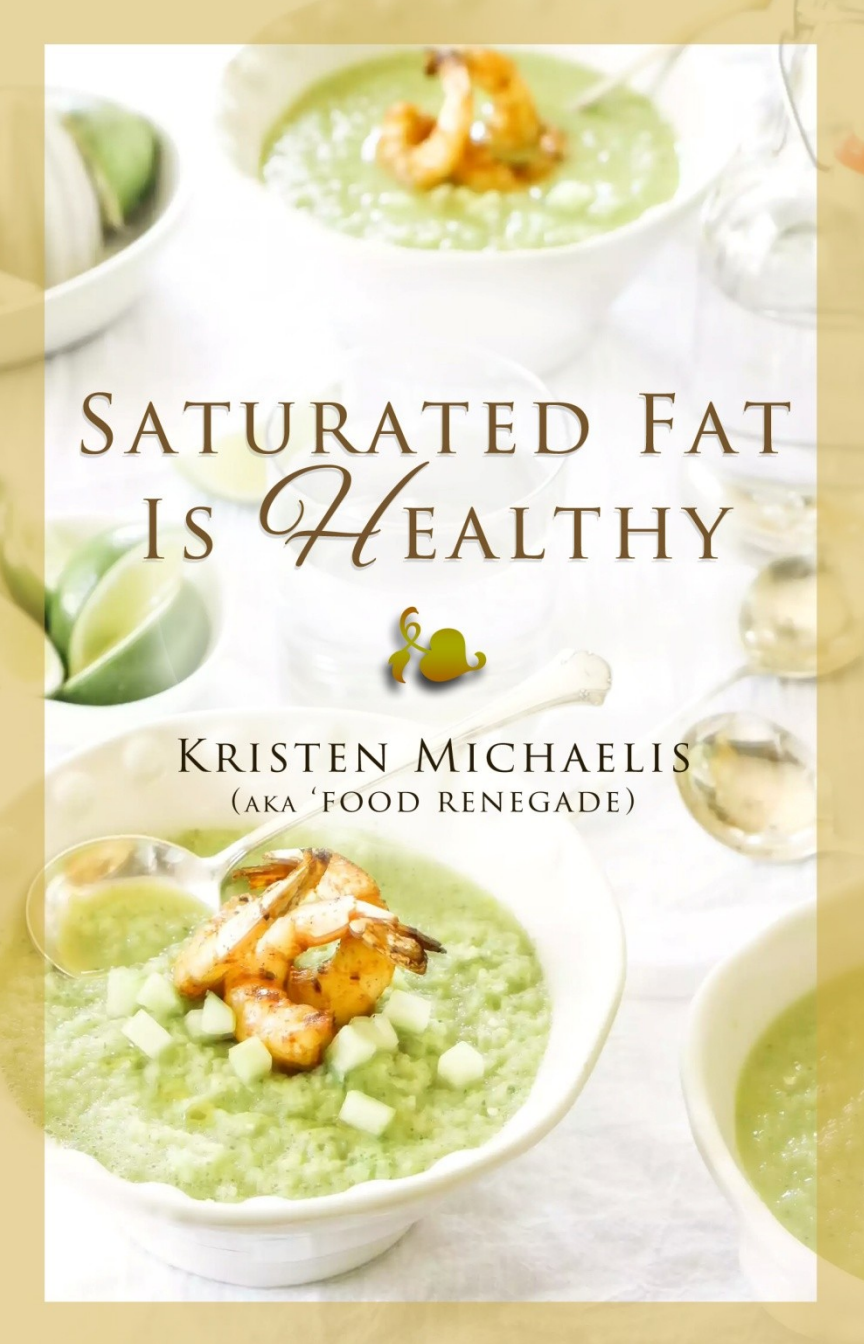

Saturated Fat Is Healthy

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INTRODUCTION

For decades, the USDA food pyramid has been telling us to eat less fat. When they launched their campaign, only 14% of Americans were obese. Today, that number's at more than 30%, with another 30% of the population being classified as "overweight."

So what's wrong?

Did the public fail to get the message? Are we all secretly pigging out on high fat foods? Did we all suddenly turn sedentary?

By the late 1990s, more than 90% of American consumers reported eating low-fat products, and roughly two-thirds of us believed "a need exists for food ingredients that can replace the fat in food products." By all appearances, we embraced the low-fat message with open arms. Yet we still gained weight.

A funny thing happens when you cut fat out of the diet. You want to replace it with something.

ONE

"Fat Is Where It's At"

Recently, Ode Magazine ran a cover story called "Fat Is Where It's At," highlighting the changing tide as scientists have started to recommend higher fat diets.

> "So given the blanket condemnation of fat, what did we eat instead? If we cut fat out of our diets, we have to get calories from somewhere. When food companies offer reduced-fat versions of cookies, salad dressings and sauces, sugar and carbohydrates generally make up the difference.
>
> When we consciously reduce the fat in our diets, we don't typically eat fewer calories; we eat more rice and pasta,

according to a survey by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. And low-fat products have their own problems. "If you reduce the fat, you have to replace it with something," says Samuel Klein, a professor of medicine and nutrition in the medical school at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. "So it's sugar."

It's true: Either for taste, or to replace fat's richness and moistness, the food industry began using sugar. But as researchers studied fat and weight, they learned more about the effects of sugar, which as it turns out may inspire more weight gain than fat does.

When we eat sugar—or refined carbohydrates, which break down into sugar—the body produces insulin to transport the sugar to the muscles and organs that burn it as fuel.

Insulin though, also regulates fat metabolism, and when insulin levels are high, the body stores fat rather than burning it. The issues and consequences of producing too much insulin are still open to debate, but many researchers believe that replacing fats with sugars

and carbohydrates has the potential to wreak havoc on your metabolism.

And ironically, even sugar substitutes, like aspartame, the sweetener in NutraSweet and Equal, have been linked to weight gain. Scientists aren't sure why, but they seem to encourage people to eat more, or disrupt energy expenditures."

So now the scientific community is starting to backtrack. They're finally starting to own up to the fact that not all fat is bad.

Check out these prime quotations from the Ode article:

– "Regularly described as the nutritional equivalent of cigarettes, fat has been the target of public-service campaigns and municipal bans aimed at keeping us slender and healthy. But a growing body of international research suggests our obsessive fear of fat may be misplaced. **A high-fat diet won't necessarily make us sick or fat; a low-fat diet may not make us healthy or slim.**"

– "Even the American Heart Association (AHA), a leader in the

> campaign against dietary fat, recently revised its nutritional guidelines, increasing the daily recommendations for fat. "**The science just wasn't there**," acknowledges Robert Eckel, president of the AHA and a professor of endocrinology, metabolism and diabetes at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center."

Personally, I love fat. It makes everything taste better and keeps me full. In order to get the proper balance of fats necessary for a healthy liver & heart (an Omega 6 to Omega 3 fatty acid ratio of 4:1, for starters),

I try to get my fat from traditional sources. This includes butter from grass-fed cows, tallow and lard from grass-fed, wild, foraged animals, and quality olive and coconut oils. I drink full-fat milk raw from grass-fed cows, don't shy away from cream or sour cream, and enjoy bacon grease.

Roughly 55-65% of my daily calories come from these fats, and I've **never** been healthier. I've lost weight, eliminated mood swings, and said goodbye to fatigue.

TWO

History Of Saturated Fat Research

Until the advent of the Industrial Revolution, the only fats available for humans to eats were those traditional, healthy fats covered above. Around the turn of the last century, vegetable shortening came on the scene. Solid and shelf-stable, like most animal fats, it was billed as a cheaper alternative to lard (by far the world's most popular animal fat at the time).

At around the same time, oleo-margarine was also invented and sold as imitation butter. Of course, people loved the flavor and texture of lard and butter and considered the vegetable oil alternatives to be cheap, unhealthy imitations of

the real thing. So, only the poor embraced the new fats. In the 1950s, things started to change.

A prominent scientist by the name of Ancel Keys postulated a theory that the amount of saturated fat and cholesterol in the diet was directly correlated to incidence of heart disease. This theory became known as the lipid hypothesis. He published his findings in a book, went on radio and television to promote his theory, and became a nutritional celebrity almost overnight.

Keys plotted the average dietary intake of saturated fat for seven different countries on a graph, along with the incidence of heart disease for those countries. The graph showed a strong link between the two. The more saturated fat a society ate, the more heart disease they suffered from.

Now (and even then), others in the scientific community were quick to point out that the correlation swiftly broke down when you added in data from other countries into the mix.

In fact, when you consider that Keys had data from more than 50 countries at hand, but only chose to highlight the 7 which proved his hypothesis, you may rightfully start to wonder

whether he was being as forthright as a scientist should have been.

Yet Keys had a charismatic personality, his own television show, and by 1961 he'd even made the cover of Time magazine. So, his ideas spread. People began to turn to yellow-seed based vegetable oils, margarine, and vegetable shortening to replace the saturated fat in their diet.

In 1968, the U.S. government also got involved when Senator George McGovern convened the Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs. Over the following 9 years, the committee convened several highly publicized hearings in which vociferous doctors, nutritionists, and scientists debated the ins and outs of the contemporary U.S. diet.

In 1977, McGovern published the committee's conclusion: Americans should eat less red meat. The meat industry was in an uproar. You can't say that! You can't just tell Americans to stop buying our meat! So, the committee edited their final conclusion.

The one thing that contemporary nutrition science knew about red meat compared to other meats was that it had more saturated fat in it.

So, rather than saying Americans should eat less red meat, the report concluded that Americans should eat less saturated fat. Of course, many scientists, doctors, and nutritionists protested: Wait! There's no link between dietary intake of saturated fat and incidence of heart disease! You can't single out one nutrient and start telling Americans to avoid it.

Too late. It had become official U.S. government policy that saturated fat was bad for you. Americans needed to replace these fats with something, so they turned towards modern industrial vegetable oils.

Of course, further research has since shown that the lipid hypothesis is false. Numerous studies have claimed to prove that it's true, but a close reading of the actual studies themselves reveals otherwise.

For example, quite a few such studies used hydrogenated animal fats as their sample for saturated fats. A fat is hydrogenated when you

force extra hydrogen atoms onto the unsaturated fatty acid in order to make it mimic a saturated fatty acid. The primary way to hydrogenate fats creates trans-fats.

If trans-fats occur in nature, they are usually only 2% or less of the total fat. When they're created artificially, they can be up to 45% of the total fat. Many of the studies claiming to "prove" the dangers of saturated fats only actually proved the dangers of excess trans-fats.

Recently, a number of meta-analysis studies have been released in which scientists combed all the data from all the studies that have ever been done which contained information regarding dietary intake of saturated fat and incidence of heart disease. When scientists do a meta-analysis, it is usually in the hope of finding a statistically significant pool of information to help prove their hypothesis.

For example, pretend that 10 studies had been done on diet and incidence of heart disease. Each study only had 100 participants, so any conclusion about diet and heart disease from that study might be statistically insignificant. But if you pool the

results from all ten studies in a meta-analysis, you might be able to demonstrate some statistically significant results.

So, what have the recent meta-analysis studies discovered? That there is no link between dietary intake of saturated fat and incidence of heart disease. Of the recent meta- analysis studies, the two most famous ones were published in prominent journals.

The first, titled "A Systematic Review of the Evidence Supporting a Causal Link Between Dietary Factors and Coronary Heart Disease" was published in the 2009 Archive of Internal Medicine.

The second, titled "Meta-analysis of prospective cohort studies evaluating the association of saturated fat with cardiovascular disease" was published in the January 2010 edition of the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.

Dr. Ronald Krauss, the study's principal investigator and director of atherosclerosis research at Children's Hospital Oakland Research Institute, said, "It's time to turn the page on how

we perceive saturated fats in relation to risk for heart disease. It's the wrong message that saturated fats are artery-clogging or evil."

Krauss says any dietary recommendations to further reduce saturated fat would be of no benefit. Americans, he says, shouldn't be avoiding all forms of saturated fats and it's erroneous to focus on saturated fat out of context from the whole diet.

THREE

Does Saturated Fat Cause Heart Disease?

To put it as simply as possible: No. There is absolutely NO EVIDENCE linking dietary intake of saturated fats with incidence of heart disease.

I know! This is so counter-intuitive, so contrary to *everything* we've been told.

According to Dr. Briffa's reporting on the study meta-analysis study mentioned above, the researchers applied the Bradford Hill Guidelines for judging whether or not a strong case for a cause/effect relationship existed between the nutritional factors studied and incidence of coronary heart disease.

If a nutritional factor met 4 or more criteria, they reported "strong" evidence supporting the link. Meeting 2 or fewer criteria made for a "weak" link.

And where did dietary intake of saturated fat score?

Zero.

That's right. It wasn't even on their list!

Here's Dr. Briffa's summary and conclusion:

In other words, according to this review, there are no appropriately conducted randomised controlled trials to support the notion that cutting back on saturated fat is good for the prevention of heart disease.

Add that finding to the one which shows no link between saturated fat and heart disease from cohort studies and where does that leave us? Well, the only logical conclusion to be drawn is that there really is no good evidence to support the widespread recommendation to reduce saturated fat intake for the sake of heart health.

Taken as a whole, I think the findings of this systematic review can be summarized as follows: a low fat, high carb diet is bad for the heart. And,

again, a close inspection of the science gives us no reason at all to cut back on saturated fat.

In recent years, we've also come to better understand the role that cholesterol plays within our bodies. It is true that many people with heart disease show increased levels of cholesterol in their blood. But we now know that our bodies use cholesterol to heal and repair damage to our cell walls.

Simply because cholesterol is present at the site of the injury, doesn't mean that it's responsible for the harm done. It's like saying our white blood cells cause infection, when in fact they are our body's defense mechanism to fight infection and keep it at bay.

Because most cell wall damage happens in the form of inflammation (which can lead to atherosclerosis, the hardening of the arteries), you can think of cholesterol like firemen. They're on the scene to put out the fire, and are not themselves responsible for the fire.

When looking back on the history of fats, there are a couple of things worth noting. First, notice how nutrition science is still in its infancy. Studies

done in the '50s and '60s trying to link dietary intake of saturated fat to incidence of heart disease were actually linking dietary intake of trans-fats to incidence of heart disease.

Yet at the time, nutrition science was still naïve enough to think that hydrogenated trans-fats were biologically the same as naturally-occurring saturated fats.

It seems highly probable that nutrition science is making similar mistakes today. We simply know too little. Second, notice how the cultural language shifted from discussing the health of whole foods to the health of particular nutrients.

This practice was sealed with the McGovern Report when rather than talking about the dangers of eating red meat, the conclusion specified a particular nutrient – in this case, saturated fat – as the culprit. Now, rather than talking about whole foods, our culture is inundated with confusing nutritionism.

So, when your friends or family chide you for your zealous use of coconut oil (92% saturated fat), butter from grass-fed cows (66% saturated fat), tallow from grass-fed cows (43% saturated

fat), lard from foraged hogs (39% saturated fat), and other healthy fats, you don't have to debate them — each wielding your own scientific sword. Instead, you can simply say "The evidence against saturated fats is simply not there."

And you'll be right!

One of the first things we need to do is to **stop looking at food in terms of nutrients**. If we've learned anything from the last two decades of nutrition science, it's that Food, Not Nutrients, Is The Fundamental Unit In Nutrition. If saturated fat is so bad for you, then why is coconut oil such a healthy fat? Why does high fat dairy lower your risk of heart disease?

We need to realize that the healthiest populations in the world don't focus on nutrients at all -- but food. These cultures use taste and tradition as guides for what should and shouldn't be eaten, rather than the latest study by nutrition scientists.

To tax nutrients, as Denmark has done (and as many in the U.S. wish to do), will only further propagate the nonsense that surrounds our dietary choices. If individual nutrients are bad or good for

you, then you can artificially create the best foods in laboratories by pooling all the best, most ideal nutrients together into a whole.

But that isn't how it works.

Instead, whenever we try to artificially create healthy foods, we demonstrate just how little we know about nutrition science. Margarine is a prime example. We thought that the saturated fat in butter was bad for us, so we created artificial fats in margarine to act as a substitute.

Decades later, after everyone from school teachers to doctors to nursery workers to the government itself got on the margarine-loving bandwagon, we found out that these artificial **trans fats** were actually far, far worse than the naturally occurring saturated fat in butter.

Let's not keep making the same mistakes. Let's return to long standing cultural food traditions, rather than newfangled marvels of industrial science.

FOUR

How To Get More Fat In Your Diet

When I tell people that my diet runs between 55% and 65% of my total calories from fat, they look at me like I'm growing a second head. "How do you **do** that?" they ask with a look that says they suddenly suspect me of deep fat frying everything I eat.

Next up, the inevitable, "**Why** do you do that?"

The answer to both is simple. Women like me do better on higher fat diets. It boosts our energy levels, balances our hormones, increases our fertility, contributes to serene moods, keeps our complexion glowing, and reduces the risk of having a stroke.

Yep, you read right. Generally speaking, women actually **need** high fat diets. The alternative is to synthesize all our saturated fat from the sugar we eat, and that comes with an unacceptable set of risks. (Hello weight gain, diabetes, heart disease, and cancer.)

So, how exactly **do** I get this much fat in my diet?

You'd be surprised! It's really not that hard at all.

1. Eat and drink full fat dairy

This one's probably the easiest. When you see fat-free cottage cheese, sour cream, or milk, run the other way! Study after study has shown that high fat dairy lowers your risk of heart attacks and strokes. So, don't be afraid of it. Drink real cream in your coffee or tea. Liberally stir in whole fat yogurt to your cut up fruit.

2. Eat eggs -- with the yolks

I eat an egg or three a day. When I tire of eggs for breakfast, I eat them in an egg salad or quiche for lunch or dinner. Eggs are one of the most nutrient-

dense foods you can buy, particularly given their low cost. Even when I pay up to $6/dozen for eggs from pastured hens, I'm still getting a good deal when I consider all the nutrients they contain.

Eggs are rich in quality protein -- having all eight essential amino acids. They're also an excellent source of choline (necessary for brain and memory), folate (important for fertility and pregnancy), and other trace minerals like calcium, selenium, and even iron.

3. Spread that butter!

When you make toast, sandwiches, pancakes, baked potatoes, or waffles, spread more than just a tiny, thin little pat of butter on that goody. Layer it on thick. Butter is far healthier than margarine, particularly if it comes from pastured cows.

4. Ditch the non-stick cookware and use fat

How many people make eggs without any sort of added fat at all? You know why you can do that? Because you're cooking on toxic, non-stick cookware! Opt for traditional cookware made of cast iron or steel and suddenly you'll realize that

you need that added fat to keep your food from sticking or over cooking.

I do have one important caveat for those of you who take this plunge though. Milk fat will brown and stick if heated too quickly, so if you cook with butter you'll want to reduce the amount of heat you're cooking with to avoid sticking.

5. Cook your vegetables in fat

Roast your vegetables in a coating of a traditional fat like olive oil or coconut oil. Pan-fry your potatoes in a healthy fat like beef tallow from grass-fed cows. Melt butter from pastured cows or bacon grease from foraged hogs over your steamed veggies. In short, any time you serve up a vegetable, make sure it's surrounded by a healthy fat.

Why? Not only does it make these veggies far more flavorful, but it also increases the availability of the vitamins and minerals in the vegetable. Many nutrients common in vegetables are fat-soluble. That means your body will only make use of them *in the presence of fat*.

Hey, look at that! I didn't mention deep frying once.

That's because I don't deep fry. I don't have a frier, and I wouldn't know how to use one.

Won't this make me fat?

No. Studies have shown that people who eat higher fat foods get full faster and stay full longer. That usually translates into them eating fewer calories, or at least eating fewer calorie-rich but nutrient-poor foods like desserts, breads, or candies. Both of those translate into weight loss, or at least weight maintenance.

6. Finally, remember the words of Julia Child.