

T H E

Great News about Grass



**How America's pasture-based farms are
protecting your health,
promoting the humane treatment of animals,
and taking care of the environment
while producing the
most flavorful foods possible.**

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Have you heard The Great News about Grass?

Today, a new breed of farmer is challenging conventional wisdom by raising animals on well-managed pastures. They are capitalizing on the symbiotic relationship between grazing animals and the birds that follow them. They are rediscovering old breeds of animals, thereby keeping diversity alive. They are farming for the health and well being of the planet, and for the people who eat their food.

In response, Americans are discovering the unique flavors and important health benefits of foods from pasture-raised animals. From sizzling burgers to tangy, mouthwatering barbecue and from the freshest, sweetest milk to the creamiest cheesecake, foods from animals raised on pasture are foods you can feel good about. Get to know the benefits of raising animals on pasture. And then make the important decision to support a pasture-based farmer near you.

What are grass-fed and pasture-raised foods?

Whether it's cattle or chickens, pigs or bison, animals are meant to eat what they find in the wild. Depending on the animal, this may mean grass, worms, insects and other nutritionally rich food sources. When animals are raised on pasture, eating what they can find on lush, green grass, the foods they produce are referred to as "grass-fed" or "pasture-raised." At present, there are no single, nationally recognized definitions for the terms "grass-fed" and "pasture-raised." However, those most faithful to the practice believe that "grass-fed" and "pasture-raised" mean the animals spend their *entire* life on pasture.



The Important Health Benefits of Grass-Fed and Pasture-Raised Foods

Are pasture-raised meats and dairy products really better for your health? The answer is yes, according to a growing number of health experts. First, animals raised on pasture eat what they are designed to eat. Like humans, animals that eat the proper diet—one that's geared toward their unique digestive systems—and that are given room to roam, exercise and play, tend to be healthier than animals that are fed an improper diet, supplemented by antibiotics, and that live in crowded, stressful conditions. In fact, because of the attention paid to their diet and their living conditions, pasture-raised animals are better able to resist illness and disease, minimizing—and sometimes eliminating—the need to treat them with antibiotics. In addition, they are allowed to grow to a healthy weight—naturally—rather than being forced to gain weight at an unnatural rate with growth hormones.

The result? Meats and dairy products that are cleaner and healthier for human consumption. Research shows that meat, eggs, and dairy products from animals raised on pasture have more desirable proportions of omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids. They also contain higher levels of conjugated linoleic acids (CLAs), another fatty acid that has shown great promise in fighting tumors and breast cancer in laboratory tests. In addition, several studies suggest that grass-fed meats and dairy contain higher levels of nutrients, such as fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K, which are critical to good health.

So when you eat pasture-raised meats and dairy, you can be sure you're nurturing your body with foods that are enhancing your well being and improving your general health.



Promoting Animal Welfare (and Human Welfare) through Pasture-Based Farming

Many of us have heard the stories of large-scale factory farms: Tens of thousands of chickens or hogs crammed into tiny, enclosed spaces, unable to move, denied sunlight and fresh food, living lives that many regard as intolerable. Is this the price that animals—and humans—have to pay for a modern-day food system? Hardly. Not only are animals that are raised on pasture healthier, they also enjoy a quality of life that is immeasurably higher than animals raised in intensive confinement.

When animals are raised on carefully managed pastures, they are able to eat when they're hungry, exercise at will, move into shade during the heat of the day, and rest when they're tired. They can move to new grass and regularly enjoy clean and spacious environments. Mothers are free to suckle their young. As a result, they're less likely than confined animals to suffer from stress, become ill, or contract an array of diseases.

However, pasture-based farming is not just better for animals; it's better for farm workers, too. Farmers working on grass-based operations are more likely to enjoy a healthier work environment than those who work on large-scale factory farms. They're less likely to suffer from respiratory problems resulting from the dust, ammonia, and dangerously high levels of carbon dioxide so common in confinement facilities.¹



Farming That Cleans Up after Itself Means a Healthier Environment

There are good reasons why those who care about the environment support pasture-based farming. The pasturing of animals encourages biodiversity, improves soil fertility, and eliminates the waste-management problems associated with confinement-feeding operations. Feeding animals on grass reduces greenhouse gases in the air due to a process called carbon sequestration, wherein the grasses and legumes found in well-managed pastures are able to draw excess carbon dioxide from the air and return it to the soil as carbon.

In addition, pasture-based farming consumes fewer natural resources. Although pasture-based farms are more labor-intensive, farm inputs, such as fossil fuels, are kept to a minimum.

Most important, buying pasture-raised products from a farmer in your area helps keep an environmentally conscious farm in business. The more commercially viable your local and regional family farms are, the more likely they will continue as farms and that the land will not be turned into housing subdivisions, shopping malls, and parking lots. If you live in a region that is rapidly losing open space, consider that there are few better uses of wide-open spaces than small-scale family farms. They enhance the landscape, provide a local food source, and make good use of the land they occupy.



Well-Managed Pastures Provide Habitat for Wildlife

Throughout history, farming has proved advantageous to wildlife. It creates a suitable environment for a wide range of wildlife, which, in turn, provide services to the farmer such as pollination and pest control. However, with intensifying pressure to increase food production, conventional farming activities are now proving detrimental to grassland birds and other wildlife. In fact, the shrinking populations of many ground-nesting birds is directly linked to the loss of grassland.

Conservation and wildlife-preservation experts have become some of the most avid supporters of grass-based farming. According to a report issued by the University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension, "Increased use of rotational grazing by dairy, sheep, and beef farmers has opened an opportunity to help increase the populations of grassland birds at little or no cost to the farmers."² By protecting wildlife, we ensure a healthier ecosystem and preserve the aesthetic and educational values that wild game and birds afford. Through responsible farming, farmers can not only avoid the unnecessary destruction of life, they can help grassland birds and other wildlife flourish.



Keeping Small-Scale Farming Healthy and Viable

Often we are told that in business, bigger is better. This is not necessarily true of farming, particularly when farms grow to become factory-like operations. In fact, large-scale farming has actually taken a toll on our food system. It limits a farmer's ability to make a living and compromises the environment and our quality of life.

Pasture-based farms tend to be small, family-run operations made up of farmers who are passionate about the land they tend, the animals they raise, and the people they feed. Rather than being swayed by so-called efficiencies—which can limit a farmer's choices—these farms are contributing to biodiversity by raising heritage breeds of cattle and pigs, as well as many other animals. While farming this way works best on a small scale, the pay-off in terms of health benefits and flavor is considerable. The June 28, 2004, issue of *Time* magazine reports that “Some consumers, concerned about the hormones and antibiotics used in modern factory-farmed cattle... are turning to old-fashioned heritage beef. Taken from heirloom breeds of cattle—such as Galloway, Hereford, Devon and Highlander—that are grass-fed and raised on small family farms using traditional methods, the meat is free of hormones and chemical pesticides and tends to be healthier than cuts taken from corn-fed cattle.”

Only small, independently run, family farms are likely to engage in these types of farming practices. And they're the only type of farms you want in your neighborhood.

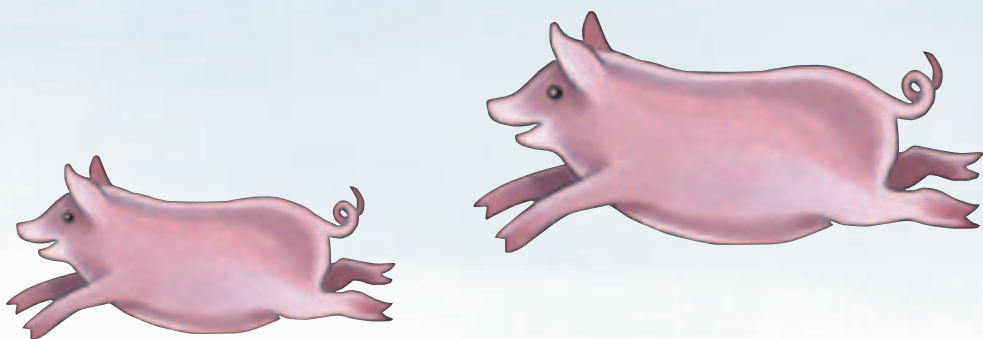


The Flavor of Pasture-Raised Meats and Dairy

Not only are pasture-raised meats and dairy better for your health, better for the animals, better for the environment, and better for the farmer, they also are better tasting than conventionally raised meats and dairy products. “The search is worth it,” writes Corby Kummer in the May 2003 issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*. “Grass-fed beef tastes better than corn-fed beef: meatier, purer, far less fatty, the way we imagine beef tasted before feedlots and farm subsidies changed ranchers and cattle.” When raised and cooked properly, grass-fed pork and lamb have a particularly rich and savory flavor. Grass-fed beef tends to be lean and juicy, with a robust flavor. Pasture-raised chickens have a firm texture and a flavor that many older generations will remember from their youth.

What gives grass-fed meats and dairy their unique flavor and texture? The grass, for one. Wine enthusiasts have long heard about the influence of *terroir* on the flavor and characteristics of wine. Terroir refers to the unique elements of the soil, the landscape, and the climate that influence flavor. The same is true of grass-fed foods. And just as the experience and expertise of the grower and the winemaker contribute to the quality of the wine, the experience and expertise of the farmer often means grass-fed meat that’s unforgettably delicious.

Flavor is also derived from the breed of the animal, the management of the pastures, the age at which the animal is harvested, and numerous other factors. The bottom line is that it pays to get to know the farmers who are growing and raising your food. Through them, you’ll find the meat and dairy products that taste best to you (see page 11 for resources on finding grass-fed foods).



Tips for Making the Most of Your Pasture-Raised Foods

(From *The Grassfed Gourmet Cookbook: Healthy Cooking and Good Living with Pasture-Raised Foods*, by Shannon Hayes, Eating Fresh Publications, 2004)

Four basic principles for cooking grass-fed meats:

1. *Put away your timer, get a good meat thermometer, and be prepared to use it.* Grass-fed meats are significantly lower in fat than the meats you're likely to find on grocery store shelves. Since fat works as an insulator, it changes the way your meat cooks. Lean roasts will cook in the oven faster than roasts that are higher in fat.
2. *Turn down the heat.* If the heat is too high when grass-fed meat is cooked, the moisture and the fat will exit quickly, which will toughen the protein.
3. *Learn when to use dry-heat cooking methods and when to use moist-heat methods.* Dry-heat cooking methods are appropriate for tender cuts of meat, such as loin cuts. Moist-heat methods are used for tougher cuts of meat, such as shoulder cuts.
4. *Ease up on the seasonings and sauces.* While meats sold in grocery stores may benefit from heavy seasonings, prime cuts of grass-fed meat have sufficient flavor to stand on their own. Start out with a simple herb rub or just salt and pepper so you can experience the true flavor of the meat. Then move into more elaborate seasonings.

Endnotes:

- 1 Shannon Hayes. *The Grassfed Gourmet Cookbook: Healthy Cooking and Good Living with Pasture-Raised Foods*. Eating Fresh Publications, New Jersey. 2004.
- 2 Grassland Birds: Fostering Habitats Using Rotational Grazing. Dan Undersander, Stan Temple, Jerry Bartlett, Dave Sample, Laura Paine. University of Wisconsin System. Cooperative Extension Publishing. 2000.

Rubs and Pastes

(From *The Grassfed Gourmet Cookbook: Healthy Cooking and Good Living with Pasture-Raised Foods*, by Shannon Hayes, Eating Fresh Publications, 2004)

One of the best ways to complement the flavor of grass-fed meats is by applying an herb or spice rub, or paste, before cooking the meat. When roasting, frying, or grilling, this creates a wonderful savory crust on the outside of the meat. The most important ingredient in all of these rubs and pastes is the salt. Salt, when applied to meat before cooking, blends with the melting fats and sugars, contributing to the overall flavor profile of the meat (by contrast, when it is added after cooking, it just makes the meat taste salty).

Basic Herb Rub *(Ideal for pork or beef)*

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 3 cloves garlic | 1 tablespoon coarse salt |
| 2 teaspoons black pepper | 1 tablespoon dried rosemary, finely chopped |
| 2 teaspoons dried thyme | |

Add the above ingredients to a food processor and blend.

Chicken Herb Rub

Prepare the mixture in large quantities and store. “Whenever I roast a chicken,” writes author Shannon Hayes, “I combine 2 tablespoons of these mixed herbs with 1 clove of chopped garlic and 1/4 cup of olive oil and rub it all into the meat and the skin of the bird before roasting.”

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 tablespoon coarse salt | 1 tablespoon black pepper |
| 1 tablespoon dried thyme | 2 tablespoons dried oregano |

Combine the above ingredients in a small bowl. Mix thoroughly, remove what you will need to roast 1 chicken (about 2 tablespoons), then store the rest in an air-tight container for later use.

Rosemary, Thyme, and Mustard Paste *(An ideal coating for a roasted leg of lamb)*

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 2 cloves garlic, minced | 1 tablespoon coarse salt |
| 2 teaspoons black pepper | 1 tablespoon dried rosemary, crumbled |
| 2 teaspoons dried thyme | 1/2 teaspoon dried mustard |
| 6 tablespoons olive oil | |

Add the above ingredients to a food processor and blend.

Animal Welfare Institute

Founded in 1951, the Animal Welfare Institute is a nonprofit educational organization. AWI works to promote animal-friendly farming practices and to stop the growth of animal factories for the benefit of animals, consumers, family farmers, rural communities, and the environment. See www.awionline.org.

Eating Fresh Publications

Publisher of cookbooks and guides to eating delicious foods from sustainable, small-scale family farms. Eating Fresh is the publisher of *The Grassfed Gourmet Cookbook* and the developer of GrazeFest®, a national campaign in support of grass-fed and pasture-based foods from America's small farms. See www.eatingfresh.com.

Eatwild.com

Arguably the most comprehensive and complete authority on the state of grass-based farming. Edited by author Jo Robinson, eatwild.com is fully documented and includes countless essays on the benefits of grass-fed foods and the dangers of large-scale, factory farms. Also includes an extensive list of pasture-based farmers by state. See www.eatwild.com.

The Grassfed Gourmet Cookbook: Healthy Cooking and Good Living with Pasture-Raised Foods

by Shannon Hayes. Eating Fresh Publications. 2004. www.eatingfresh.com. A comprehensive cookbook and guide to finding, handling, and preparing grass-fed and pasture-raised foods. Includes more than 120 recipes, profiles of pasture-based farmers, and advice and strategies for making the most of your purchases.

Sustainable Table

Through its entertaining, informative, and interactive website and projects, Sustainable Table celebrates the sustainable food movement, educates consumers on food-related issues, and works to build community through food. The program also includes the Eat Well Guide, an online directory of sustainable meat and dairy products, and the award-winning, critically acclaimed films *The Meatrix*. See www.sustainabletable.org.

Weston A. Price Foundation

Founded in 1999, the Weston A. Price Foundation is dedicated to restoring nutrient-dense foods to the human diet through education, research, and activism. It supports a number of movements that contribute to this objective, including nutrition instruction, organic and biodynamic farming, pasture-feeding of livestock, community-supported farms, honest and informative labeling, prepared parenting, and nurturing therapies. See www.westonaprice.org.

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sustainable table

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See www.sustainabletable.org

Animal Welfare Institute

Supporting alternative farming systems for better treatment of farm animals.
See www.awionline.org



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