaways of the podcast.

It is also important to highlight that other traditional diets that are centered around whole, plant-based foods while limiting UPFs, such as certain Latin American, Asian, and African heritage diets, have similar positive health outcomes (LeBlanc et al., 2024).

Casey's top advice for future registered dietitians is to avoid immediately asking, "What diet should this client follow?" when meeting with clients. Instead, focus on encouraging small, manageable changes that enhance overall diet quality and help clients feel their best. It's important to review their medical history and lab results while understanding each client's unique motivation, lifestyle, and goals. Casey emphasizes that the priority should always be making realistic and sustainable shifts toward a balanced, well-rounded way of eating.

Check out the full podcast episode + transcript, [here](#).

You can also follow Casey on Instagram [@eat.well.together](#) or visit her [website](#).

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Interviewing Pediatric Oncology RD:

Erin Gilfillan, MS, RD, CSO, CDN

BY JACKIE SPENCE

Erin Gilfillan attended TC's nutrition program from 2014 to 2016, then completed her dietetic internship at Boston's Brigham and Women's hospital with the goal of working in oncology nutrition. After graduating and passing the RD exam in August of 2017, Erin's first job was as a dietitian in a hospital per diem role, which allowed her to gain valuable experience in a wide range of clinical nutrition roles, including ICU and pediatrics. Erin connected with dietitians in her network to identify opportunities to move into a permanent role in oncology nutrition. A fellow alumni of her dietetic internship informed her of a position on the pediatric dietitian team at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center located in New York City in January 2018, a position she continues to hold today.

As one of two pediatric dietitians at MSK, Erin oversees the nutrition care of the patients diagnosed with sarcomas, neuroblastomas, and rare tumors. Her role involves both inpatient and outpatient care, allowing her to build strong relationships with children and their families both during their hospital stay and after discharge, allowing Erin to provide consistency and continuity of care to her patients.

Erin begins her day at 8am by reviewing the patient population and identifying those likely to benefit from nutrition support. She also responds to requests from doctors for nutrition consultations, she joins the medical team on rounds in the pediatric intensive care unit and inpatient rounds, and spends time with patients in the outpatient clinic. In such a demanding and



varied role, and with new clinical priorities emerging throughout the day, Erin emphasizes the importance of time management skills and flexibility in enabling her to meet her patients' needs.

Erin appreciates that her role allows her to work closely with patients and their families, building relationships and becoming an important part of a child's journey through their treatment and, hopefully, recovery. In the outpatient clinic, she pairs clinical nutrition care with general pediatric nutrition principles, helping her young patients to return to a healthful, varied diet after their treatment. The rewarding relationships Erin builds with her patients can come with sadness when treatment doesn't go as intended, and Erin stresses the need for the team to support each other to cope with the emotional challenges of the role. Erin also unwinds outside work by hiking and spending time with her family.

In addition to the value of networking with fellow dietitians and other professionals, Erin's best advice to future graduates of our program is to be open to different experiences and to take advantage of all the opportunities that come our way to learn what we can.

From Student to Educator:

BY SALLY LIU *A Special Journey to Becoming a Diabetes Educator*

Leora Apfelbaum, MEd, MS, RDN, CDN, CDCES, is a dedicated diabetes educator at the Naomi Berrie Diabetes Center, part of the Columbia University Irving Medical Center in New York City, and graduated from our nutrition program in 2022. Recently, I was fortunate to interview Leora and was amazed by the depth of her experience. Leora began her academic journey studying neuroscience as an undergraduate, where volunteering in local schools sparked her interest in nutrition, particularly through exposure to school lunch programs. This led her to pursue a Master's in Human Nutrition at Columbia University's Institute of Human Nutrition (IHN), hoping to explore the field further and define her career path.

During her studies, Leora became especially interested in diabetes—a condition she recognized as both highly impactful and, in many cases, preventable. She was drawn to its data-driven nature, where

nutrition and lifestyle changes have a measurable effect on blood sugar. Seeing these changes firsthand in patient outcomes and monitoring data made the work deeply rewarding. Aiming to expand her scope of practice, Leora decided to go to Teachers College and become a registered dietitian. There, she completed her Master of Education and dietetic internship, gaining training in clinical, community, and food service nutrition.

The experiences provided a strong foundation in helping her prepare for her future steps.

[Making the Most of TC & Tips for RDN Exam Prep](#)

Leora emphasized the importance of taking full advantage of the time at TC to explore the various areas of nutrition. She noted that the program offers a wide range of opportunities, and students may discover interests they

hadn't anticipated. She encouraged students to embrace this time to explore and try different areas, even if they don't immediately know their long-term career goals. Leora also highlighted the value of building connections with others during the internship, as these relationships can play a key role in transitioning to one's next steps after graduation.



When talking with Leora, she described herself as lucky to have gotten her current job after graduating, noting that she began exploring job opportunities early on. She also advised current and future TC students to start exploring early and narrow their areas of interest as soon as possible.

When asked for advice on preparing for the RD exam, Leora shared that our nutrition program had prepared her very well and that she had dedicated only the summer following graduation to studying. In addition to TC materials, she relied on the [Jean Inman review course](#), the [Pocket Prep app](#), and official practice exams from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Leora emphasized that everyone has different study styles, but her biggest tip is to break the material into small, manageable chunks and review a little each day. She found that practice questions were particularly useful for getting familiar with the exam format and identifying areas that needed more focus. Using tools like the Pocket Prep app for even a few minutes daily helped her stay sharp and strategic without becoming overwhelmed.

[A Glimpse into Leora's Work at the Naomi Berrie Diabetes Center](#)

At the Naomi Berrie Diabetes Center, Leora primarily works with outpatients, typically seeing five to eight patients a day, both virtually and in person. Her role includes nutrition counseling and support with diabetes technology like continuous glucose monitors and insulin pumps. She educates patients on using these tools and helps adjust insulin doses. She works with people of all ages who have type 1 or type 2 diabetes, as well as transplant recipients and cancer patients managing diabetes—work she finds especially meaningful. Leora values the variety of patients she sees and the unique experiences each day brings. While she rarely works with pediatric patients, she occasionally helps support their transition to adult care. Her passion for diabetes education is clear—she finds deep fulfillment in helping patients build the knowledge and confidence to manage their health.

Furthermore, Leora explained that the focus of each visit

varies greatly depending on the patient. When focusing on nutrition, Leora typically does a diet recall and discusses balanced meals using a diabetes "My Plate" approach, highlighting how protein, carbs, and fiber affect blood sugar.

Some visits, however, center on diabetes technology, like setting up glucose monitors or adjusting insulin pumps. Her approach varies based on each patient's experience—offering basic education to the newly diagnosed and tailored strategies for long-term patients. She enjoys this variety, as it allows her to adapt care to each individual's needs.

[Reflecting on the TC Experience](#)

Leora shared several key aspects of her TC training that have been especially valuable in her current role. First, the coursework in nutrition education and counseling provided her with practical tools for communicating with patients and encouraging behavior change in effective, empathetic ways. These skills have been essential in her day-to-day interactions, especially when discussing sensitive

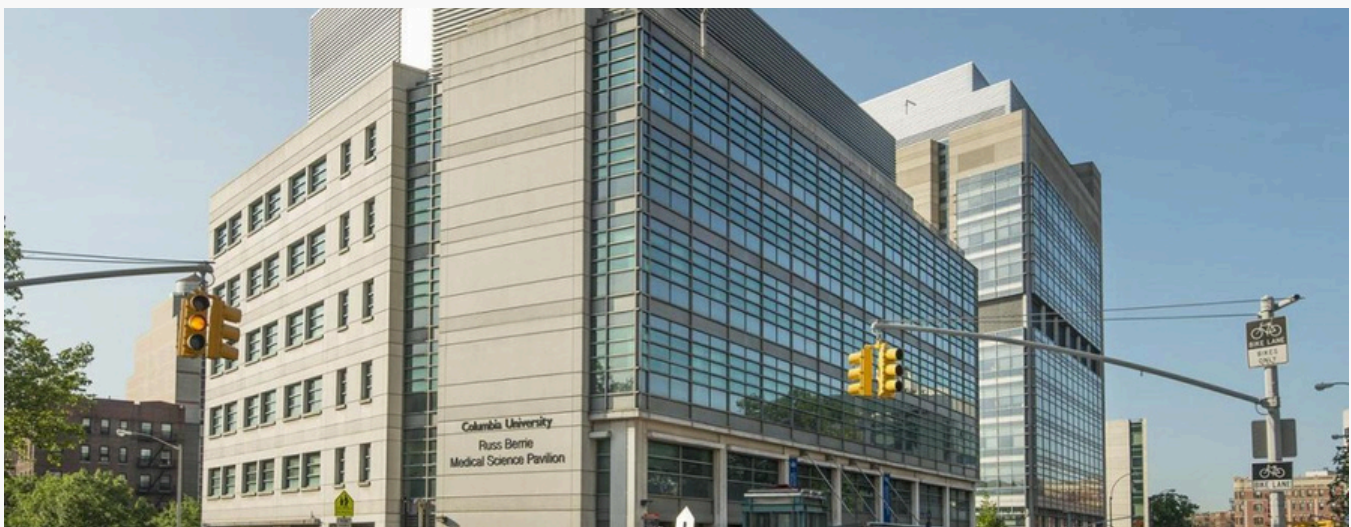
topics or helping patients adopt new habits. She also highlighted the impact of her clinical rotation at New York-Presbyterian, which not only deepened her clinical knowledge of inpatient care but also gave her hands-on experience with the electronic medical record system, which is conveniently the same system used in her current outpatient role. In addition, Leora enjoyed her internship at Harlem Hospital's WIC program, where she provided primarily phone-based nutrition counseling to pregnant clients and parents of young children—an experience that prepared her well for working with pregnant patients in her current role. Speaking with unfamiliar clients about nutrition helped build her confidence and communication skills, which she continues to use in her outpatient work today.


Another key part of her academic journey was learning about weight stigma and eating disorders. She noted that many people with diabetes struggle with disordered eating due to societal pressure around restrictive diets. This background helps her provide more sensitive care, supporting patients without enforcing rigid food rules.

When asked about staying up to date with new nutritional information in her field, Leora explained that it's challenging, especially with how rapidly things are changing. Her workplace makes a concerted effort to share technology updates, webinars, and other resources with employees. Continuing education is particularly helpful for staying informed in this regard. For new food products, Leora tries to keep up by observing items in the supermarket or researching online, often

coming across new information through news stories. She acknowledged that staying current with every new product or supplement is nearly impossible. When patients ask about something she hasn't heard of, she's honest and lets them know she'll look into it further.

Leora believes one of the biggest challenges in nutrition is that behavior change is hard, especially when people face social or life struggles like housing instability, financial stress, or demanding jobs. These issues can make it tough to prioritize health. While it's a challenge to navigate these factors, she's hopeful. She believes current and future dietitians understand these barriers and can use available tools to help bridge the gaps. The future of nutrition is bright—and it needs passionate professionals to lead the way.





Green Smoothie With Yogurt, Pear, and Ginger

Review by Tyra Vanriel

Recipe by Ellie Krieger



Ellie Krieger, a TC alumna who earned her Master's degree in Nutrition Education in 1994, authored several cookbooks and is widely recognized for her Food Network show *Healthy Appetite*. She also hosts *Ellie's Real Good Food* on PBS, where she shares healthy recipes and practical cooking tips for any lifestyle. Ellie hosts the *One Real Good Thing* Podcast where she offers her listeners advice on ways they can make small food and lifestyles changes to propel their lives in a healthier direction. Her expertise and approachable style have made her a trusted voice in the world of nutrition and wellness.

Spring is the perfect season to blend some delicious smoothies, whether you are on the go or relaxing at the park. This green smoothie recipe, featured in the "[Smoothies & Sippables](#)" section of Ellie's website, offers a nutritious and refreshing blend of fresh spinach, zesty ginger, and sweet pear. It's a delightful balance of vibrant flavors and health benefits which is a perfect way to enjoy spring's freshness.

For more delicious recipes, visit Ellie's website at:

<https://www.elliekrieger.com/recipes/>

INGREDIENTS:

3/4 cup ice
2/3 cup regular, plain yogurt,
low-fat or whole*
1 medium very ripe fresh pear,
any variety, peeled, cored and
cut into chunks, or canned pear
(not in syrup)
1 cup, lightly packed, spinach
leaves
½ cup sliced almonds
3 pitted dates, coarsely
chopped
1 ½ teaspoons chopped fresh
ginger
Honey to taste, optional

Directions:

Place the ice into a blender and blend to crush it. Add the remaining ingredients and blend until smooth and frothy, with some texture remaining from the almonds and dates. Taste, and then blend in a little honey, if desired.

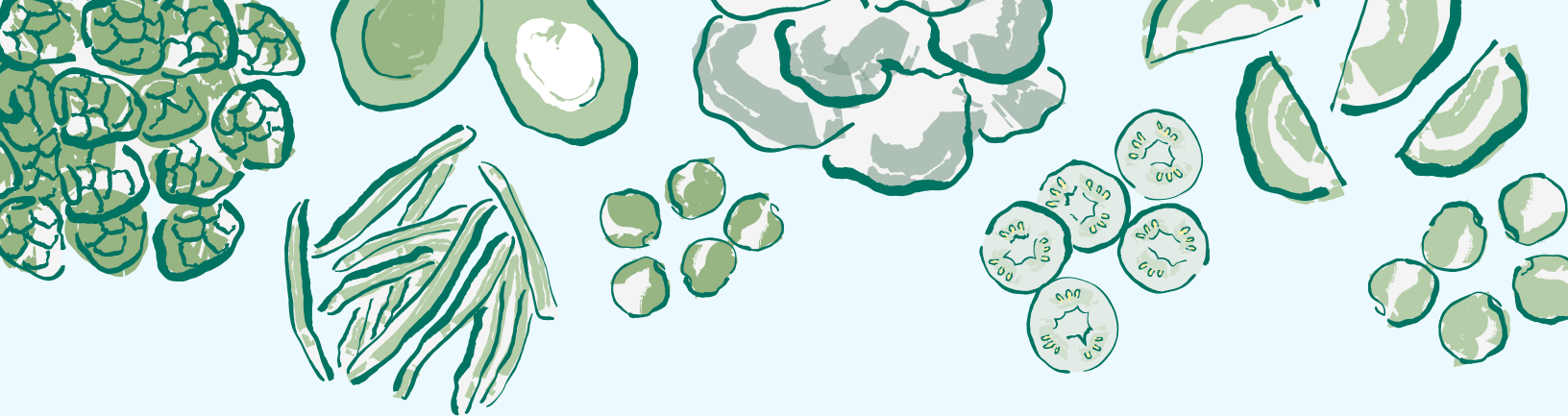
Makes 2 servings

Serving size: about 1 ¼ cup

Per Serving (*made with low-fat yogurt): Calories 280; Total Fat 13g (Sat Fat 2g); Protein 10g; Carb 35g; Fiber 7g; Cholesterol 5mg; Sodium 60mg; Sugars 23g, (Including 0 g added sugar)

The green smoothie can be found at:

<https://www.elliekrieger.com/recipe/green-smoothie-with-yogurt-pear-and-ginger/>



Sustainability in Nutrition: Transforming Food Systems Through Agroecology

BY CHRISTY
DAUGHTERTY

Dr. Bonnie Averbuch began her academic journey in Nutrition and Public Health, earning her Master of Science degree and completing a dietetic internship at Teachers College in May 2015. She later pursued a PhD at Aarhus University's Department of Agroecology in Denmark, which she completed in 2021.

Her interest in food systems was sparked during her undergraduate prerequisites for the nutrition program. It was during this time that she recognized a critical insight: the greatest barriers to improving nutrition and public health often stem not from individual food choices, but from systemic issues embedded in how food is produced and distributed. This

realization shifted her focus toward sustainable food systems as a means of ensuring long-term food security and resilience—particularly in the face of climate change.

In recent years, a growing body of research has supported her conviction, revealing that diets which promote human health are often aligned with those that are most sustainable for the planet. This intersection between environmental sustainability and public health highlights the urgent need to reform food systems in ways that benefit both people and the planet.

But sustainable food is more than just what ends up on our plates—it's also about how

that food is grown, who has access to it, and who benefits from the system as a whole. Today, as a researcher based in Denmark, Dr. Averbuch focuses on making agriculture more environmentally responsible by advancing agroecology—an approach to farming that mimics natural ecosystems to enhance biodiversity, improve soil health, and build resilient agricultural systems.

Her work centers on facilitating knowledge-sharing and creating infrastructure that connects academic research with practical farming applications. Through the use of living labs—collaborative, real-world environments where farmers, scientists, policymakers, and



other stakeholders come together—she helps test and implement sustainable farming solutions that are rooted in both science and community engagement.

Dr. Averbuch uses Gleissman's five-level framework to show different ways farming can become more sustainable:

1. **Improve efficiency** – Using better technology, like precision irrigation, to reduce waste.
2. **Use eco-friendly alternatives** – Replacing chemical fertilizers and pesticides with organic options.
3. **Redesign farms** – Shifting to practices like crop rotation and agroforestry that mimic natural ecosystems.
4. **Strengthen local food systems** – Creating direct connections between farmers and consumers.
5. **Transform the food system** – Changing policies to support fair, climate-friendly agriculture.

Most large-scale farmers find the first two steps easier, while the full redesign (Level 3) is a bigger challenge due to financial and logistical barriers.

That's where living labs come in—they provide farmers with the support, knowledge, and real-world testing needed to make the transition smoother.

Empowering Farmers in Policy Making

Farmers, who have generations of hands-on experience, are often left out of decisions that shape agriculture. Dr. Averbuch stresses that policies work best when they combine scientific research with real-world farming knowledge—including traditional and Indigenous practices that have sustained ecosystems for centuries.

Right now, many policies are created without farmer input, leading to solutions that don't drive real sustainability which leads to a food system that will remain trapped in industrialized models that prioritize mass production over food quality, environmental health, and community resilience. Shifting away from these systems is essential to fostering local farming communities, protecting biodiversity, and ensuring a more secure and regenerative food supply for future generations. To resolve this issue, we need farmer-led cooperatives that can influence decision-making, bottom-up policies that consider the needs

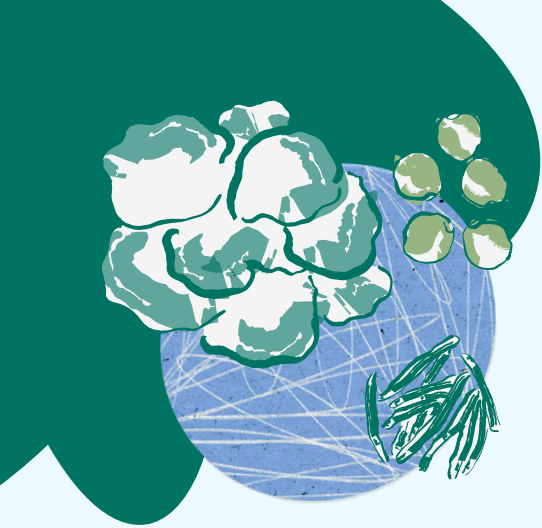
of farmers, and a shift in agricultural policies to prioritize small-scale and regenerative farmers over corporate interests.

Additionally, farming is in decline in both Denmark and the U.S., with high land costs and lack of rural development making it an unattractive profession for younger generations. Dr. Averbuch highlights the need for cultural and policy shifts to make farming a viable and respected career. Potential solutions include:

- Investing in rural infrastructure to make farming communities attractive places to live.
- Supporting alternative farming models, such as small-scale, high-yield organic farms.
- Recognizing farmers' contributions to sustainability and prioritizing working farmers over absentee landowners.

Dr. Averbuch emphasizes that while farmers' markets provide a direct link to fresh, local food, they aren't always convenient. To improve access, farmers can offer farm visits, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)





programs, and seasonal cooking education—helping consumers understand where their food comes from while making a conscious effort to support local, sustainable options and understand the impact of their food choices.

Blueprint for Sustainable and Eco-Friendly Eating

A truly sustainable food system must strike a balance between ecological health, food security, and cultural relevance. After speaking with Dr. Averbuch, I've identified several key strategies that individuals can adopt to eat more sustainably:

1. Embracing a more plant-forward diet – This doesn't mean eliminating meat entirely, but rather reducing dependence on resource-intensive animal agriculture. Even athletes can meet their protein needs through complete plant-based sources.

like quinoa or chickpeas. Small changes—such as dedicating just one meal a week to plant-based options—can make a meaningful difference.

2. Strengthening local food systems – Prioritizing locally sourced produce and meat supports regional farmers and fosters resilient food networks. Many communities offer opportunities to invest in local agriculture, including ethically sourced meat from humanely raised livestock.

3. Reintegrating livestock into ecosystems – Instead of industrial factory farming, agroecology promotes integrated, nature-based livestock systems. By investing in locally produced meat from regenerative farms, consumers help support more sustainable land management practices.

4. Raising consumer awareness – Educating people about seasonal eating, food equity, and mindful consumption can drive demand for more sustainable food choices. Seasonal cooking, for instance, encourages the use of regionally available ingredients, making sustainability both practical and culturally relevant.

Sustainability in nutrition requires a holistic, multi-level approach that connects farmers, consumers, policymakers, researchers, and other stake holders to create systemic change. The transition to a resilient agricultural future is complex but essential—and it begins with empowering the very people who grow our food; together we can build a food system that is both environmentally sustainable and socially equitable.

