

On Nutrition: by Helayne Waldman, Ed.D., N.E., **Kudos to Flippers!**

My husband and I went over to Flippers last week as it was time for him to get his occasional beef fix. What a pleasant surprise! Flippers, it seems, is serving up only Niman Ranch beef these days, and that is wonderful news.

What's so good about Niman Ranch? They're part of a select group of cattle ranchers -- including Marin SunFarms, Highland Hills Farms and web-based Grass Fed Traditions, among others -- who produce superbly healthy grass fed/free range beef, and other free range animal products as well (for a complete list of Bay Area grass fed beef products check out <http://www.wisefoodways.com/bay/meat.php>).

Raising animals on pasture differs dramatically from the typical 21st century factory farm. Virtually all the meat, eggs, and dairy products found in your local supermarket come from animals raised in confinement in animal penitentiaries known as CAFOs or "Confined Animal Feeding Operations." These highly mechanized operations provide a year-round supply of food at a reasonable price, and while the food is cheap and convenient, the final cost is dear: obese, infected, maladjusted animals that hardly supply the makings of a healthy meal no less a "happy" one, jolly TV commercials notwithstanding.

Animals raised in factory farms are fed dietary "ingredients" designed to boost their size, decrease time-to-market and lower costs -- that is, they are fed an abundance of cheap, genetically modified grain and soy that are kept at artificially low prices by government



subsidies. To further cut costs, the feed may also contain "by-product feedstuff" such as municipal garbage, stale pastry, chicken feathers, and candy.

The Grass-fed Advantage

Grass fed cows spend their days on pasture, not in feed lots eating "junk food." For me, that satisfies an ethical standard of just and humane treatment.

Moreover, scientific studies report that beyond a doubt grass fed beef is higher in Omega-3 fatty acids, CLA, and Vitamin E than conventional grain fed beef while also boasting lower cholesterol, saturated fats and calories per serving than grain fed beef.

As I've written before, Omega-3 fatty acids play a vital role in every cell and system in our bodies. Folks who have substantial amounts of Omega-3s in their diet are less likely to experience hypertension or an irregular heartbeat. Remarkably, they are also 50 percent less likely to have a serious heart attack.

When cattle eat their natural diet of greens (rich in Omega 3 fats), beef becomes a great source of

Omega 3. Corn and soy are not rich sources of Omega 3 fats, so standard, cattle-raising practices cause the Omega 3 level to decrease dramatically.

The meat and milk from grassfed ruminants are the richest known source of another type of good fat called "conjugated linoleic acid" or CLA. In fact when cows are raised on fresh pasture alone, their milk and meat contain as much as five times more CLA than products from animals fed conventional diets. Not only is CLA an effective weight loss agent, it may also be one of our most potent defenses against cancer, according to Dr. Tilak Dhiman of Utah State University. In one Finnish study, women who had the highest levels of CLA in their diet, had a 60 percent lower risk of breast cancer than those with the lowest levels of CLA.

It's an exciting area for further study, to be sure.

Delicious, too

Grass fed beef provides a memorable eating experience whose popularity has been growing yearly among chefs and food writers as well as the public.

My husband says it offers a clean savory, "beefier" taste, and is tender and juicy when prepared properly. Haven't tried it yet? Head on over to Flippers for your first bite. They've taken a terrific first step in offering healthy, delicious and sustainably-raised beef to our community.

Congratulations, Flippers!

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