



MYTH vs FACT

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 and zinc, comes in such a delicious package with relatively few calories. There are several other facts about beef that many people may not realize, therefore, we are busting some common myths about many people's favorite protein, beef.

Myth #1: Beef consumption should be limited because it's bad for your heart and raises cholesterol.

FACT: Contrary to conventional wisdom, research shows that including lean beef every day, as part of a heart-healthy diet and lifestyle, can reduce risk factors for heart disease.^{1, 2, 3} A randomized-controlled trial found that participants who consumed lean beef, as part of a dietary pattern rich in fruits, vegetables and lowfat dairy and low in saturated fat, experienced a 10% decrease in LDL cholesterol and a moderate decrease in blood pressure, both markers of lower heart disease risk.^{1, 2} Another study found that subjects who followed a healthy and 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.³ In addition, evidence has shown that beef has a similar effect on total cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, HDL cholesterol and triglycerides as poultry or fish.⁴ The current body of evidence provides convincing support that lean beef can support a strong heart, as part of a healthy dietary pattern and lifestyle.

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.⁵ On average, Americans (age 2 years and older) consume 5.7 ounces from the Protein Foods group each day (meat, poultry, eggs, fish/seafood, nuts, seeds and soy products), which is at levels consistent with the recommendations of the 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs).⁶ Including high-quality protein, like lean beef, in a healthy dietary pattern can help Americans meet their protein needs, improve satiety and preserve lean muscle mass.^{7, 8}

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

FACT: On average, Americans consume 1.7 ounces of beef daily, which is well within the recommended amount of 5.5 ounces from the Protein Foods group per day.^{6, 9} The fact is, beef is a natural source of essential nutrients with relatively few calories, 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 ten percent or less of saturated fat and total fat to the American diet.⁹ Many people are surprised to learn that not all the fats in beef are saturated fats. In fact, half of the fatty acids in beef are monounsaturated – the same heart-healthy type of fat found in olive oil. 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.^{10, 11}

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

FACT: Thanks to enhancements in cattle breeding and feeding, today's beef is leaner than ever as more than 65 percent of the whole muscle cuts sold through the supermarket meat case are lean when cooked with visible fat trimmed.¹² In fact, the number of beef cuts that qualify as "lean" increased sixfold from 1989 to 2013.¹³ Many Americans' favorite cuts, such as Top Sirloin, Tenderloin (Filet Mignon), Strip Steak and Flank Steak, are lean, when cooked with visible fat trimmed.¹²

What does "lean" mean?¹⁴

- To be considered lean, a 3.5 ounce (100 grams) serving of cooked beef must have:
 - Less than 10 g total fat
 - Less than or equal to 4.5 g saturated fat
 - Less than 95 mg cholesterol

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 can be paired with fruits, vegetables and whole grains, and there are many cuts of beef available in the marketplace. Therefore, you have an endless amount of culinary possibilities at your fingertips to create a delicious, satisfying and healthy meal.

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

FACT: There are a variety of beef choices, including grain-finished and grass-finished, but no matter the choice, there is a delicious and nutritious beef option for you. All cattle, whether grass- or grain-finished, spend the majority of their lives eating grass on pastures, and beef is a natural source of more than 10 essential nutrients, like protein, iron and zinc. While grass-finished tends to be a little leaner, there are a number of variables that contribute to leanness, including breed, age, grade and cut.^{15, 16}



Now that we've busted some common myths about beef, it's time to take it to the plate with a delicious lean beef recipe that can be prepared in less than 30 minutes.

Greek-Style Beef Pita

Makes 4 Servings

Ingredients

- 1 pound beef Sirloin Tip Steaks, cut 1/8 to 1/4 inch thick
- 1 tablespoon lemon pepper
- 2 to 3 teaspoons vegetable oil
- 3/4 cup plain or seasoned hummus
- 4 whole wheat pita breads, cut crosswise in half

Instructions

1. Stack beef steaks; cut lengthwise in half, then crosswise into 1-inch wide strips. Combine beef and lemon pepper in medium bowl.
2. Heat 2 teaspoons oil in large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until hot. Add 1/2 of beef; stir-fry 1 to 3 minutes or until outside surface of beef is no longer pink. (Do not overcook.) Remove from skillet. Repeat with remaining beef, adding remaining 1 teaspoon oil to skillet, if necessary.
3. Spread hummus evenly in pita pockets. Fill with equal amounts of beef and toppings, as desired.

Nutrition information per serving: 333 calories; 16 g fat (4 g saturated fat; 7 g monounsaturated fat); 68 mg cholesterol; 581 mg sodium; 22 g carbohydrate; 4.8 g fiber; 29 g protein; 7.7 mg niacin; 0.6 mg vitamin B₆; 1.4 mcg vitamin B₁₂; 3.5 mg iron; 38.9 mcg selenium; 5.4 mg zinc; 92.7 mg choline.

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