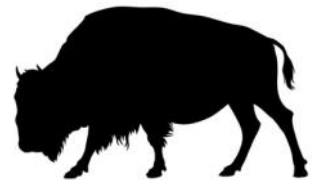




The Nutritional Benefits of Pasture-Raised Bison

Better feed, better meat

Bison are designed to eat plants. And almost all do for the majority of their lives. However, most conventionally-raised bison are eventually moved to a corral finishing system similar to cattle feedlots for the final three to six months where they eat a diet high in grain. Bison that remain on pasture or range instead of going to corrals continue to eat plants. This results in healthier animals ... and more nutritious food for people as well.



Studies show the nutritional value of meat from bison that consume grass and forage for their entire lives is higher than meat from bison that are fed grain.

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, strokes, and related deaths.

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

**Increase
in
Nutrients**

- ▶ Omega-6 fats are generally more inflammatory than omega-3 fats.
- ▶ Research suggests a lower ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 fats is more desirable and may improve cognitive function and reduce the risk of many chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular disease and cancer.
- ▶ Long-chain omega-3 fatty acids can improve neural health and result in lower total mortality.

Higher levels of antioxidants: niacin and β -carotene

- ▶ Niacin and β -carotene protect cells from damage due to free radicals.
- ▶ β -carotene is a precursor of vitamin A and is critical for vision health.

By the numbers...

Compared to grain-fed meat, meat from bison raised 100% on pasture has up to:

**2.5x more
omega-3
fats**

**2x more
long-chain
omega-3s**

**70% lower
omega-6:
omega-3
ratio**

**1.8x
higher poly-
unsaturated:
saturated
fat ratio**

**1.6x more
niacin
(vitamin
B3)**

**10x more
 β -carotene**

Why feed matters

Bison meat quality is influenced by many factors, including an animal's genetics, age, location, and **very significantly**, the animal's diet.

Bison are a type of ruminant animal. Ruminants have a stomach with four compartments, the largest of which is called the rumen. The rumen is a fermentation chamber where fibrous grasses are digested by bacteria to produce high quality protein (i.e. meat).

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 bison digest their food, they are able to convert the beneficial fat and nutrients in plants into more nutritious meat for people to eat.



Shopping for meat

Grass-fed bison meat signifies that only grass was fed to the bison. The USDA's "100% grass-fed" claim may be applied to meat from bison that were fed only 100% grass (forage) without grain or grain by-products. The USDA's staff reviews supporting documentation supplied by the company making the claim, but third-party inspections are not completed and humane standards are not considered in the grass-fed claim.

Grass-finished bison meat implies that grass was fed in the final phase of production, thus the bison were fed grass their entire lives. However, grass-finished bison can also be fed grain, therefore the USDA states the claim "grain-fed, grass-finished" is the most accurate terminology.

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

The Bottom Line

Animals raised on pasture 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.



Food Animal Concerns Trust (FACT) is a national nonprofit organization that works to ensure that all food-producing animals are raised in a humane and healthy manner. FACT offers grants, scholarships, webinars and a mentorship program for livestock and poultry farmers and ranchers who wish to raise their animals on pasture.