

Today's Dietitian

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The Magazine for Nutrition Professionals

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GET TO KNOW...

RACHEL BELLER

Nutrition's New Addition
to TV's *The Biggest Loser*

By Juliann Schaeffer

Previously providing nutrition's voice of reason for TV shows such as *Dance Your A** Off* and *Dr Drew's Lifechangers Show*, Rachel S. Beller, MS, RD, recently went mainstream: She's now the new nutrition expert for the hit prime-time weight-loss program *The Biggest Loser*.

As the freshest nutrition force to join *The Biggest Loser* family, famous for helping morbidly obese contestants slim down super fast in game-show style, Beller offers her nutrition know-how to contestants (and at-home viewers) and can only hope her message sticks long after the Biggest Losers leave the show. "The take-home message is essential," she says. "Each contestant should be able to envision themselves shopping, cooking, and preparing food in a quick and easy way that's realistic and affordable, for years down the line."

That's a tough task in today's world, but Beller isn't known for shying away from hardship; her other passion involves helping cancer patients. Before becoming the founder of the Beller Nutritional Institute in Beverly Hills, California, she spent time at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center and the John Wayne Cancer Institute studying the role nutrition plays in cancer prevention. As you'll read below, it's a subject that's deeply personal for her.

She may be more recognized for helping celebrities stay thin (and healthy) the right way, but it's cancer patients who hold her heart. Noting her work as part of a large multicenter breast cancer and nutrition clinical trial as a highlight of her career thus far, she says, "I am very passionate when working with cancer patients; I refer to it as my 'inner calling.'"

Today's Dietitian (TD): Who inspired your career path?

Beller: My parents. When my father succumbed to cancer, I decided it wasn't enough to learn about low fat and low calories; I wanted to learn how nutrition affects total health. I also realized there was a strong need for supportive care during cancer treatment. I found that I couldn't necessarily trust the dietary advice coming from celebrity chefs, fitness experts, and other uncredentialed individuals hopping on the nutrition bandwagon. My dream was to help people navigate through better nutritional choices, to help fight cancer, lose weight, control diabetes, heart disease, and address overall prevention. In order to do that, I needed to learn the scientific truth for myself.

TD: You've been involved with a lot of community outreach. Does this work have special significance for you?

Beller: Absolutely. I recognize the importance of supporting



community outreach efforts and am proud to serve on the boards of many charitable organizations that are really making a difference by providing education and support services to those in need. As a healthcare provider, it's important to make time and contribute to such causes.

TD: What's the biggest misconception people have about working in Hollywood?

Beller: People might think that Hollywood is all glitz and glam, but the reality is people work really hard here and under pressure, which many times leads to their making less-than-ideal food choices at the craft service on set. Working alongside the demands of their jobs requires me to be very creative in my approach.

TD: What five items are always in your refrigerator or cupboard?

Beller: I have six that I can't live without: tons of vegetables, low-mercury tuna, nori sheets, premeasured dark chocolate, high-fiber cereal/crackers, and beans. (Sprouted lentils are my ultimate fast-food fave.)

TD: What foods do you crave?

Beller: New York pizza and sushi

TD: Treadmill or the open road?

Beller: I personally like the open road because in all aspects of my life I always like the mental satisfaction of knowing and feeling like I'm going somewhere.

TD: Do you entertain houseguests often? If so, what are your go-to recipes or tips for a successful soiree?

Beller: Absolutely. My extended family (that's about 20 people!) gets together about once a week at my house for dinner. Grilled wild salmon, roasted veggies, and chopped salad are always staples on my dinner table. I don't even know how to cook for one [person]!

TD: How do you stay current with the latest research on nutrition?

Beller: I'm a researcher at heart. I regularly hold meetings with physicians and researchers in the community. I continually subscribe to the industry magazines and stay involved with nutrition organizations that are research centric. Also, as I perform community outreach, which involves developing and updating lectures, I'm constantly forced to update my knowledge base with the latest research available.

— Juliann Schaeffer is an associate editor at Great Valley Publishing Company and a frequent contributor to *Today's Dietitian*.