

# A Brief History of Nutrition Guidelines in the U.S.

The USDA's first nutrition guidelines were published in 1894 by Dr. Wilbur Olin Atwater as a farmers' bulletin.

A new guide in 1916, *Food for Young Children* by nutritionist Caroline Hunt, categorized foods into milk and meat; cereals; vegetables and fruits; fats and fatty foods; and sugars and sugary

foods. *How to Select Food* in 1917 promoted these five food groups to adults, and the guidelines remained in place through the 1920s. In 1933, the USDA introduced food plans at four different cost levels in response to the Great Depression.

In 1943, during World War II, The USDA introduced a nutrition guide promoting the "Basic 7" food groups to help maintain nutritional standards under wartime food rationing. The Basic 7 was the first well-known chart or visual guide picturing food groups as categories in a healthy diet. This guide was in use from 1943 until 1956. The seven groups were then reduced to four and the "Basic 4" guidelines were adopted and used until the food pyramid was developed in 1992.

Scandinavian countries are credited with developing the first food pyramids. The USDA food pyramid was created in 1992 and divided into six horizontal sections containing depictions of foods from each section's food group. It was updated in 2005 with colorful vertical wedges replacing the horizontal sections and renamed MyPyramid. MyPyramid was often displayed with the food images absent, creating a more abstract design.

In an effort to restructure food nutrition guidelines, the USDA rolled out its new MyPlate program in June 2011. My Plate is divided into four slightly different sized quadrants, with fruits and vegetables taking up half the space, and grains and protein making up the other half. The vegetables and grains portions are the largest of the four.

