HOW TO OBTAIN A NUTRITIONAL ANALYSIS
AN E-BOOK FROM ESHA.
Congratulations. You’ve invented the world’s perfect food.

And now you want to market it to the masses. There are myriad steps you’ll have to take to get from here to conquering the market, and we can offer you help with an important one: Obtaining nutritional analysis and labeling of your product.

Current federal regulations require nutrition labels for “all products intended for human consumption and offered for sale” minus a few exemptions (fresh fruits, vegetables, meat, etc. for example) [Code of Federal Regulations 101.9(a)]. So you’re going to need, at a minimum, nutritional analysis for the required nutrients. What these are depends on what country your product will be sold in, but generally include Calories (Energy), Fats, Carbohydrates, Protein, Sodium and other vitamins or minerals.

Your options are:
1. Laboratory analysis;
2. Nutrition analysis software;
3. Contracting with a consultant;

This paper compares the pros and cons of your options by discussing the cost, time, accuracy and/or additional aspects of each.
Laboratory Analysis

Pro: Versatility
One advantage of laboratory analysis is that it can be used for many purposes including analysis for labeling and verifying supplier data. You send in a sample of your product and the laboratory returns an analysis obtained through scientific methods.

Labs can analyze all ingredients for all nutrients. If your product contains a fruit nobody’s ever heard of, if you’re looking for the amount of Taurine in your product, if you want to see if there are GMOs in your granola bar, laboratory analysis can tell you this.

Pro: Other services
Often, labs offer complementary services to go along with the analysis. These include ingredient statements, allergen declarations, and more. In fact, most labs will generate a camera-ready Nutrition Facts panel either as part of the analysis package or for an additional fee.
**Con: Cost**
Lab analysis can range anywhere from $199 to $800, depending on the product, what you're analyzing for, and what extras you want. Also, each time you add an ingredient or alter an ingredient’s amount, you have to pay for a new analysis.

However, if you're only looking for a one-time simple analysis and don't plan on changing anything in the future, lab analysis might be what you want.

**Con: Time**
Lab analyses take time. First, physical samples of your product have to get from you to the lab, by mail, courier, or other means. Then, the lab has to do the work of analysis. Finally, the results have to come back to you. At the very least, you’re looking at one day, and this assumes every step goes smoothly. More likely, you’re looking at a week or two.

There are exceptions, of course. Some labs do offer one-day turn-around. You might wonder how this is possible.

Here’s a secret: They use nutritional analysis software.
Nutritional Analysis Software

Pro: Time
Using nutrition analysis software is fast. You enter search terms for an ingredient (example: bananas), select the closest match (example: Banana, large, without peel), enter the measure (example: 14 each) and continue in the same manner for the remaining ingredients. The software calculates the per-serving amount of each required nutrient and spits out the information in a variety of reports, including a camera-ready Nutrition Facts panel. Some of your ingredients may not be in the database, so you will have to add them, if the software allows you to do so. This does increase the time, of course, but not by much. And the higher-end programs will most likely have any ingredient you need.

Pro: Virtual tweaks
If you don’t like what you see after the analysis (too much fat?), you can easily experiment with ingredient amounts. Maybe you want to see how much the fat will decrease if you reduce the amount of almonds. Change the numbers in your formula and the software recalculates the analysis for you.

Pro: Government regulatory compliance
This can be a little tricky because the Code of Federal Regulations for nutrition labeling is hundreds of pages long. The good news is most high-end software programs have the regulations built in. You should be able to create a label that conforms to the layout standards, the nutrient standards, and the rounding rules. Some software packages even calculate what Nutrient Content Claims (example: “High in Fiber”) you can safely use. Currently, the U.S. Government does not certify any particular method of nutrition label creation, but it does recognize the validity of using software.

For additional assurance, it’s a good idea to look for software that has a built-in data check, which assesses if your values make sense and that the numbers add up.
Pro: Unlimited use
The software is yours. You can use it once or a thousand times. Plus, ownership allows for team collaboration and workflow integration. With software, you can expand your operation more quickly and easily.

Pro/Con: Accuracy
Software analysis cannot, of course, be as precise as laboratory analysis. And you have to be really careful about which software you choose. High-quality software will have an extensive and accurate food database — one that is verified and frequently updated — that includes obscure items and processing ingredients. The software should be as close to laboratory analysis as possible and will offer what labs offer: Nutrition Facts creation using the latest in government standards, Ingredient Statements, Allergen declarations and more.

How can you be sure you’re getting the best software? Hint: Look at what the labs and top food and beverage companies use.

Pro/Con: Cost
The cost of high-quality software can be daunting, that is until you compare it to lab analysis. Consider this. Analysis for 10 products at $800 a pop equals $8,000. Ouch. So, while the up-front costs may seem high, you can easily see how you’d save money over the long haul. Something else to look at is subscription pricing. Many software companies are now moving to a month-to-month payment system in order to make their software affordable. This is a good option for smaller businesses or tight budgets. Remember to ask about this when you’re considering nutrition software.

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Consultants

Pro: Added value
Most consultants use some sort of nutrition analysis software to help them create Nutrition Facts panels. So they’re not going to be more or less accurate in terms of analysis. However, they’re going to have extra knowledge and offer added services. For example, a consultant may have extensive experience with government regulations and may offer to review your packaging design and suggest changes. Or they might have access to a printer that specializes in package design. Whether to use a consultant is going to depend on what you ultimately need.

Con: Cost
Consultant services and pricing vary widely, again, depending on what you’re looking for, but you will, at a minimum, be charged for analysis and Nutrition Facts creation. Somewhere around $300. For a full label with Allergens and Ingredient Statements, you might be looking at $1,000. And costs will go up from there.

Additional services could be billed at an hourly rate. Again, this depends on your needs. Consultant fees vary from $40 per hour all the way up to $275 per hour.
Obtaining nutrient analysis and creating a government-compliant Nutrition Facts label can initially appear to be an overwhelming task.

But you’ve seen here that there are options available to you that can simplify the process quite a bit.

Again, when choosing the solution that’s right for you, remember to look at cost, time, accuracy, and your particular needs.
ESHA Research has been the leading provider of nutrition databases, food and supplement labeling, and nutrition analysis software solutions for more than 30 years. Our team of consultants are knowledgeable in nutrition, labeling, and regulatory compliance, ensuring your unique needs are met.

If we can be of assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us:

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