



Chapter 34

Meat

Pork Myths

Directions: Read the text below, and study the chart. Then answer the questions under *Thinking Critically*, and complete the activities as directed by your teacher.

In response to concerns about the fat and cholesterol in pork, producers made changes in their breeding and feeding techniques. They aimed to produce pork that is lower in fat, calories, and cholesterol than it had been in the past. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, these efforts have been successful.

Since the 1960s, pork producers have lowered fat in their products by 77 percent, accompanied by a 53 percent drop in calories. In 1963, 3 ounces of broiled pork loin contained 29.6 grams of fat and 351 calories. Today the same portion contains much less—6.9 grams of fat and 171 calories.

Despite these alterations, however, pork remains higher in calories, cholesterol, and fat than other meat products.

Another criticism of pork is that it is high in sodium. However, similar to other fresh meats, fresh pork is actually low in sodium.

Only cured pork products are naturally high in sodium. The curing method used to process meat in order to extend its shelf life and add distinctive flavor involves treating the meat with a mixture of salt, sugar, nitrite, ascorbic acid, and water. As a result, cured pork

products are sometimes much higher in sodium than fresh pork cuts.

As with breeding and feeding methods, however, processing methods have changed over the years. Present-day curing uses 50 percent less salt than was used twenty years ago. In addition, some pork products are now marketed with reduced amounts of sodium. Still, cured meats should be used sparingly in your eating plan. In addition to concerns regarding sodium, warnings continue about the potentially harmful presence of nitrites and nitrates used in curing. These may be linked to certain types of cancer.

Although pork does raise some health concerns among food specialists, including pork in the diet is a better nutritional option for people than in the past. However, it is still important to exercise moderation when consuming pork with meals. The numbers in nutrition charts are always based on a certain quantity of food, usually 3 ounces. If you regularly eat more than the recommended amount, the additional cholesterol, fat, calories, and sodium can lead to health problems.

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Nutritional Comparison of Lean Poultry & Meat				
3-oz. cooked serving:	Calories	Total Fat (g)	Saturated Fat (g)	Cholesterol
Lean Chicken				
Skinless chicken breast	140	3.1	0.9	73
Skinless chicken thigh	178	9.3	2.6	81
Lean Cut of Pork				
Pork tenderloin	139	4.1	1.4	67
Pork rib chop	186	8.3	2.9	69
Pork boneless rib roast	182	8.6	3.0	70
Lean Cuts of Beef				
Beef eye of round	141	4.0	1.5	59
Beef top sirloin	162	8.0	2.2	76
Beef tenderloin	175	8.1	3.0	71

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Thinking Critically

1. Using the chart as a sample, what are the most healthful poultry and meat choices? Why? Should you avoid other options? Explain your reasoning.

2. What cooking method(s) would significantly change some of the numbers in the chart? Why?

3. If you were buying a cut of pork or beef, what factors would you consider when making your choice?

4. Suggest ways to lower the amount of meat that you eat each week. Would this change the total amount of fat or cholesterol in your diet? Why or why not?

For Further Study

- ◆ Prepare a chart of information on the sodium content of bacon, ham, and fresh pork, such as pork tenderloin. How do these compare? What recommendations can you make to reduce the amount of sodium in each? Share your findings with the class.
- ◆ The last time you were in the supermarket, boneless pork-loin roasts were on sale with signs labeled, “Buy one, get one free.” Search cookbooks to find five different recipes you could use with this cut of meat. (Hint: Could the roast be cut into 1-inch pork steaks? Cubed?) Based on your search, would it be wise to take advantage of this sale? Write a brief summary of your conclusions and submit it to your teacher.
- ◆ Using the label information on luncheon meats, such as bologna, compare the amount of calories and other nutrients in regular bologna, reduced-fat bologna, and reduced-sodium bologna. Based on your data, what would you recommend? What factors might need to be considered? Discuss your conclusions with the class.