



SMARTER BEEF 

EDITORIAL BACKGROUNDER

Organic versus Grass-fed versus Lean and Natural Beef: They All Sound Good – So How Good Are They?

There is no doubt that in the past decade, Americans have become more health-conscious and more interested in improving their diets. Survey data shows a particular trend toward lower fat foods, driven by increased public understanding of the role fat plays in chronic health problems.

Beef producers and retailers have responded to this healthy eating trend with a variety of alternatives including organic, grass-fed and natural, lower fat products. They all sound good – but exactly how good is each in improving nutrition and reducing fat?

Organic Beef – Focusing on Production

Today, healthy eating is often associated with the word “organic.” However, certified organic beef is not necessarily lean and may not deliver all of the health benefits of beef that’s low in fat.

An organic certification refers only to the philosophy and practices used in beef production. For beef to be certified organic, cattle must be handled and fed in certain specified ways including having access to pastures and being fed 100% organic feed. They must also be processed in certified organic plants.

There are no stipulations, however, about fat content. In fact, organic beef is typically no more healthy or nutritious than conventionally produced beef.

Grass-Fed Beef – Return to the Range

Since the late 1990s, there has also been a growing interest in grass-fed beef. This has been driven by many of the same principles which propelled the organic movement including the return to more natural food production.

Grass-fed beef, however, takes things one step further. Livestock are raised only on pasture – not on grain or soy of any kind. As a result, animals produce more “good” fats (including omega-3 fatty acids and conjugated linoleic acid or CLA) and fewer “bad” fats (omega-6s).

The drawback to grass-fed beef is its taste and toughness. It is very difficult to raise cattle solely on pasture that yields the succulent and tender beef which consumers prefer.

Natural and Lean Beef – The Laura’s Difference

While Laura’s Lean Beef is neither certified organic nor exclusively grass-fed, it combines many of the benefits of both while delivering less fat and great taste.

Laura’s cattle are raised on sustainably managed farms, without the use of growth hormones or antibiotics, and fed a diet of natural grasses and grains. This approach yields exceptionally lean beef which is also full of flavor.

The focus at Laura’s is on producing beef that’s low in fat and saturated fat and that meets the government’s nutrition labeling for “lean” or “extra lean.” For beef to be called “lean,” it must contain less than 10g of fat, 4.5g or less of saturated fat and less than 95mg of cholesterol per serving. To be classified as “extra lean,” it must contain less than 5g of fat, less than 2g of saturated fat and less than 95mg of cholesterol. All Laura’s Lean Beef products meet or exceed one or both of these standards.

Laura’s Lean Beef accomplishes this while providing conditions that meet the health needs and natural behavior of cattle. This combination – and its great taste – is what differentiates Laura’s Lean Beef from organic and grass-fed options.