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DowntownSeattleChiropractic.com
(206) 623-2225

Grass – Fed Beef is Best Understanding Food Labels

Virtually all the meat you find in the supermarket comes from animals raised in confinement on large factory farms. Factory farms produce cheap meat, but they also create a multitude of problems including animal stress and abuse, air, land, and water pollution, unnecessary use of hormones, antibiotics, and other drugs, loss of family farms and food with less nutritional value. Pasture-raised, grass-fed beef and free-range chickens, turkey and eggs are a healthy and responsible alternative to meat found on most grocery store shelves.

Cows Don't Eat Corn



Cows don't eat corn, sawdust, newspaper, cardboard or dead animal carcasses, but this is what most farmers feed them. Cows naturally eat grass, but to cut costs farmers feed them grains and other fillers to fatten them up because it's easier and more profitable.

Grain-fed livestock is usually fed genetically modified, low-quality corn grown with pesticides and contaminated by mold growth. Because cattle haven't evolved to eat grain, they become sick from it. To compensate, cattle are given antibiotics. Low-quality beef sold at supermarkets is likely to have come from a sick animal and be contaminated with toxins and is a legitimate health concern.

An animal that eats its natural diet of grass is more healthy and resistant to disease. Its meat is more nutritious and is similar to the meat our grandparents and earlier generations were raised on, when there was less cancer, diabetes, and heart disease. This is the only reason I need to spend the extra money on grass-fed beef. Here are more reasons why buying grass-fed beef makes sense.

In an article published in the magazine Mother Earth News, Jo Robinson, author of Pasture Perfect stated: ". . . mad cow disease has never been found in grass-fed beef, which is also far less likely to contain dangerous E. coli bacteria."

Lower in Fat and Calories

Meat from grass-fed cattle is lower in total fat and calories. If the meat is very lean, it can have one third as much fat as a similar cut from a grain-fed animal, the same amount of fat as skinless chicken breast.

Healthier Fats and More Vitamins

Meat from grass-fed animals has two to four times more omega-3 fatty acids than meat from grain-fed animals. Of all the fats, Omega 3's are the most heart-friendly. Although we've historically eaten an equivalent amount of these fatty acids, the modern diet is high in omega-6's and low in omega-3's. This imbalance can cause brain malfunction, heart disease, cancer and other health problems. People who have sufficient amounts of omega-3's in their diet, on the other hand, are less likely to have high blood pressure, an irregular heartbeat, suffer a heart attack, depression, schizophrenia, attention deficit disorder or Alzheimer's disease.

Like wild salmon, grass-fed beef is an excellent source of conjugated linoleic acid (CLA). CLA is a fatty acid that has number of health benefits including antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and insulin-sensitizing actions. CLA helps prevent muscle loss and weakness associated with aging and disease. A grain-fed diet leads to dramatically decreased levels of CLA in meat and dairy products. Researchers have also compared antioxidants in meat from pasture-fed and grain-fed cattle and found that grass-fed meat was higher in vitamin C, vitamin E, folic acid, and ten times higher in beta-carotene.

Better Taste

Grass-fed beef has an exceptional flavor. Since it is extremely low in fat, grass-fed beef is best prepared rare to medium rare. Coating the meat with virgin olive oil prevents drying and sticking, while cooking for a longer period at a lower heat ensures tenderness and juiciness. For more cooking tips, visit EatWild.com.

Better Treatment of Animals and the Environment

When animals are raised in feedlots or cages, they deposit large amounts of manure in a small amount of space. The manure must be collected and transported away from the area and the surrounding soil is overloaded with nutrients, which can cause ground and water pollution. When animals are raised outdoors on pasture, their manure is spread over a wide area of land and is a source of organic fertilizer.



When you buy grass-fed beef, it's likely that it's from a farmer who cares for his livestock and raises them with the respect and comfort that they deserve.



When it comes to Meat, Eggs, and Dairy, Organic Isn't Enough

While buying organically raised beef eliminates the chemical toxins associated with raising animals on genetically modified corn, livestock raised on organic corn still produces beef that's nutritionally inferior to grass-fed beef, which is lower in saturated fat and higher in healthy fats and vitamins.

When you eat meat, eggs, and dairy products from animals raised on pasture you are improving the welfare of the animals, helping end environmental degradation, helping small-scale ranchers and farmers make a living from the land, helping sustain rural communities, and giving your family the healthiest possible food.

Buying Grass-fed Beef

Locally, PCC and Madison Market in Seattle and Marlene's Market in Federal Way sell grass-fed beef. EatWild.com has a ton of great information and a list of stores, farmers markets, and farmers who sell grass-fed beef as well as food clubs that will deliver grass-fed beef to your door.

Understanding the Labels ***Pastured and pasture-raised are other terms for grass-fed.



USDA Organic - Prohibits the use of hormones, antibiotics, genetic engineering, radiation, synthetic pesticides or fertilizers. **May be fed grain.**



American Grassfed Requires that animals eat **grass only**, and if they receive antibiotics due to illness they must be removed from the program; prohibits growth hormones.



Demeter Certified Biodynamic - Prohibits synthetic pesticides and fertilizers; requires pastured (**grass-fed**) livestock, promotes holistic farming and preservation of high-value conservation areas.

“100 percent Natural” Or “All Natural” - **BEWARE!** This label claim is **very misleading**; it only means that the product contains no artificial ingredients or added colors and is minimally processed. “Natural,” on meat labels, pertains only to how meat is handled after it is slaughtered, not to how it is raised. **Animal products raised with artificial hormones can still be labeled natural.** So can **genetically modified organisms.** **Natural does not mean organic or even good for you.** Arsenic is natural, but that doesn’t make it good for you. Many companies, including 7-up have added “Natural” to their labels. By the way, 7-up, is loaded with GMO high-fructose corn syrup! When I see “natural” on a label, I am immediately suspicious and know to read the nutrition label closely. **Buying Organic is the best way to ensure that your food is free of hormones, antibiotics, genetic engineering, radiation, synthetic pesticides or fertilizers.**

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