

FRANK TALK

●● When is a hot dog not a hot dog?

When it doesn't include nitrates, according to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Father of two and Toronto entrepreneur Matthew von Teichman found that out the hard way when his company, Life Choices, began the packaging approval process for its healthy, nitrate-free wiener.

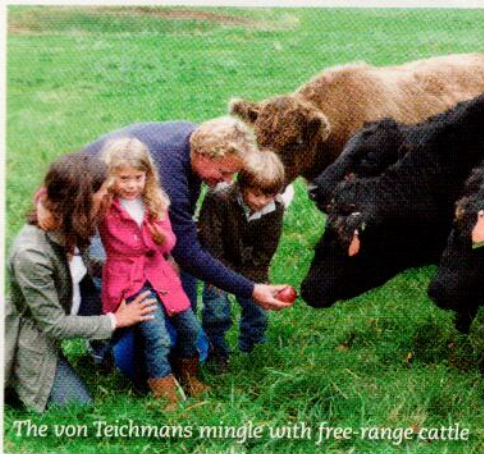
"They said the definition of a hot dog was that it contained sodium nitrate," says Matthew. "We used celery salt and green tea extract, both naturally occurring nitrites, to cure our product." That label wasn't the only snag. Life Choices' hotdogs use only beef shoulder and hip cuts. "We wanted to say 'Prime Cuts Only' on our package, but the CFIA said that making that claim would imply that other manufacturers DIDN'T use prime cuts." Duh.

In the end, the CFIA allowed the claims, and this November Life Choices began selling their hotdog in grocery stores across Canada. True, they are more expensive and don't last as long as other brands, but for parents who are keen to improve their children's nutrition, the dogs are a welcome addition to the refrigerator. They're also the latest in line of kid-friendly, organic products, which includes meatballs made from grass-fed, free-range beef.

At Grandview Farms near Collingwood, Ont., Life Choices' cattle feed on rye and clover and flax seed. They are 'finished' with a diet of apples, which sweetens the taste of the beef. Unlike the recent revelations in documentaries such as *Food Inc.*, that the typical hamburger is made up of hundreds if not thousands of different cattle, a package of Life Choices' meatballs only includes five at the most, says Matthew.

Matthew launched Life Choices when his wife first announced she was pregnant and she wanted to put only healthy food into her body. With his kids now eight and five, the goal of creating healthy food that kids want to eat is still a priority. It's just a little bit easier with live-in taste-testers!

—JANICE BIEHN



The von Teichmans mingle with free-range cattle

WHAT'S IN STORE



slim bagels

● Hey bagel, you look good. Have you lost weight? The answer is yes. And President's Choice Thin Bagels also contain less sodium than their heftier cousins. Choose from Original, 4-Seeded or Cinnamon Raisin.

say olé!

● Make taco night even healthier with Old El Paso's new and improved taco shells and tortillas, which include added whole grains, fibre and reduced sodium.



true colours

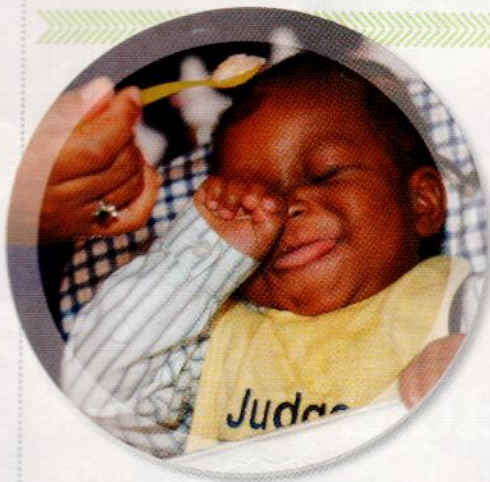
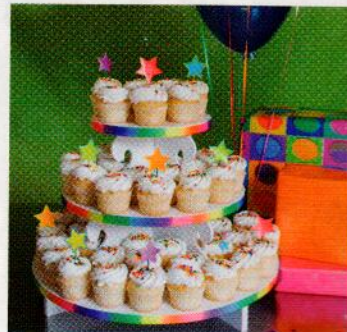
● When Kelowna mom Kia Robertson created a set of rainbow charts to help her daughter eat a more varied range of fruits and vegetables, she never dreamed it would morph into a top-rated story book. Follow the antics of the

rainbow bunch as they learn about the importance of eating fruits and vegetables every day. Available at todayiatearainbow.com, with or without magnetic board.



party favours

● Birthday cakes are delicious but often lead to leftovers that tend to get wasted. Try perfect size cupcakes at your next celebration and serve them on this beautiful tower. Comes apart for easy storage. Change the ribbon to match your colour scheme. Holds 72 cupcakes! Available at cupcaketower.com.



Rice is nice

The invention of Pablum in 1931 in Toronto revolutionized baby health. It makes sense then that the USA Rice Federation would include Canadian parents in its search for innovative rice baby food recipes. The Rice, Rice, Baby! Taste-off contest drew more than 100 entrants from across Canada, with the five finalists squaring off in Toronto in September.

Each recipe was tasted by five (adorable) baby judges and the results were based on each baby's reaction. In the end the Yummy Rice Pudding narrowly beat out the Avocado Banana Rice Mash.

"I had a feeling the rice pudding would win because it's so sweet," says Nicole Young, author of *Blender Baby Food*, who helped narrow down 117 entries. Nicole says that making your own baby food allows you to control the freshness and quality of the ingredients you give your baby. (For more on homemade baby food, see *Mix and Mash* on page 98).

Rice is an ideal first solid food to introduce to your baby. "You don't have to worry about allergies, and rice is going to cause the least amount of digestion problems," says Nicole. She suggests starting with white rice, then introducing brown rice for a little more fibre and iron.

—TERESA MORGADO



For the top three rice recipes visit ParentsCanada.com



It is the holidays, after all

● Give yourself a little gift of indulgence this season with President's Choice newest dessert, Red Velvet Cheesecake.