

What Does Your Beef Eat?

Grass-Fed Beef: Healthier for Humans, Cattle and the Environment

By Jenelle Petrinchuk

The majority of North American raised beef comes from something called a factory farm. These are actual animal factories that have been developed to produce the most amount of meat at the lowest cost to the farmer. But did you know that these beef products can actually be detrimental to the health of you and your family?

It has been known for years that due to the high content of saturated fats in red meat, eating too much of it can cause serious health problems such as high cholesterol or heart problems. So why is there so much fat in beef?

It may be because factory farms feed their cattle anything that will fatten them up for the lowest price. Although cows have evolved to survive on grass, those raised on factory farms receive little or none of it throughout their lives. The main ingredient in many of their diets is bio-engineered corn (...yum?), full of carbs and easy on the wallet. In addition, their food usually also contains a good dose of antibiotics to fend off the problematic diseases that result when cows consume corn or other non-grass foods. Growth hormones are also commonly injected into cattle food.

Luckily, the grass-fed farms of our society's yesteryears are not completely gone. The humane food movement is penetrating North America slowly but surely. People are opening their eyes to the horrors of what we have become. Grass-fed meat is becoming more readily available as more and more farmers are moving towards practices that allow animals to live low-stress, comfortable and healthy lives.

The meat from grass-fed or pasteurized cattle has marked nutritional advantages:

- The overall improved health of the animal means healthier meat with less total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol and calories. Very lean, grass-fed meat can have up to two thirds less fat than grain-fed.
- There is up to four times more vitamin E in grass-fed meat. This antioxidant is important in maintaining a healthy circulatory system and aids in proper blood clotting. Other antioxidants such as beta-carotene and vitamin C are also of greater quantity in grass-fed meat.
- There can be two to four times more omega-3 (one of the "good fats") in grass-fed meat. Omega-3 fats are important to every cell in your body and are actually good for your heart and brain.
- Another "good fat" is conjugated linoleic

acid, or CLA, which has been found to have anti-cancer properties. Keep in mind, the amount of CLA in the meat will only be increased if the grass is eaten directly from the pasture. Even if the cattle were fed hay made with the exact same grass, the nutrients from it become lost in the wilting and drying process.

In addition to all of these natural health benefits, grass-fed beef farms are also better for the environment.

When farmers use the feedlot or factory farming method of finishing their cattle, thousands upon thousands of animals may be crammed into a relatively small space, creating massive amounts of waste (greenhouse gases) and causing undue stress on the animals before slaughter.

Grass-fed farm operations take everything back a notch or two (or ten) and rely on sunshine to grow the grass and allow the cows to graze on their own. The elimination of sowing, fertilizing, spraying and harvesting animal feed means less fossil fuels are used as the cows fertilize and harvest on own, therefore reducing the need for diesel and gasoline.

Make it your goal to purchase grass fed beef today, and bring back the world of yesterday for a healthier, happier you.

Turn for recipes.