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FIRST-EVER STATEWIDE RESTAURANT NUTRITION PROGRAM – “EAT HEALTHY MISSISSIPPI” – EMPHASIZES LOCAL SOURCING, HEALTHYDININGFINDER.COM APPROVAL

Mississippi Hospitality & Restaurant Association launches initiative with online nutrition resource partner to promote restaurant industry's commitment to healthy lifestyles

(Jackson, Miss.) – The [Mississippi Hospitality & Restaurant Association](#) (MHRA) today unveiled a groundbreaking statewide initiative called “Eat Healthy Mississippi” that aims to make great strides in helping Mississippi remove its status as the “fattest state in the nation.” In a press conference at the State Capitol, Governor Phil Bryant, along with Department of Agriculture and Commerce Commissioner Cindy Hyde-Smith and [Healthy Dining](#) President Anita Jones-Mueller, joined the MHRA in launching this major healthy lifestyle program to encourage Mississippi citizens to eat more healthfully when dining out.

“Eat Healthy Mississippi” is designed to promote locally grown produce in the preparation of dietitian-approved, Healthy Dining menu options at restaurants throughout Mississippi. All approved menu choices will be featured on [HealthyDiningFinder.com](#), along with resources to educate restaurants and consumers about nutrition and eating and living well. Additionally, the healthy eating initiative establishes a mutually beneficial relationship between local growers and restaurants that not only will promote healthy lifestyles but also stimulate the local economy.

“We are thrilled and honored to have Governor Bryant and Commissioner Hyde-Smith join us today in supporting our efforts to promote a healthier Mississippi, where we can enjoy farm-fresh ingredients in healthier options at participating restaurants,” said Mike Cashion, MHRA Executive Director. “It is our hope that this innovative approach to linking local producers to local restaurants will provide consumers with even more healthy dining options at their favorite restaurants throughout the state.”

In his comments, Governor Phil Bryant urged Mississippians and visitors to understand the benefits of smart lifestyle choices.

“We all must take seriously the impact lifestyle choices make on health,” Bryant said. “Poor choices can lead to obesity, disease and other health complications, but smart choices such as healthful diets and regular exercise can lead to a longer life. I encourage everyone to adopt a healthy lifestyle and choose wholesome foods at home and when dining out.”

Healthy Dining president and founder Anita Jones-Mueller, MPH, also underscored the long range benefits of the program.

“This landmark effort can greatly enhance the health and well-being of Mississippi residents and tourists. It serves as a model that other states can emulate in contributing both to better health and a vibrant economy,” said Jones-Mueller. “With HealthyDiningFinder.com, it is easy for those eating away from home to find restaurants offering menu items with health and taste in mind. Our dietitians look forward to working with Mississippi restaurants to help them offer a growing selection of Healthy Dining menu choices that their guests will love.”

(more)

Through MHRA's strategic partnership with HealthyDiningFinder.com, participating "Eat Healthy Mississippi" restaurants will have access to Healthy Dining's expert nutrition services, including consultation on finding menu items that meet [Healthy Dining's nutrition criteria](#). The online, nutrition resource's team of registered dietitians has analyzed thousands of menu items from restaurants nationwide – fast food to fine dining – to ensure consumers are armed with accurate nutrition information to make more informed dietary choices when dining out. Restaurants that join the "Eat Healthy Mississippi" program will have the benefit of having several menu items analyzed and approved by Healthy Dining's dietitians, and their restaurant and healthier choices will be featured on HealthyDiningFinder.com – also accessible via its [mobile site](#) and [iPhone app](#) ("yumPower") for on-the-go consumers.

"Eat Healthy Mississippi" restaurant participants may also qualify to participate in the [Kids LiveWell](#) program, a National Restaurant Association initiative, developed in collaboration with Healthy Dining, that provides parents and children with a growing selection of restaurants providing healthful children's menu options that focus on fruit and vegetables, lean protein, whole grains and low-fat dairy, with limited amounts of unhealthy fats, sugars and sodium.

The "Eat Healthy Mississippi" campaign has been made possible by a grant of more than \$83,000 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, as well as partnerships with the Mississippi Department of Agriculture & Commerce, Mississippi Division of Tourism, the Mississippi Department of Health, local farmers and growers, and other local and national support. The multi-phase initiative will include various programs to educate and bring awareness to local growers and farmers, restaurants and consumers to expand their knowledge of the benefits of "Eat Healthy Mississippi" and living a balanced and healthy lifestyle.

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Mississippi Hospitality & Restaurant Association: The Mississippi Hospitality & Restaurant Association is a non-profit association composed of food service operators, lodging properties, attractions, convenience stores, casinos, suppliers, manufacturers, and other professionals who realize the importance of working together for the good of our industry. The mission of the association is to promote the hospitality and foodservice industries, protect our industry and patrons from unnecessary laws and regulations, and provide education and training programs for all hospitality industry employees.

HealthyDiningFinder.com: Since 1990, [HEALTHY DINING'S](#) culinary nutrition experts have been guiding and inspiring chefs and restaurateurs to create and serve a selection of HEALTHY DINING menu options. A leader in restaurant nutrition, the company works with hundreds of restaurants and has analyzed thousands of menu items for nutrient content. In collaboration with the [National Restaurant Association](#), HEALTHY DINING leads the largest-ever restaurant industry nutrition initiative. Through [HealthyDiningFinder.com](#), the only resource of its kind, Americans can find dietitian-approved, HEALTHY DINING menu options and view corresponding nutrient information (calories, fat, etc.) for restaurants that span fast food to fine dining, coast to coast. The site is promoted to the growing segment of health- and weight-conscious consumers through employers, health organizations, health insurance companies, weight control programs, fitness centers, the media, and much more. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provided partial funding for the development of the initiative. For more information, visit www.HealthyDiningFinder.com.

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