



SURPRISING FACTS ABOUT LEAN BEEF

Many people are often surprised to learn that the bundle of nutrients in lean beef, like high-quality protein, iron, zinc and many B vitamins,¹ comes in such a delicious package with relatively few calories. Let's bust some common myths about our favorite protein, beef.

MYTH: Beef consumption should be limited because it's bad for your heart and raises cholesterol.

FACT: Research consistently shows that a heart-healthy diet and lifestyle including lean beef, even daily, can reduce risk factors for heart disease.²⁻⁶ A randomized-controlled trial found that participants who consumed lean beef, as part of a dietary pattern that was rich in fruits and vegetables, low in saturated fat, and included low-fat dairy, experienced a 10% decrease in LDL cholesterol and a moderate decrease in blood pressure, both markers of lower heart disease risk.^{3,4} Another study found that subjects who followed a healthy, higher-protein, weight-loss dietary pattern, combined with physical activity, and consumed lean beef four or more times a week, saw reductions in total cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, triglycerides and systolic and diastolic blood pressure.⁵ In addition, evidence has shown that lean beef consumed in the context of an overall heart-healthy diet pattern rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy maintains blood lipid levels similar to other lean proteins like poultry and fish.⁷ The current body of evidence provides convincing support that eating lean beef, as part of a healthy dietary pattern and lifestyle, can support a strong heart.

MYTH #2: Americans already consume too much protein.

FACT: Although the American diet has evolved over time, Americans have not increased their percentage of calories from protein in 30 years.⁸ On average, Americans (age 2 years and older) consume 5.7 oz from the Protein Foods group each day (meat, poultry, eggs, fish/seafood, nuts, seeds and soy products), which is at a level consistent with the recommendations of the 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs).⁹ Including high-quality protein, like beef, in a healthy dietary pattern can help Americans meet their protein needs, improve satiety and preserve lean muscle mass.^{10,11}

MYTH #3: Americans consume too much red meat, especially beef.

FACT: On average, Americans consume 1.7 ounces of beef daily, well within the recommended amount of 5.5 ounces from the Protein Foods group per day.^{9,12} The fact is, beef is a natural source of essential nutrients with relatively few calories,¹ which makes it a great lean protein option that Americans can enjoy at any meal.

MYTH #4: Beef is the primary source of fat in the diet.

FACT: Beef contributes approximately five percent of total calories and ten percent or less of saturated fat and total fat to the American diet.¹² Many people are surprised to learn that half of the fatty acids in beef are monounsaturated – the same heart-healthy type of fat

found in olive oil! Furthermore, approximately one-third of beef's total saturated fat is stearic acid, which has been shown to be neutral in its effects on blood cholesterol levels in humans.¹³

MYTH #5: It is difficult to find lean cuts of beef in the grocery store.

FACT: Thanks to advancements in cattle breeding and feeding, today's beef is leaner than ever as approximately 65 percent of the whole muscle cuts sold through the supermarket meat case are lean when cooked and visible fat is trimmed.¹⁴ In fact, many beef cuts qualify as "lean" including some of the most popular cuts at retail like Top Sirloin, Tenderloin, Strip Steak, Flank Steak and 93% lean ground beef and leaner!¹

WHAT DOES "LEAN" MEAN?

According to USDA, a cut of cooked fresh meat is considered "lean" when it contains less than 10 grams of total fat, 4.5 grams or less of saturated fat and less than 95 mg of cholesterol per 100 grams (3½ oz) and per RACC (Reference Amount Customarily Consumed), which is 85 grams (3 oz).¹⁵

MYTH #6: Beef is difficult and time-consuming to prepare.

FACT: Beef is a nutrition powerhouse that can be easy to prepare by using common ingredients and matching the right cooking method to the right cut. By planning ahead, you can also save time in the kitchen when preparing recipes made with beef. Beef pairs well with other healthful foods like fruits, vegetables and whole grains, and many cuts of beef are available in the marketplace. Therefore, you have an endless amount of culinary possibilities to create a delicious, satisfying and healthy meal. Find beef recipes for all meal occasions, cooking tips and nutrition information at BeefItsWhatsForDinner.com.

Myth #7: Grass-finished beef is more nutritious than grain-finished beef.

FACT: The variety of beef choices available to you, including grain-finished and grass-finished, are delicious and nutritious. Most people don't realize that cattle spend the majority of their lives grazing on pasture. On average, over their lifetime, grain-finished cattle consume less than 11% of their diet as grain and close to 90% of their diet as forage (e.g., grass and hay) and other human-inedible plant leftovers (e.g., dried distillers grains).¹⁶ In general, all varieties of beef are equally nutritious as all are a natural source of more than 10 essential nutrients, like protein, iron, zinc and many B vitamins.¹ While grass-finished beef tends to be a little leaner, a number of other variables contribute to leanness, including breed, age, grade and cut.^{17,18}