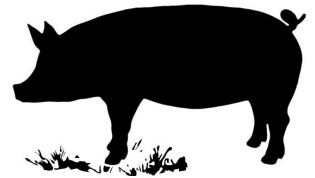


The Nutritional Benefits of Pasture-Raised Pigs

Hampshire College Farm

Pigs on pasture = better pork

Most pigs today are raised entirely indoors and are fed a diet of corn and soybeans. Pigs raised outdoors on pasture and in wooded areas are able to eat a diverse diet of plants, insects and nuts, in addition to being fed silage and grain. They are exposed to sunshine and are able to forage, run, jump and root in the soil. This results in healthier animals ... and more nutritious food for people as well.



Studies show the nutritional value of pork from pastured pigs that consume grass and forage is higher than pork from conventionally-raised pigs.

Less saturated fat, more heart-healthy polyunsaturated fats

Better Fat Quality

- ▶ Replacing saturated fats with polyunsaturated fats is associated with reduced blood levels of total and LDL cholesterol.
- ▶ Studies suggest that replacement reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease, including heart attacks, and related deaths.

Lower ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 polyunsaturated fats

Increase in Nutrients

- ▶ Omega-6 fats are considered more inflammatory than omega-3 fats.
- ▶ Research suggests a lower ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 fats may be more desirable and may improve cognitive function and reduce the risk of many chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular disease and cancer.

Higher levels of protein and vitamin E

- ▶ Protein is needed to build, maintain, and repair tissue.
- ▶ Vitamin E is an antioxidant that protects cells from free radicals.

By the numbers...

Compared to conventionally-raised pork, pasture-raised pork has:

2.4x more omega-3 fats

60% lower omega-6: omega-3 ratio

1.3x higher polyunsaturated: saturated fats

8% higher protein

2x more vitamin E

The how & why

Forages are the edible parts of plants other than grain and include pasture vegetation and grasses. They are good sources of beneficial omega-3 fats.

In contrast, grains such as corn are dominated by more inflammatory omega-6 fats. Due to the way pigs digest their food, the beneficial fat and nutrients in the pasture are absorbed relatively unchanged before they are incorporated into the meat. When it comes to meat from pigs, **“you are what you eat!”**

In addition, pigs that live most or all of their lives outside on pasture exercise more than pigs do in confinement. This factor likely contributes to muscle development and results in higher protein content.



Shopping for pork

“Free-range” implies that the pigs were raised freely outdoors. However, under USDA labeling laws, this is not always the case as animals only have to be allowed access to outdoors with no provision for how much time or space must be allowed outside.

“Pasture-raised” suggests pasture was included in the pig’s diet. However, there is no standard diet requirement and no definition of pasture under this claim.

Because these claims are not 100% reliable or tightly regulated, look for third party verified labels, or a local farm that uses humane practices but may not be certified due to the costs involved. Learn more at: foodanimalconcernstrust.org/food-labels



The Bottom Line

Pasture-raised animals produce nutritionally superior food for people. In addition to the nutritional advantages, there are many animal welfare and environmental benefits associated with pasture-based animal agriculture. Please consider supporting your local family farmers who raise their animals humanely on grass and well-managed pasture.

FACT

Food Animal Concerns Trust (FACT) is a national nonprofit organization that promotes the safe and humane production of meat, milk, and eggs. FACT offers grants, scholarships, webinars and a mentorship program for livestock and poultry farmers who wish to raise their animals on pasture.

www.FoodAnimalConcernsTrust.org