



Gluten-free Diets Are Harmful for the General Population (Except for one percent)

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The Mediterranean Diet Is a Weight-Gainer The Asian Diet Should Be Our Goal

by Jeff Novick, RD

Once again the Mediterranean Diet is [in the news](#) for its health promoting properties. Not only is this diet promoted for its “heart healthy” benefits, it is also sold to the public as the best way to achieve and to maintain a healthy body weight. However, I have come to the [opposite conclusion](#).

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Three Potential Problems from Wheat

Celiac Disease:

Celiac disease results from damage to the intestines caused by eating gluten, found in wheat, barley, and rye, in genetically susceptible people. The resulting malabsorption prevents the small intestine from efficiently absorbing necessary nutrients. Diarrhea, abdominal pain, flatulence, weakness, and weight loss are frequent. Gluten damage to the intestinal barrier creates a “leaky gut.” Now “foreign proteins” from microbes and food are indiscriminately allowed to pass through the intestinal wall, causing all kinds of trouble. People with untreated celiac disease have a two to six times greater risk of dying, mainly due to an increase in the risk of lymphoma, and a much greater risk of suffering from autoimmune diseases, such as type-1 diabetes and thyroiditis (leading to hypothyroidism).

The definitive diagnosis of celiac disease is made by a bowel biopsy showing damage to the intestinal lining (villous atrophy). Blood tests (endomysial and tissue transglutaminase antibodies) help support the diagnosis. The cornerstone of treatment is lifelong adherence to a strictly gluten-free diet.

Wheat Allergies:

Wheat allergies are classically found as two conditions: baker’s asthma and rhinitis (runny nose). However, allergies to components of wheat may cause, and contribute to, many other problems, including inflammatory arthritis.

Wheat Sensitivity:

A new category of problems classified as “[wheat sensitivity](#)” or “non-celiac gluten intolerance” has recently become widely recognized. This form of gluten intolerance is diagnosed when both celiac disease and wheat allergy have been excluded. Symptoms include abdominal discomfort, bloating, pain, and diarrhea. In addition, many people relate headaches, “foggy mind,” depression, fatigue, muscle cramps, joint pain, numbness, and skin rash to wheat sensitivity. The actual incidence of non-celiac gluten intolerance is unknown.

Because this condition is so non-specific, my guess is that most of these people are simply sick from their unhealthful diet of meat, dairy foods, vegetable oils, and other junk food. Blaming gluten or wheat is wrong, and as a result, their efforts on gluten-free eating are misplaced. Benefits seen while attempting any new more restrictive diet regimen are from simply removing foods recognized to be unhealthful, irrelevant to their containing gluten or not.

Gluten-free Can Be a Disguise for Low-carb Eating

The national best-selling book, *Wheat Belly*, by William Davis, MD, has fueled the current rage for gluten-free foods. The book’s

subtitle is “Lose the wheat, lose the weight, and find your path back to health.” [Misquoting the research](#) and ignoring the bulk of the scientific evidence, Dr. Davis has convinced people, as well known as Fox News TV co-host [Bill O’Rielly](#), that avoiding wheat is the solution to America’s obesity and health crises. Dr. Davis says “modern wheat is a perfect chronic poison; it causes diabetes, it causes inflammation, it causes heart disease, it causes high blood pressure....” He goes on to claim in a [CBS News interview](#) that the elimination of wheat will cure these conditions and cause people to stop their medications.

Although I applaud Dr. Davis for bringing problems with wheat to greater public awareness, I consider this fad a serious diversion away from what I believe to be the real solution to obesity and common diseases: a [starch-based diet](#). Traditionally my kind of high-carbohydrate eating has been the diet of people throughout recordable human history, and a large share of these civilizations, ancient and modern, have relied on generous amounts of wheat, barley, and/or rye for survival.

While exaggerating the benefits of a wheat-free diet, Dr. Davis makes clear his alliance with the low-carb movement, typified by the popular [Paleo and Atkins diets](#). He recommends people eat unlimited amounts of eggs, full fat cheese, other dairy products, meat, fish, chicken, and vegetable (olive) oils; and reducing or eliminating favorite (even non-gluten) “comfort foods,” like corn, rice, oats, quinoa, millet, buckwheat, potatoes, and beans. My opposite conclusion is that Dr. Davis’s prescription for filling the dinner table with rich foods, those once reserved for the tables of opulent kings and queens, is actually the cause of the current epidemics of obesity and common illnesses in the developed world, not the solution.

The AACCI International (formerly the American Association of Cereal Chemists), a global nonprofit organization of 2,500 grain scientists and professionals studying the chemistry of cereal grains and their products, also disagrees with Dr. Davis and has [responded with a scientific analysis](#) of a few of his claims.

Gluten-free Diets Cause Weight Gain

Patients with celiac disease are usually suffering with malnourishment because of the problems created by damage to their intestines from gluten. Following removal of the wheat, barley, and rye, the GI track usually heals, and only then are calories and other nutrients efficiently assimilated. Weight gain is the desired and expected result for underweight people with celiac disease. Some people with documented celiac disease, however, [are overweight, and even obese](#), before starting a gluten-free diet. You might expect that the dietary restrictions imposed by a strict gluten-free protocol alone would cause weight loss for them. Unfortunately, [weight gain is a common](#) occurrence in overweight and obese adults and children with celiac disease who go on gluten-free diets. A 2012 [study of 1018 patients](#) with biopsy confirmed celiac disease found significant weight gain; with 16 percent of patients moving from a normal or low BMI (body mass index) class into an overweight BMI class, and 22 percent of the patients who were overweight at the time of diagnosis gaining weight after starting their strict gluten-free diet.

Let me be more to the point for the growing masses looking for the answer: “There are [no published reports](#) showing that a gluten-free diet produces weight loss in persons without celiac disease or gluten sensitivity.” To reiterate this point, [a 2011 article](#) in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* states, “At this time there is no scientific evidence supporting the alleged benefit that a gluten-free diet will promote weight loss.”

Percent of Fat Calories from Popular Gluten-free Foods	
Falafel	71%
Cheese Pizza	36%
Brownies	38%
Cupcakes	37%
Chocolate Cake	38%
Chocolate Chip Cookies	50%
These foods also can contain saturated fats, free vegetable oils, simple sugars, refined flours, nuts, soy, dairy products, and eggs.	

The primary reason for unwanted weight gain found in people buying gluten-free products is that these imitations often contain more calories, fat, and sugar, and fewer important nutrients (dietary fiber, complex carbohydrates, vitamins, and minerals) than the original gluten-containing foods. Even the casual observer can see the folly in eating gluten-free cakes, cookies, and pies, and expecting weight loss and better health. A trip through your local health food store or supermarket reveals rows of desserts where the wheat has been replaced with another grain (flour); and fats, vegetable oils, simple sugars, dairy

products, and eggs are abundant on the ingredient lists.

When an expert dietitian, knowledgeable about proper food choices for a healthy gluten-free diet, devoid of cakes, cookies, and pies, is involved in patient care, then weight loss is accomplished. [In one study](#) overweight and obese patients were advised to choose a high quality gluten-free diet with naturally gluten-free foods (fruits and vegetables) and alternate non-gluten containing grains (quinoa and buckwheat). These properly counseled patients consistently lost excess weight. There is unfortunately a paucity of dietitians and medical doctors available for the proper management of celiac disease.

This Fad Ultimately Harms Many Celiac Patients

If you are one of the few people with celiac disease, then avoiding gluten is crucial to your health. You cannot cheat! With the popularity of “going gluten-free,” for unsubstantiated reasons, the importance of this dietary restriction for the truly needy has been diminished. Waiters at restaurants become used to customers asking for “gluten-free dishes” and then failing to object when a few whole wheat bread crumbs appear as a decoration on top of their potato soup. Since wheat, barley, and rye did not cause any apparent distress in the previous 99 customers, the waiters and chefs think, “It can’t be all that important.” But it is for that one percent.

[Dr. McDougall’s Recommendations:](#)

If you suspect that you have celiac disease, get tested by your physician. Avoidance of gluten foods is a life long restriction. If you are unsure about your diagnosis, but still suspect gluten, then go on a starch-based diet, with no wheat, barley or rye. For example, you can base your diet on rice, corn, sweet potatoes, white potatoes, and beans, with fruits and green and yellow vegetables. The

McDougall Foods Acceptable for Celiac Disease:

Grains:

- Amaranth
- Buckwheat (or kasha)
- Corn
- Job's tears
- Millet
- Quinoa
- Rice
- Sorghum
- Teff
- Wild rice
- Oats*

Other Foods:

- All root vegetables, like potatoes, yams, sweet potatoes, and cassava-root (tapioca)
- All legumes**, more specifically, beans (including soy and chickpeas), peas and lentils
- All green, yellow, and orange vegetables
- All fruits

*Oats have been demonstrated in multiple studies to be free of toxic proteins and can be tolerated by most, but not all, people with celiac disease; but there is worry that commercial oat products may be contaminated with wheat.

**Legumes create extra gas, sometimes causing bloating and bowel discomfort. This reaction may be confused with symptoms of celiac disease and wheat sensitivity.

connection between gluten and celiac disease is so close that the diagnosis can often be made when the patient experiences dramatic improvement of symptoms upon following a gluten-free diet. Confirmation of your diagnosis can be made by carefully adding back any suspected foods.

If you, like two-thirds of adults in the US, are sick and overweight, and of the vast majority whom are also without celiac disease, wheat allergy or wheat sensitivity, then I strongly recommend that you include these good starches—wheat, barley and rye—in your diet because these foods are known to cause desirable [weight loss and medical benefits](#).

The Mediterranean Diet Is a Weight-Gainer

The Asian Diet Should Be Our Goal

Jeff Novick, RD

Once again the Mediterranean Diet is [in the news](#) for its health promoting properties. Not only is this diet promoted for its “heart healthy” benefits, it is also sold to the public as the best way to achieve and to maintain a healthy body weight. However, I have come to the [opposite conclusion](#).

In order to provide *proof beyond any reasonable doubt* of the culpability of diet, I have put this table together showing the incidence of obesity compared to fat intake in various countries worldwide. (I have highlighted the countries of Southeast and East Asia in green and the Mediterranean countries in yellow. The few countries in these regions that have become westernized are highlighted in blue.)

Nine out of 11 of the countries with the lowest rates of obesity (<10% incidence) are in Southeast and East Asia. The one exception is Malaysia. If I include Malaysia in this region of the world then the obesity rate is 4.8 percent. When I exclude Malaysia, which has had in recent years a more rapid transition to a diet of animal foods and oils than the rest of Asia, then the obesity rate is only 3.6 percent

Now look at the Mediterranean countries. Most of them fall in the middle range of obesity incidence, with the only exception being Italy, which has a fairly low rate of obesity. (However, the rate of obesity among Italian children is high, indicating a trend toward joining other Mediterranean countries in the near future.) When Italy is included, then the average obesity rate for the Mediterranean countries is 18.8 percent. Without Italy, it is 19.6 percent.

While education and financial matters are often cited as important variables, I can confidently tell you that these are not the problem. Consider that some of the strongest economies are in Southeast and East Asia where people are trim and healthy. Bankruptcies are everyday news in the Mediterranean regions. Educational achievement follows a similar pattern, with the highest levels found throughout Asia.

Comparing rates of obesity worldwide gives the most compelling clues about the best diets for achieving and maintaining a trim body weight. In Asia, where the bulk of the food is rice, with no dairy foods, and very little meat, fewer than 5 percent of people are obese. Make nuts and olive oil a focus of eating, i.e. the Mediterranean Diet, and the obesity rates hit 20 percent. In the US and other Western countries, where meat, dairy products, and vegetable oils satisfy people's appetites, overweight and obesity have become the norm. (Obesity is a more severe form of being overweight, which affects nearly two-thirds of Americans.)

Even more than the obnoxious habit of smoking, the greatest health challenge to the US and other Western countries is the food, which causes obesity and associated illnesses, such as type-2 diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, and common cancers (breast, prostate, and colon). Obesity now affects 34 percent of Americans. My conclusion from this worldwide comparison is that it is time for

doctors, dietitians, scientists, and national leaders to focus on rice instead of nuts and olive oil in an effort to solve the obesity epidemic. My advice to individuals is to forget the Mediterranean Diet—you and your family deserve better.

Country Name	Obesity - adult prevalence rate (%)	Year of Estimate	Region
Tonga	56	2000	C Polynesia
Kiribati	51	2006	Central Tropical Pacific
Saudi Arabia	36	2000	Western Asia
United States	34	2006	United States
United Arab Emirates	34	2000	Arabian Peninsula
Egypt	30	2006	NE Africa (MED)
Kuwait	29	2000	Arabian Peninsula
New Zealand	27	2007	New Zealand
Seychelles	25	2004	Africa
Fiji	24	2004	Melanesia
Mexico	24	2000	South America
Canada	23	2004	Canada
Israel	23	2001	Middle East (MED)
United Kingdom	23	2002	Europe
Greece	23	2003	SE Europe (MED)
Croatia	22	2003	Central Europe (MED)
Chile	22	2003	South America
Bosnia and Herzegovina	22	2002	SE Europe
Malta	21	2007	S Europe (MED)
Lithuania	20	2006	NE Europe
Jordan	20	2004	Middle East
Poland	18	2001	C Europe
Hungary	18	2004	C Europe
France	17	2007	W Europe (MED)
Australia	16	2005	Australia
Malaysia	16	2006	SE Asia
Peru	16	2000	S America n
Turkey	16	2007	SE Europe & W Asia (MED)
Morocco	16	2000	N African (MED)
Zimbabwe	16	2005	S Africa
Finland	16	2008	NE Europe
Spain	16	2007	SW Europe (MED)
Latvia	16	2006	NE Europe
Czech Republic	15	2002	C Europe
Slovenia	15	2001	C Europe (MED)

Table Continued			
Country Name	Obesity - adult prevalence rate (%)	Year of Estimate	Region
Estonia	14	2004	N Europe
Slovakia	14	2002	C Europe
Portugal	14	2005	SW Europe
Iran	14	2005	W Asia
Colombia	14	2007	NW S America
Lebanon	14	2004	E Mediterranean (MED)
Ireland	13	2002	NW Europe
Germany	13	2003	WC Europe
Iceland	12	2002	Europe
Bulgaria	12	2001	SE Europe
Sweden	12	2009	N Europe
Cuba	12	2002	Caribbean
Denmark	11	2006	N Europe
Brazil	11	2003	S America
Austria	11	2008	C Europe
Belgium	11	2001	W Europe
Norway	10	2009	Scandinavia
Mongolia	10	2005	East & Central Asia
Italy	10	2005	S Europe
Romania	9	2000	Central & SE Europe
Switzerland	8	2007	W Europe
Thailand	8	2003	SE Asia
Singapore	7	2004	SE Asia
Philippines	4	2003	SE Asia
Eritrea	3	2004	Africa
Korea, South	3	2001	SE Asia
Japan	3	2000	SE Asia
China	3	2002	SE Asia
Indonesia	2	2001	SE Asia
Madagascar	2	2005	Africa
Laos	1	2000	SE Asia
Vietnam	1	2000	SE Asia



Kid-Friendly Recipes – Soups and Desserts

By Heather McDougall

It has been a very busy month, so we have been eating lots of soup. Soups are such an easy meal, because all I need to do is serve with a salad or steamed veggies, and sometimes bread, and I am done.

Brown Lentil Soup

Adapted from Colleen Patrick-Goudreau's *The Vegan Table*. I love to add steamed kale to this dish, but my boys like it just as it is.

Preparation Time: 15 minutes

Cooking Time: 40 minutes

Servings: 6-8

2 tablespoons water for sautéing
 1 large yellow onion, chopped
 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
 2 carrots, finely chopped
 2 celery stalks, finely chopped
 2 cups brown lentils, picked through and rinsed
 8 cups vegetable stock
 1/2 teaspoon ground coriander
 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
 1 teaspoon salt, or to taste

Heat the water in a soup pot over medium heat. Once hot, add the onion, garlic, carrot, and celery, and cook until the onions are translucent, about 7 minutes.

Add the lentils, stock, salt, coriander, and cumin, and stir to combine. Increase the heat to high and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium-low, cover, and cook until the lentils are tender, about 35 to 40 minutes.

Serve as is, or using an immersion blender, puree to your preferred consistency. Alternatively, you may transfer a portion of the soup to the blender, puree, and then return to the pot.

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Noodle Soup

This soup is reminiscent of my favorite chicken noodle soup when I was a young child. I usually make this with fancy ribbon noodles (egg-free, of course) which sort of melt in your mouth when you're eating them. I make whole wheat bread in my bread machine to serve with this soup. Delicious!

Preparation Time: 10 minutes

Cooking Time: 30 minutes

Servings: 4-6

6 cups vegetable broth
 1 onion, chopped
 2 stalks celery, chopped
 2 carrots, chopped
 1/2 teaspoon marjoram

½ teaspoon sage
¼ teaspoon thyme
freshly ground pepper, to taste
1 teaspoon soy sauce
3 cups uncooked fancy ribbon noodles

Place all of the ingredients, except the noodles in a large pot. Bring to a boil, cover, reduce heat and simmer for about 20 minutes. Add the noodles and cook about 10 minutes longer until noodles are very tender.

Hints: Garden Time Organic makes Fancy Ribbons sold in a 10 ounce bag. I use about ½ of the bag in this recipe.

Chili

Preparation Time: 10 minutes

Cooking Time: 6 hours in a slow cooker

Servings: 6-8

1 15 ounce can kidney beans, drained and rinsed
1 15 ounce can black beans, drained and rinsed
1 15 ounce can pinto beans, drained and rinsed
1 cup frozen corn
1 red bell pepper, diced
1 yellow bell pepper, diced
1 red onion, diced
1 28 ounce can fire roasted diced tomatoes
1 cup vegetable broth
5 garlic cloves, minced
1 heaping tablespoon chili powder
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon ground coriander
1 teaspoon Ghirardelli cocoa powder (unsweetened)
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
1/2 teaspoon salt

Put all ingredients into a slow cooker and cook on high heat for 6 hours.

Pea Soup

This is my family's favorite pea soup. My mom has been making this version for over 25 years. This tastes even better the next day and is great over baked potatoes, too!

Preparation Time: 15 minutes

Cooking Time: 2 hours

Servings: 8-10

1 cup green split peas
1/2 cup dried baby lima beans
1/4 cup barley
8 cups water
1 onion, chopped
2 bay leaves

1 teaspoon celery seed
2 cups vegetable broth
2 carrots, chopped
2 potatoes, chunked
2 celery stalks, chopped
2 tablespoons parsley flakes
1 teaspoon basil
1 teaspoon paprika
1/8 teaspoon white pepper
freshly ground black pepper to taste

Place split peas, lima beans, barley and water in a large pot. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and add bay leaves and celery seed. Cover and cook over low heat for 1 hour. Add remaining ingredients and cook for 1 additional hour.

Hints: If you want to make this without the lima beans, increase the split peas to 2 cups and reduce the initial cooking time to 1/2 hour. This recipe freezes and reheats well. For a delicious smoky flavor, try adding a couple drops of liquid smoke to the soup about 15 minutes before the end of the cooking time.

Moroccan Red Lentil Soup

Versions of this lentil soup with tomatoes and chickpeas are served all over Morocco during the festival of Ramadan and to celebrate special occasions throughout the year. This is my interpretation.

We serve it with whole grain flatbread to scoop up the juices, or ladle the soup over brown rice.

1 onion, chopped
4 celery stalks, chopped
6 cups vegetable broth
1½ cups chopped tomatoes
1 cup dried red lentils
1 can (15 ounce) chickpeas, drained and rinsed
1 bay leaf
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon ground ginger
½ teaspoon ground turmeric
¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1/3 cup orzo
½ cup chopped cilantro
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice.

Pour ½ cup of water into a large soup pot along with the onion and celery. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables begin to soften, about 5 minutes. Add the broth, tomatoes, lentils, chickpeas, bay leaf, cinnamon, ginger, turmeric, coriander, and black pepper. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to a simmer, then cover and simmer until the lentils are tender, about 45 minutes.

Stir in the orzo, cilantro, and lemon juice. Cook 10 minutes longer, until the orzo is al dente.

Serve hot.

Cornbread

Preparation Time: 10 minutes

Cooking Time: 30-35 minutes

Servings: 8-10

2 cups cornmeal

1 cup all-purpose flour

2 teaspoons baking powder

½ teaspoon salt

2 cups non-dairy milk

2 teaspoons apple cider vinegar

2 tablespoons maple syrup

½ cup applesauce

1 cup frozen corn

Mix cornmeal, flour, baking powder, and salt. Set aside. Whisk milk, vinegar, syrup and applesauce. Stir together dry and wet ingredients. Add corn. Pour into an 8 x 8 inch silicone baking dish. Bake at 350 degrees for 30-35 minutes. Slice into squares and serve with Chili.

Banana Bread

Preparation Time: 10 minutes

Cooking Time: 60 minutes

Servings: 8-10

2 cups flour

1 ½ teaspoons baking powder

½ teaspoon baking soda

½ cup applesauce

½ cup sugar

2 ripe bananas, mashed

½ cup oat milk, or other non-dairy milk

1 container lemon soy yogurt

1 teaspoon vanilla

½ cup granola (optional)

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

In a separate bowl, combine, flour, baking powder and baking soda. In another medium bowl, stir together the applesauce and sugar, then stir in the bananas, oat milk, yogurt, and vanilla. Add flour mixture and mix well. Stir in the granola, if using. Pour into a silicone bread pan and bake for 60 minutes. About halfway through, tent the bread with parchment paper to prevent the top from browning too much.

Chocolate Decadence Pudding

My boys love this pudding, just remember it is a treat. We like to add berries on top, or Miyoko Schinner's *Vegan Banana Gelato* (see recipe below).

Preparation Time: 5 minutes

Cooking Time: 10 minutes

Servings: 6

½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder (Wonderslim)

¾ cup sugar

3 tablespoons cornstarch

3 cups soymilk

1 ½ teaspoons vanilla

With a whisk, combine cocoa, sugar, cornstarch, and soymilk in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium-low heat, stirring constantly until thickened. Remove from heat and add vanilla. Mix well. Pour into a bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and chill for 4 hours. Spoon into individual bowls and serve cold.

Hint: This may also be placed in individual sized serving dishes, covered and refrigerated until serving. Be sure to bring this to a boil slowly, while stirring constantly, for a smooth and creamy result.

Vegan Banana Gelato

This is just like soft-serve ice cream. You must use a food processor, not a blender for this. Depending on the size of the food processor, you may have to make this in two batches.

Preparation Time: need pre-frozen bananas

Processing Time: 5 minutes

Servings: 6

5 to 6 very ripe bananas, peeled and frozen

(after peeling, freeze overnight or longer in a plastic bag)

1 tablespoon vanilla

½ cup (approximately) non-dairy milk

Break frozen bananas into 1-inch pieces. Place in a food processor with the vanilla and milk and puree until creamy, stopping the machine occasionally to stir so that it processes evenly. Serve immediately. Can be refrozen.

Hints: Up to a third of the bananas can be substituted with frozen mangoes, strawberries, raspberries or other fruit of choice.

Oatmeal Chocolate Chip Cookies

My boys and I love making these cookies together. They are so delicious and make a wonderful treat now and then.

Preparation Time: 15 minutes

Total Time: 25 minutes

Yield: 4 dozen

1 cup applesauce

¾ cup sugar

¾ cup firmly packed brown sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla

1 ¾ cups flour

1 tablespoon Egg Replacer

1 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon baking soda

1 cup oats

1 1/2 cups semi-sweet chocolate chips

In large mixing bowl, combine applesauce, both sugars, and vanilla. In another bowl, combine flour, egg replacer, salt and baking soda. Stir wet and dry ingredients together. Add oats and chocolate chips. Drop by heaping teaspoonfuls onto a non-stick baking sheet, or one lined with parchment paper. Bake at 350°F for 10-12 minutes or until golden brown.

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