

# Where's the Beef (and what's it been eating)?

Beef is one of the most consumed meats in America. "Beef, it's what's for dinner" is more than just a slogan. But how do we go about choosing the right beef for our family? As we've said before, we need to be careful not just about what we eat, but about what we eat eats.

## What is grass-fed beef?

The short answer is that it's meat that comes from cows that eat only grass. Many people think that ALL cows eat grass. According to an article from CNN: "All cows do graze on pasture for the first six months to a year of their lives, but most finish at a feedlot on a concentrated mix of corn, soy, grains, and other supplements, plus hormones and antibiotics. This growth-spurt formula is the backbone of a hugely productive U.S. beef industry. A feedlot cow can grow to slaughter weight up to a year faster than a cow fed only forage, grass, and hay.

'That's one year that you don't have to feed the cows in the feedlot,' notes [Eatwild.com](http://Eatwild.com) founder Jo Robinson, who spent the past decade examining scientific research comparing grass-fed and grain-fed animals. 'Conventional factory meat is so cheap because they've done everything to speed growth and lower the cost of feed.'

## What about the health benefits?

"The grass-fed cow, which eats from a pasture and is not "finished" on a diet of grains and supplements for rapid weight gain, is said by its promoters to be better for the planet (less energy goes into growing grass than grain); better for the beef eater (less overall fat, and more omega-3s and other "good" fats); and better for the cow (critics decry feedlot practices as inhumane)."(1)

Grass-fed beef is lower in calories, contains more healthy omega-3 fats, more vitamins A and E, higher levels of antioxidants, and up to seven times the beta-carotene. "If you eat a typical amount of beef per year," Robinson points out in *Pasture Perfect*, a book about the benefits of pasture-raised animals, "which in the United States is about 67 pounds, switching to grass-fed beef will save you 16,642 calories a year."

## What about the taste?

Huffington Post conducted a blind taste test. They were concerned that people wouldn't be able to taste the difference between conventional and grass-fed beef. "How different could they be? we wondered. We were SO wrong. Every single editor was able to taste which burger was made with grass-fed beef, and they were almost 100 percent unanimous as to which one made the better burger. We learned first hand that the price tag is worth it, people. Grass-fed beef makes for a significantly better tasting burger."

And, according to a panel of chefs from *Cooking Light*, they said, "And on the matter of taste, we confirmed that grass-fed beef can be delicious and versatile."

## What about the price?

At first glance, grass-fed beef appears more expensive than conventional beef from the grocery store. Again, the reason the conventional price tag is cheaper is because they've sped up the time it takes to raise a cow by feeding it hormones and a rapid weight-gain diet. However, there is a way to purchase grass-fed beef at an affordable price, and that's by buying in bulk. When you purchase a quarter, half, or whole cow, then all the cuts are the same price. Yes, the

cost of ground burger might be higher than the grocery store, but the price per steak is significantly cheaper because all the meat is the same price per pound.

In the *Cooking Light* comparison study of grass-fed beef and conventional beef, they said this about price: "We learned that we could dodge supermarket prices by buying in bulk, which made it only marginally higher than similar quantities of regular grain-fed beef prices in local supermarkets, and a lot less than we would have paid for premium grass-fed or grain-fed meat."

## The Bottom Line:

- Grass-fed beef is pastured in fields of grasses, and supplemented with grass hay during the winter. Whereas conventional beef comes from cows that eat grass for part of their life, and are fed an unnatural diet of corn, soy, grains, hormones, and antibiotics.

- Grass-fed beef is actually higher in taste and flavor.

- Grass-fed beef is more nutritional than conventional beef with many health benefits.

- And grass-fed beef can be very comparable in price if you buy in bulk by purchasing a quarter, half, or whole cow.

There's a lot of information out there about the benefits of grass-fed beef. After studying the facts, it just makes sense to eat a healthier meat that satisfies both our nutritional needs and the desires of our taste buds.

(1) <http://www.cnn.com/2011/HEALTH/03/29/grass.grain.beef.cookinglight/index.html>