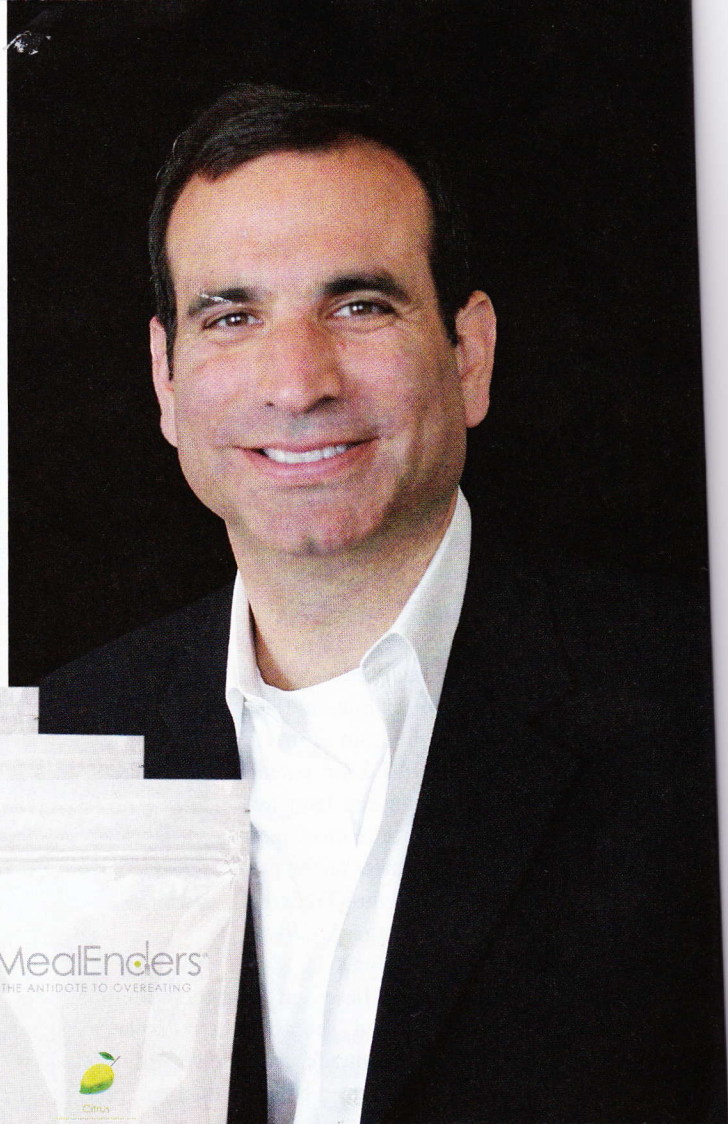


# Battle of the Bulge

MealEnders® Offers an Innovative Solution for Overeating

BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN



Mark Bernstein, a lawyer by profession, developed MealEnders to help him lose weight.

**A**s a lifelong contender with the battle of the bulge, I am always interested in products that might help middle-age spread. After noticing an ad for MealEnders® on my Facebook page, I tracked down the inventor, Mark Bernstein. He explained the concept behind MealEnders, which utilizes a combination of taste sensations to instill feelings of satiation, which, in turn, can lead to weight loss. Bernstein's foray into nutrition, psychology and product development has taken him far outside the arena of his former legal career.

A native of Knoxville, Tenn., Bernstein graduated from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. After working as a political assistant in the House of Commons in London, followed by pruning apple trees in Israel, he landed at New York University School of Law. Upon graduation in 1986, Bernstein moved to Atlanta, serving first as an attorney with King & Spalding and then as a senior legal counsel at Turner Broadcasting System, Inc.

At Turner, Bernstein was part of the team that birthed CNN's new media businesses. He ultimately served as a senior vice president at CNN and as general manager of CNN Interactive. In 1999, Bernstein was recruited by Springstreet.com, a division of

Move.com, the Internet's dominant real estate portal, as president.

With an interest in education and literature, several years later, Bernstein co-founded Hundreds of Heads Books and West Hills Press, where he serves as co-publisher. The two imprints publish titles ranging from *How to Survive Your Freshman Year* to the thriller *Eyes of Abel*.

In addition to his business ventures, Bernstein has been an active community volunteer for more than 25 years. He has contributed his expertise to such organizations as Hands on Atlanta and the Hands on Network, as well as the national boards of B'nai B'rith Youth Organization and the American Jewish World Service. In 1999, he was named by the World Economic Forum as one of its 100 Global Leaders for Tomorrow. In 2004, Bernstein was selected as a member of the Wexner Heritage Program, a Jewish leadership development organization for volunteers in North America.

Not one to sit still, Bernstein moved in another direction when he became concerned about his health and could not find a simple solution to his overeating problem. MealEnders was the result of the merger of Bernstein's investigative curiosity with his business prowess.



**Edith G. Tolchin:** When did you have that “light bulb” flash to create MealEnders?

**Mark Bernstein:** As I grew older and started to battle with my belt line, I discovered two obstacles to managing my weight: the willpower to end meals before I felt full and the ability to avoid unnecessary snacks. Too often, I ate a big plate of spaghetti, but still felt hungry. I often ate seconds and thirds.

After my doctor suggested I would benefit from losing a few pounds, my need to break these unhealthy habits became imperative. But, I felt helpless. I wanted to change, but I couldn't do it alone. I needed a little boost of outside willpower.

I searched the market for a formulation of flavors or sensations that would help me turn off the unhealthy urges to keep eating when I couldn't stop. I talked to biologists, dentists, nutritionists and culinary experts looking for a magic bullet. They all agreed that nothing like that existed.

I found most of the research concerning weight loss and weight management to be focused on either filling people up with unpleasant fibers and liquids before eating; limiting what we eat with the use of unsavory, prepackaged foods; or adding chemicals or food additives so we would enjoy them less.

During my own research, I learned that my overeating challenge was not just a problem of willpower, it was a problem of biology. It takes the brain 20 minutes after eating to receive the hormonal signal from our digestive track that we are, in fact, satiated. This is why I felt hungry after having a big plate of spaghetti. I wasn't giving my brain enough time to catch up with my stomach.

**EGT:** How long did it take your company, WillPower Labs, Inc., to develop the product?

**MB:** It took almost two years to research, develop and test a prototype; find appropriate manufacturers; develop messaging, marketing support and a website; and launch the product.

Once I engaged Mattson, the nation's leading food development firm in Silicon Valley, to help me create MealEnders, it took nearly a year to come up with a winning prototype and product. We began the search by interviewing leading doctors, dentists, psychiatrists, psychologists, nutritionists and weight-loss professionals.

After months of research with a variety of compounds, flavors and form factors, we arrived at the duo-sensory approach of today's MealEnders. Our proprietary flavor/sensation combination provided the right cues and sensory experience to do the job.

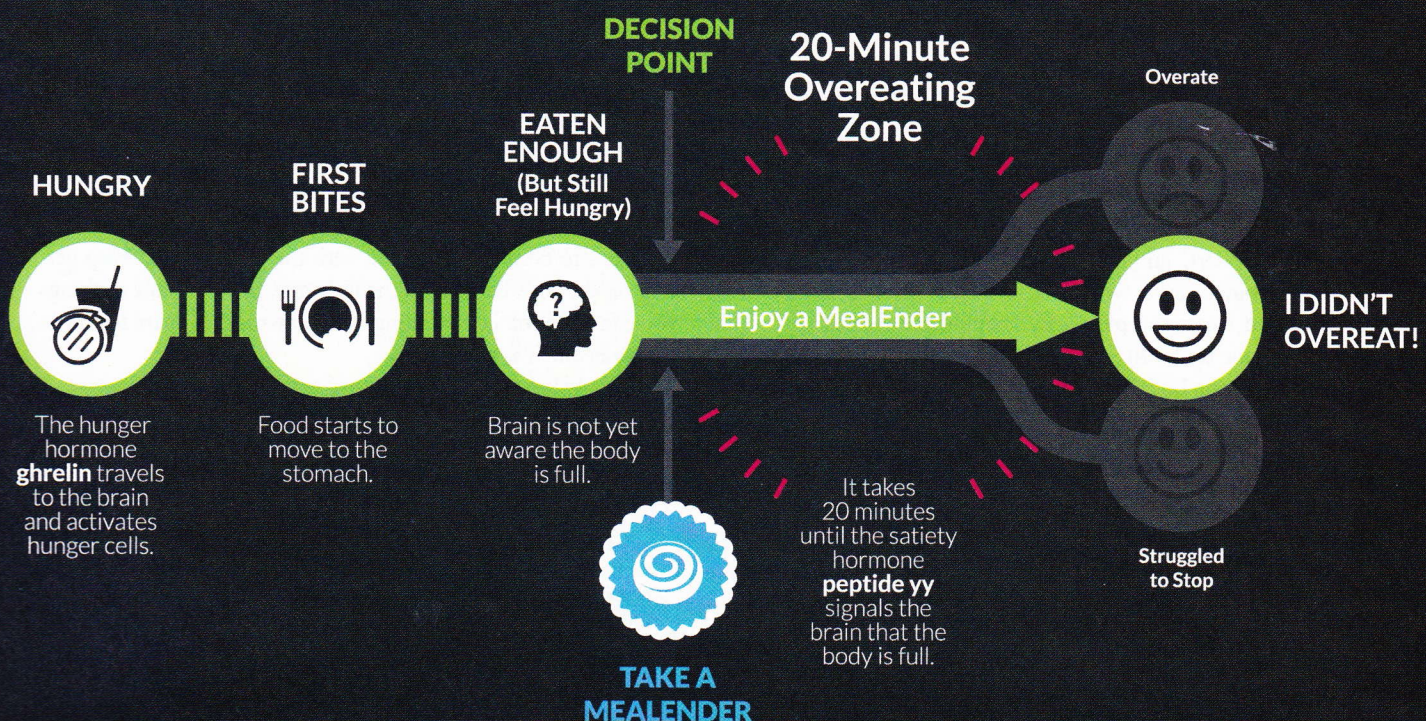
After a national test in which a majority of users reported that MealEnders had helped them stop eating and lose weight, we decided to commercialize our signaling lozenges and share the invention.

**EGT:** When did you launch MealEnders?

**MB:** We launched publicly in October 2014 at the Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo in Atlanta. We began promoting our product online January 2015.

**EGT:** How does the product work?

**MB:** MealEnders are drug- and stimulant-free “signaling lozenges” designed to help people avoid overeating and master portion control by removing from the mouth and mind the desire to eat







Developing a product in the lab is significantly different than developing one in a commercial factory. It took significantly more time to make that jump than I expected. As a small company, you have very little leverage, and thus every hiccup encountered is much harder to solve.

more than necessary. Unlike extreme diets, meal replacements, appetite suppressants or supplements that focus solely on the stomach, MealEnders works with the body's natural hunger and fullness-signaling process. They are a safe and sustainable way to curb the appetite. They contain no drugs, added stimulants, herbs or toxic ingredients. MealEnders work on a behavioral, sensory and psychological level to empower smarter eating.

The product consists of two components: a sweet, outer reward layer, or "dessert," and a cooling/tingling inner core that engages the trigeminal nerve, which senses tastes. This cues the end of eating and clears the palate. By keeping the mouth and mind occupied for up to 20 minutes—the overeating period—MealEnders give the body's natural satiety process time to catch up. MealEnders come in 25-piece pouches in four flavors: chocolate mint, cinnamon, mocha and citrus.

MealEnders' behavioral psychology approach is what sets it apart from other weight-management products. MealEnders catalyze behavioral change by retraining the mind to stop eating with the eyes. They heighten mindfulness of natural digestive rhythms; create habitual cueing of meal completion; train the mind to recognize healthy portion sizes; and empower a sense of

Bernstein unveiled MealEnders at the 2014 Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo in Atlanta.

control. By engaging the consumer, both mentally and physically, the signaling lozenges heighten awareness of natural satiety signals, helping regulate portion size and master the healthy habit of mindful eating.

**EGT:** What, if any obstacles, did you find along the way of product development?

**MB:** We initially set out to find an interrupter but ultimately realized we needed a tool that would also be tasty—something that would help the transition from eating to not eating. Also, developing a product in the lab is significantly different than developing one in a commercial factory. It took significantly more time to make that jump than I expected. As a small company, you have very little leverage, and thus every hiccup encountered is much harder to solve.

**EGT:** Where is the product made?

**MB:** It is made in two factories in Chicago.

**EGT:** Did your product require FDA approval?

**MB:** MealEnders contain no drugs, stimulants, herbs or toxic ingredients. It is regulated as a food; therefore there was no preapproval required.

**EGT:** Where are you selling MealEnders other than on Amazon and your website?

**MB:** We currently have relationships with BuluBox.com and Joyus.com. We also met international distributors in Lebanon and the Philippines at the Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo who want to introduce MealEnders to their countries.

**EGT:** Do you have any words of wisdom to share with *Inventors Digest* readers regarding developing an invention or new product?

**MB:** Often, the process of inventing is easier than commercialization and execution of the business. It can be very stressful and lonely, without good partners, to be a small business—especially if it's under-capitalized. Without the leverage of a big business, you have to be prepared to roll with the punches and keep getting off the mat, because as the little guy, there are lots of things you can't control. Lots of things will go wrong. Prepare for those things as much as possible. 🍀

For information, visit [www.mealenders.com](http://www.mealenders.com).

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