



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on September 15, 2010

First Lady Sets Her Sights on Restaurant Menus

First Lady Michelle Obama has been touted as a “champion” in her efforts against childhood obesity. However, her labors have been criticized for their infringement upon individual rights, particularly those of parents. Now, by turning her attention to American restaurants nationwide, Michelle Obama has indicated her willingness to tread upon the individual liberties of adults.



Speaking to the National Restaurant Association, Michelle Obama urged restaurants to include more healthy options on their menus and to cut back the quantity of fatty ingredients in their dishes. She also recommends reducing the amount of butter and cream used in meals, substituting whole wheat pasta for white pasta, and serving smaller portions. Justifying her request, Obama cited statistics that indicate Americans spending half of their food dollars outside of their homes, and a third of their meals in restaurants.

The First Lady explains that parents require easier access to healthy food choices for their children and should not be expected to explore menus for limited healthy options.

According to the First Lady, “We have to do more, we have to go farther, and we need your help to lead this effort.”

Michelle Obama has delivered similar messages to schools and fast-food chains across the country as part of her campaign to boost childhood nutrition.

International House of Pancakes (IHOP) has responded positively to the First Lady’s efforts. Jean Birch, president of IHOP, states that IHOP is currently formulating a new children’s menu with items that do not surpass 600 calories.

However, the First Lady’s actions and recommendations indicate that her mission is not simply to target the eating habits of America’s children, but of Americans overall. Obama claims that Americans are “programmed” to make unhealthy choices by taste and advertising and believes it is the government’s responsibility to re-program Americans’ personal tastes.

As humans, we are programmed to crave sugary, fatty, salty foods. And as people who work to meet those needs, I know its tempting to respond by creating products that are sweeter, richer, and saltier than ever before. But here’s the catch. See, feeding those cravings doesn’t just respond to people’s natural desires, it actually helps shape them. The more of these foods people eat, the more they’re accustomed to that taste, and after awhile, those unhealthy foods become a permanent part



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of their eating habits.

Mrs. Obama adds that Americans should be particularly concerned with pursuing healthier habits in order to save billions in healthcare costs.

An advertisement campaign was recently launched in Washington, D.C., to assist in the endeavors of the First Lady. The ad features a “victim” of the fast-food industry, specifically McDonald’s: an adult male. Laying on a gurney, the man is rolled through the hallway of a hospital past his grieving widow. In his hand is a half-eaten hamburger. The video ends with the infamous McDonald’s “M” logo, but with a distorted version of McDonald’s catchphrase “I’m lovin’ it”: “I *was* lovin’ it.”

While the Michelle Obama’s healthy food campaign may seem noble, though perhaps naïve and tyrannical, conservative pundit [Glenn Beck](#) is concerned with the influences upon Michelle Obama’s health food crusade: Cass Sunstein, Obama’s regulatory czar and author of *Nudge-Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness*.

In describing the premise of his book, Sunstein explained, “We think that there is a little Homer Simpson in all of us. Sometimes we have self-control problems, sometimes we’re impulsive. In these circumstances, both public and private institutions, without coercing, can make our lives a lot better.”

In August 2008, Sunstein said, “Once we know that people are human and have some Homer Simpson in them, then there’s a lot that can be done to *manipulate* them.” (Emphasis added.)

Sunstein’s book recommends a variety of ways to “nudge” Americans towards healthier lifestyles while giving the appearance that Americans are in fact doing it by choice, through behavioral psychology. For example, according to Sunstein’s *Nudge*, one viable way for schools to encourage healthy eating habits among students is by placing healthy food choices at eye level while unhealthy choices are hidden from sight.

Michelle Obama made a similar statement when she recommended that restaurants serve apple slices as a default side dish to hamburgers instead of French fries, requiring Americans to specially order the side dish to which they are most accustomed.

Nudge also indicates that Americans are currently faced with too many choices which ultimately confuse them, statements reminiscent to those made by President Obama during Hampton University’s [commencement speech](#).

In June 2009, President Obama said, “I think we can all take steps to become healthier, and there’s nothing wrong with us giving a little bit of a nudge in moving people toward the direction of healthier lifestyles.”

However, Beck and many other critics of the Obama administration’s increasing overreach, fear that the “nudge” will soon give way to an all out “push” when Americans begin to resist the “subtle” tyrannical approaches of the federal government.

Photo: First lady Michelle Obama speaks at the National Restaurant Association’s fall board meeting, on Capitol Hill in Washington, Sept. 13, 2010.: AP Images



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