

# LEVANA KIRSCHENBAUM: **ACCIDENTAL ENTREPRENEUR**

Founder, Levana™ Meal Replacement

**T**he holidays are a time for reflection and family. No matter where you spend your holiday, it's a given that you'll be gathered around a table to enjoy delicious meals with people you love.

But the holidays don't have to be an excuse to eat poorly... there are lots of ways to incorporate healthful, wholesome foods into your holiday meals, and Levana Kirschenbaum, often referred to as the "Jewish Julia Child," has figured out the best way to do just that.

Levana has enjoyed a long career as a renowned kosher restaurateur, cook-book author, caterer and all-around foodie. Just when life was starting to settle down, and Levana began enjoying a more laid back, semi-retired lifestyle, life threw her a curveball that she knew food could cure.

When her husband, Maurice, received a sudden and daunting diagnosis of multiple myeloma in 2015, Levana was faced with her biggest challenge – keeping her husband at a healthy weight as he received grueling treatments which robbed him of his appetite and love for the foods he'd often begged Levana to cook for him.

As Maurice began to undergo intensive treatment for his cancer, his weight dropped precipitously. Levana tempted him with all his usual favorites to no avail. Levana says, "Here he was, surrounded by wonderful food, and could not eat a

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drop.” His doctors said not to worry and recommended that Maurice try a commercial premade meal replacement shake found in most drugstores and often given to patients in the hospital. It didn’t take long for both Maurice and Levana to conclude that this was not the path they wanted to go down. Maurice hated the taste and Levana hated the ingredients. Almost all of the recommended meal replacements were made up of mostly water, corn syrup and chemicals. Levana refused to feed her husband a “meal” that was formulated in a science lab.

So Levana went into her home kitchen and began tinkering. She was determined to create something sensible and wholesome Maurice would eat. She began experimenting with dozens of all-natural ingredients with a goal of creating a fully-balanced all-natural meal replacement that had all the healthy fats, proteins, carbs and fiber Maurice needed.

But to meet her exacting standards as a chef, it had to actually taste good.

With the finest grinds of chia, flax, hemp, pumpkin seeds, avocado, berries and many other pure, simple ingredients, she whipped up batch after batch of blends to perfect the flavors, texture and nutrition. Her blender was constantly whirring as she mixed up sweet-tasting smoothies using her powdered ingredients. Once she’d perfected her smoothies, she didn’t stop... next she started experimenting with savory flavors, adding a vast array of vegetables, and making them into soups instead of cold drinks. Maurice was her willing guinea pig and soon came to rely on what he called “Levana’s magic potions.”

Lo and behold, Levana’s blends worked!

Maurice’s medical team was impressed with the

strength, weight and energy Maurice regained, enabling him to successfully continue his treatment. Levana beamed with pride as they called him “the gold standard.” They began to ask if they could get some of her product for other patients and even their own family members.

Thus was born the idea of Levana™ Meal Replacement. A new business and mission for Levana. “I knew that if my mixes were helping Maurice, they had potential to help many other people.”

It was then Levana started her journey to bring Levana™ Meal Replacement to the public.

## Getting Started...

Watching Maurice’s miraculous turn-around ignited a fire in Levana. She realized her meals weren’t just a wonderful option for people fighting cancer who needed to gain weight. Everyone needs good nutrition, every day. Yet so often people deprive themselves of the necessary daily nutritional requirements because they face challenges with food. Some people have food allergies, sensitivities or intolerances to certain foods. Some people are simply just fussy eaters and stick with the same, habitual meals that may not be complete and balanced, but taste good. Some people feel forced to eat fast food because they are constantly on the go and don’t have the time or resources to make healthier choices. Some people face health challenges that make eating solid foods difficult. And some people are looking to lose weight the healthy way, not by starving, but by eating meals that are complete, have the right balance of nutrients and calories, but still make you feel full.

The list goes on... and that’s the beauty of Levana™ Meal Replacement.

Levana’s meals are plant-based and high in vitamins, minerals, protein, fiber and good fats (i.e., Omega3 fatty acids) in easy-to-use single-serving pouches. Since each meal is in powder form, it’s highly customizable, depending on your dietary need. One pouch of powder is the equivalent of a complete meal when added to water, but the powders can also be added to fortified liquids like juices, milk, or milk alternatives, or to enhance flavors and the nutrition profile of everyday meals like vegetable dishes, soups, baked goods, chicken, rice or pasta dishes, and more.

Levana worked with top food scientists, certified natural verifiers and the highest quality ingredients to come up with five delicious flavors that are all-natural and do not have an artificial and unpleasant aftertaste often found in mass-produced commercial products.





Levana™ Meal replacement is kosher, non-GMO, gluten-free, soy-free, dairy-free and nut free, and have no added sugar.

“I’m so excited to share Levana™ Meal Replacement with my patients because they all have unique needs,” says Jackie Topol, a practicing registered dietitian in New York City. “Many of my patients have food sensitivities or intolerances and until now have not had many options. The fact that you can take any of Levana’s flavors and mix them into your diet in a wide variety of ways adds special convenience and renewed satisfaction to the lives of people who face eating challenges and for so long have felt inconvenienced, even limited, by eating.”

Like Maurice’s medical team, Ms. Topol is also impressed with the high-quality ingredients in Levana™ Meal Replacement that she can now offer her oncology patients. “Cancer treatment doesn’t just rob patients of their appetites, it also changes how the body absorbs nutrients, so oncology patients typically need extra calories to combat these effects,” said Ms Topol. “Most high calorie shakes on the market are either full of sugar, poor quality oils or chemicals. They also all contain dairy, which is often not well-tolerated by cancer patients undergoing treatment. Levana’s blends give my patients a great variety of options to fortify their meals according to their specific needs for complete, wholesome nutrition.”

### Preparing to Launch...

Once she’d settled on her five flavors, Levana knew it was time to test them out on a new audience. Using her contacts in the Jewish community and kosher press where she was already well-known, Levana hosted a tasting event in her own dining room. She showcased drinks and soups made from her mixes and also cooked up nearly a dozen dishes, each featuring Levana™ Meal Replacement as the key ingredient. Her guests enjoyed pasta, baked goods and even chocolate mousse that all had complete nutrition cooked right in. The evening was a great success and helped Levana find an investor to help fund her start-up business.

The twelve months since that first tasting have been

a whirlwind for Levana as she assembled a team of professionals to help bring her idea to reality. Levana is experiencing a completely new way of running a business, long after she’s spent several decades as a seasoned food professional. But the learning process has been exciting and educational. From locating the right warehouse that could reliably fulfill customer orders, to sourcing the perfect ingredients from high quality vendors, to coming up with the right branding, participating in photo shoots, developing user-friendly and informative packaging, to building a new social media presence for Levana™ Meal Replacement, this new venture has allowed Levana to learn and grow, personally and professionally, in ways she never expected and she couldn’t be happier.

Along the way, Levana also decided to partner with the not-for-profit organization Chai Lifeline, whose mission is to support children with life-threatening and chronic illnesses. Having fed her large family for decades, Levana knows how challenging it can be to get children to eat healthy meals. Good nutrition is of utmost importance for a child to grow and develop into adulthood, and Levana is all too familiar with the negative impact that sickness can have on diet, appetite and sensitivity to tastes, food textures and smells. She knew her meals could help. Her partnership with Chai Lifeline helps ensure sick children in desperate need of good nutrition can get the complete, balanced meals that Levana™ Meal Replacement offers. In addition to sampling, Levana™ Meal Replacement will also donate a portion of its annual sales to Chai Lifeline.

So, just when Levana thought she’d be settling down later in life, she is back in the saddle and loving every minute of it. “I feel like this is the perfect culmination of my career,” she says. It brings together her knowledge and love of food with a real purpose and mission. “So many people have thanked me for creating this product, I know this is what I am supposed to be doing.”

To learn more about Levana™ Meal Replacement and for delicious recipe ideas, visit [www.LevanaMealReplacement.com](http://www.LevanaMealReplacement.com)