

Dear America,

Today, one-third of our kids are overweight or obese, and one-third of adults are obese. Add them together and we are hardly a picture of health.

Diet-related diseases are striking in record numbers. For the first time in history, our children are expected to live shorter lives than their parents. As a father of two, I am both sobered and empowered by that fact.

Despite our challenges, there is good news. People care. More and more consumers today care about how their food is made, sourced, handled and prepared. They care about what is in it and what is not. And they care about eating for both health and joy.

As a result, these consumers also are demanding more of the companies that feed them. And they should.

At Panera, we have always sought to challenge the status quo. Ten years ago, we set a new standard by offering chicken raised without antibiotics. We now enforce that same standard with our roasted turkey, ham, breakfast sausage and bacon. Five years ago, we voluntarily posted calories on our menus because we believe transparency is a consumer's right. And just last month, we became the first national restaurant brand to publish a list of artificial ingredients we will be removing from our menu by the end of 2016. Our food will have no artificial colors, preservatives, sweeteners or flavors. None whatsoever.

No other company is moving as aggressively to offer clean food. We want to encourage suppliers and competitors to rethink the way that they do business, too. We want to set an example for the change our food system so desperately needs.

We all have a choice: Be part of the solution or be part of the problem. We at Panera want to be part of the solution; that's why I got into this business. I see no better way to make a positive difference than by fueling the ten million people we serve each week with food that's simply good and is also good for you.

For me, this work is deeply personal. I want to serve you food that I want to eat myself and serve to my own children. I want to wake up every morning optimistic about the direction our food system is headed. I want to see our country get healthier and stronger by experiencing the joy of good eating.

If you'd like to be part of the solution, please join us on our journey. We all have a job to do. Yours is simple: Care. Ask questions. Demand transparency and cleaner menus. Our Food Policy and No No List are available online as inspiration. We invite you to help spread wellness in your own families and communities. Come in, have a seat at our table, and enjoy food as it should be.

All my best,
Ron



Ron Shaich
Founder, Chairman and CEO



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