

Bible Bar packs a nutritional punch with inspired formula_60203

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Bible Bar packs a nutritional punch with inspired formula

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ORLANDO (RNS)—Different people find different things in the Bible. Tom Ciola found a recipe—for snack food.

The directions weren't precise, he admits. Coming up with the right formula, which added a few organic ingredients for taste and texture, was “quite a challenge.”

But through trial and error, and with a bit of outside help, Ciola finally produced the Bible Bar. Resembling a granola bar, it's billed as a “highly effective appetite regulator” and a “great way to control hunger pangs while still providing your body with the highest level of biblical nutrition.”

“God was the first nutritionist,” Ciola said from his office in Orlando, Fla., noting that early in the Bible God commands, “You shall not eat of every tree in the garden.”

“It may be symbolic,” Ciola said, “but I've done a lot of research on the Garden of Eden story, and I believe the Lord was saying something about improper nutrition. The Lord put a high price on good eating habits and health.”

Ciola found inspiration for Bible Bars, however, in Deuteronomy 8:8, “where the Lord uses seven species of food to describe the goodness of the land. That intrigued me. I've been in the nutrition business all my life, and I've also been a Bible student all my life.”

The seven foods are wheat, barley, honey, olive oil, figs, pomegranates and grapes. All are laden with symbolic value and, Ciola learned, sometimes surprising nutritional value.

“I wasn't the first to stumble on the importance of these foods,” he said. “Many ancient Bible scholars and rabbis have studied the subject, and I found a number of theories about their importance. I thought, from a nutritional standpoint, as long as the Lord sees these as important foods, let's see if we can put them in a form people can eat day to day.”

That was seven or eight years ago. Ciola approached a candy company with the idea. The results, from a taste standpoint, were “absolutely horrendous.”

So he put the idea aside, “got hot on it again” three years ago, and finally got it to work with the help of a small Texas company—and the addition of organic puffed rice and raspberry flavoring.

This was something he could sink his teeth into.

Besides being a serious Bible student, Ciola has a background as a natural health advocate and bodybuilder. He opened a combination health food store and fitness club in Utica, N.Y., in 1970, and won the Mr. New York State title in 1975—the same year he founded National Health Products,

which produces sports nutrition supplements. He organized the Natural Bodybuilders of America, which sponsored the first Natural Mr. America competition, excluding steroids and drugs.

He also wrote the nutrition guide "Moses Wasn't Fat," which he titled after realizing the Bible said Moses died at 120, "and his eyes were not dim nor his natural vigor diminished"-making him "an excellent physical specimen right up to his death and the epitome of everything my book stood for," Ciola said.

Using the Bible Bar as the foundation, under National Health he started House of David, a distributor of "spiritual health products" in a growing field that includes such items as Testamints and edible Nativities.

House of David, at houseofdavid.net, handles such products as Bible Bread, Back to the Garden meal replacement powder and the new Bible Granola-as well as the chewy Bible Bar, which has 190 calories, 6 grams of fat and retails for \$1.89 at about 2,500 health-food stores and religious bookstores.

"I've been accused of commercializing the Bible," Ciola said, "but I'm a believer, and I believe I will have to answer someday for my actions."

No problem there, he said-in the end, "it all goes back to the beginning. God does have a plan for us to eat properly."

One more thing, Ciola added. Stay away from underripe apples.

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