The Value of the Spreadsheet View

One way to display the nutrient information for foods could be called the "single-item view." This method shows you all the nutrients for one food item at a time. This is the sole presentation method used by most nutrition software packages today.

Another method of viewing the nutrient data for foods is called the "spreadsheet view." This method presents a tabular view of columns and rows that displays the nutrient information for a number of food items at once. The presentation is almost exactly what you'd see in a modern spreadsheet program like MS Excel. Food names appear in the first vertical column followed by nutrients in the remaining columns.

There are many advantages to this method of viewing data:

- The spreadsheet view allows you to look at and compare similar food items because they are situated next to each other in the list of foods.
- Scrolling through a spreadsheet allows you to see the foods you were looking for very quickly. This can easily become a time-consuming chore if you have to look at every food item one at a time, close the screen, locate the next item, etc..
- If you can drag and drop nutrient columns as desired, you can put the nutrients you are most interested in viewing next to each other for easy comparison.
- If the software allows you to also select which nutrients to display, you can limit your view to the nutrients of interest and avoid having to scroll through columns of data to see what you are interested in - you can focus on the nutrients you are tracking.
- If the software supports a "split-screen view," you can view nutrient data from, say vitamins or fatty acids, while viewing the food name, brand, and serving size information (or any other information) on the other half of the screen.

Example

An example of the spreadsheet view in action illustrates its advantages. Suppose you are looking for a low saturated fat yogurt to recommend for a client. Here are two approaches you could take:

Using software that offers only the single-item view, you would conduct a search on "Yogurt". Let's say you get 100 "hits" (100 yogurt names come up). You double-click the first yogurt on the list and view its nutrients in the single-item view. Write down its name and its saturated fat value on a piece of paper. Close this window to go back to your hit list, then repeat this process 100 times until you have written down the names and the saturated fat values for all 100 yogurts. Now scan at your hand-written list and find the yogurt you will recommend for your client. *This process can easily take an hour.*

Using software that provides a spreadsheet view, conduct a food name search on "Yogurt". Several food categories will appear in your hit list. Double-click on the Dairy Products category. A list of all the Dairy Products that contain the string "Yogurt" anywhere in the food names will appear in a spreadsheet of columns and rows with their nutrient values displayed. Scan the column labeled "Saturated Fat (g)". Select the yogurt you want to recommend. That's all there is to it. *This process frequently takes less than 60 seconds.*

NutriBase supports the spreadsheet view with split-screen support, a zoom control (to adjust how small or large the spreadsheet is), and the ability to drag and drop columns of data to resequence them. You can also select which nutrients to display.

NutriBase also supports the single-item view. Double-click on any food item in the spreadsheet view to see all the nutrients for the selected food item.