



## Have you Herd? – The Benefits of Grassfed Beef

*Written by Jill Grunewald and published in Present Magazine, October 2007*

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“I’m trying to eat healthier, so I’ve eliminated red meat from my diet.” It’s a familiar phrase, often heard from those turning over a nutritional leaf and from folks wanting to drop a pant size or two. For some, it’s an easy item to eliminate from the regimen. Others find themselves with vivid dreams about a juicy hamburger or Kansas City strip, drawn to the nearest steak house like a moth to a flame.

Quality, antibiotic-, and hormone-free meat is condensed nutrition. For some, eschewing red meat means denying the body of nutrients that can improve health, energy, and vitality. It is an excellent source of zinc and magnesium, both of which are easier for the body to break down when obtained from red meat versus grains. Red meat is also rich in B12 vitamins, which are critical for a healthy nervous system and healthy blood.

### **Fat Schmat**

The primary reason health conscious people steer clear of red meat is because of the fat content. Regrettably, anti-saturated fat propaganda has been successful in dissuading people from eating this strength-building food. What these propaganda-mongers have failed to communicate (or don’t understand themselves) is that red meat is not only composed of saturated fat but it also is composed of essential fatty acids, upon which virtually all of our body’s systems rely and which protect us from diseases including cancer, heart disease, and diabetes.

We have emerged from the fat-fearing ’90s with an understanding that saturated fats play a vital role in the human body. It is an important nutrient for our immune system, provides anti-microbial fat for our digestive tract, provides a great source of stored energy, acts as an insulator, acts as a shock absorber for our delicate organs, and provides energy for cells. If this weren’t enough, the right amount of healthy saturated fats can significantly help you with your weight loss goals.

### **Modern Mooing**

It’s important to note that not all beef is created equal. For the most part, the idyllic farms of yore have been replaced with large feedlots and confinement facilities. Cows are fed diets they would never eat if they were pasture-raised. These diets are designed to boost the animals’ (and the farms’) productivity and reduce costs. The primary feedlot feed is genetically modified, pesticide-laden corn and soy that is kept at artificially low prices by government subsidies.

When livestock are fed an unnatural diet, it causes stress and anxiety, which lowers their quality of life. They are most likely subjected to the use of hormones, antibiotics, and other drugs. The conditions under which feedlot animals are raised is also typically adverse.

# HEALTHFUL ELEMENTS



According to Dr. Andrew Weil, M.D. and founder of the Program in Integrative Medicine in Arizona, "Cattle evolved to graze on grass; they are not adapted to digest grains, which wreak havoc with their digestive systems, even though they promote faster weight gain. In fact, the need for antibiotics in raising cattle on feedlots results from the alterations in the natural flora of their gastrointestinal tracts from eating grain-based diets." Adds Michael Pollan, author of *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, "We have come to think of 'cornfed' as some kind of old-fashioned virtue; we shouldn't. Corn is a mainstay of livestock diets because there is no other feed quite as cheap or plentiful."

Grassfed beef has significantly more omega-3 fatty acids, vitamin E, and conjugated linoleic acid, which are all good for human health. According to Dr. Chris Foley, MD at Minnesota Natural Medicine, "There are mounting peer reviewed scientific studies on the chemical composition of fats essential for human health, and how they are altered negatively in corn and grain fed beef and positively in grassfed beef."

## **Final Kernels**

It should be noted that organic beef isn't necessarily grassfed. These organically raised cattle may be raised in pesticide-free pastures, but they are taken to feedlots and fed (organic) grain prior to slaughter. Fortunately, as the popularity of grassfed beef increases, more and more markets are supplying it.

Because pasture-raised cattle are not fed corn and grains to speed growth, are not confined, move around in search of food, and develop more muscle than fat, their meat has less fat marbling; it is this marbling that gives beef the flavor most Americans are used to and many folks note a difference in taste. However the fats present in grassfed beef are extremely nutritious when cooked *low and slow*. This is the best way to preserve the moistness and tenderness during preparation.

"When you choose products from pastured animals, you are eating the food that nature intended. You are also supporting independent farmers, protecting small farms and rural communities, safeguarding the environment, promoting animal welfare, and eating food that is nutritious, wholesome, and delicious." – [www.eatwild.com](http://www.eatwild.com)

You are what you eat, and you are what you eat eats. So, take advantage of the health benefits of red meat and buy the organic, grass-fed variety.

For sourcing grassfed meats (and other sustainably-raised foods):

[www.eatwild.com](http://www.eatwild.com)

[www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org)

[www.eatwellguide.org](http://www.eatwellguide.org)

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