



## Q&A with Melissa Jensen

### **What is the basic premise of your research?**

The food environment influences people's dietary behaviors and therefore, their long term health outcomes. Food policies can help improve the food environment, and research can help us determine what policy designs work best while also helping narrow disparities. Specifically, food marketing influences children's food attitudes, choices, and consumption, at a life stage where they are most vulnerable to these influences. Policies that effectively restrict marketing of unhealthy foods to children can help prevent its consequences.

### **What are your future directions for your research and what do you hope to accomplish while at the Rudd Center?**

From my dissertation work, I have learned that although TV food marketing can contribute to long term diet changes, other types of marketing and elements of the food environment likely influence food choices. At the Rudd Center, I am looking forward to collaborating on projects that involve other forms of marketing (packaging claims, digital, retail). I also hope to see my dissertation papers through to publication, to learn as much as possible from the people I will be working with, and to continue building my skills and become a better scientist, overall.

### **Where are you from?**

I was born in Florida, but grew up in a small town in Costa Rica, called Quepos. It is home to one of the most beautiful coastlines in our country (Manuel Antonio beaches).

### **What is your favorite food?**

Ceviche with patacones. In Costa Rica, ceviche is usually made from white fish (mahi mahi or corvina are great in it!) which is marinated in a lime/lemon mix, with onion, red and green bell peppers, and cilantro. Patacones are made from green plantains that are cooked in large pieces, then flattened, and then fried. Love this dish!

### **What is your favorite movie?**

I don't have a favorite movie, but one of the most recent series I watched and enjoyed was "Money Heist" on Netflix... so good!