

# THE RAW FACTS

## Daily staple or public enemy?

Meat is a one-stop-shop for essential amino acids – the ones the body needs to build proteins but can't make on its own. It is also a rich source of vitamin B12, iron and protein, all of which are often lacking in plant-based foods.

But the types of meat we eat, and how much, matter. We are now eating meat in unprecedented quantities, and demand is growing, especially in developing nations.

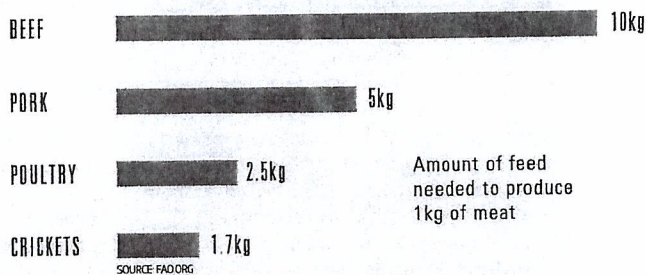
The kinds of meat we consume are also changing. In the UK, we are buying less fresh meat and more meat in the form of pre-prepared meals, which might contain added sugar, fat, salt and preservatives (see graph, page 35). While there's little indication that white meats like poultry, or fish, are a health concern, the evidence for red processed meats like bacon, salami and ham is not encouraging (see chart, right).

All this raises concerns for our health and the environment. However, eating the right kinds of meat can be beneficial for both (see "Red meat can be green", page 34).

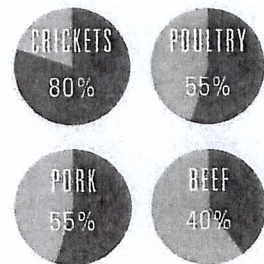
As well as vitamins and the like, meat contains a lot of protein for its calorie content (facing page), so although other foods give us protein too, meat is the most efficient source. Avoiding it could make it harder to get a healthy, balanced diet.

## COSTLY CUTS

The greediest animals to farm are also the poorest meat yielders



Percentage of animal that is edible



An individual's annual meat consumption varies widely by country

122kg

US

84kg

UK

58kg

CHINA

## Processed versus fresh

The evidence is conflicting, but it seems that preservatives in processed meat could lead to carcinogenic compounds being formed in the gut

CANCER RISK

Even fresh, lean red meat is rich in haem, which creates cancer-causing compounds when it reacts with fats and oils

A study of almost 40,000 men found that for every 50g of meat consumed daily, the incidence of heart failure rose by 8 per cent and the risk of death from heart failure by 38 per cent

HEART HEALTH

The study (left) found no effect for unprocessed red meat. But other studies show gut bacteria can convert L-carnitine in red meat into a compound which inhibits cholesterol removal from arteries

Processed meat often contains high levels of salt, sugar and fat

NUTRITIONAL VALUE

Fresh meat is a good source of essential amino acids, iron and vitamins, especially B6 and B12

Adults need around 50 grams of protein per day. Steak could give you this plus other nutrients. Other sources may not be so practical

200g

Steak serving  
Cals - 407  
Vit B12 - 3.32µg  
Vit B6 - 1.2mg  
Iron - 3.6mg  
Sat fat - 7g



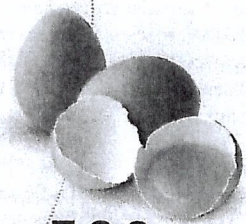
200g

1.5 salmon fillets  
Cals - 364  
Vit B12 - 6.1µg  
Vit B6 - 1.9mg  
Iron - 2mg  
Sat fat - 2.5g



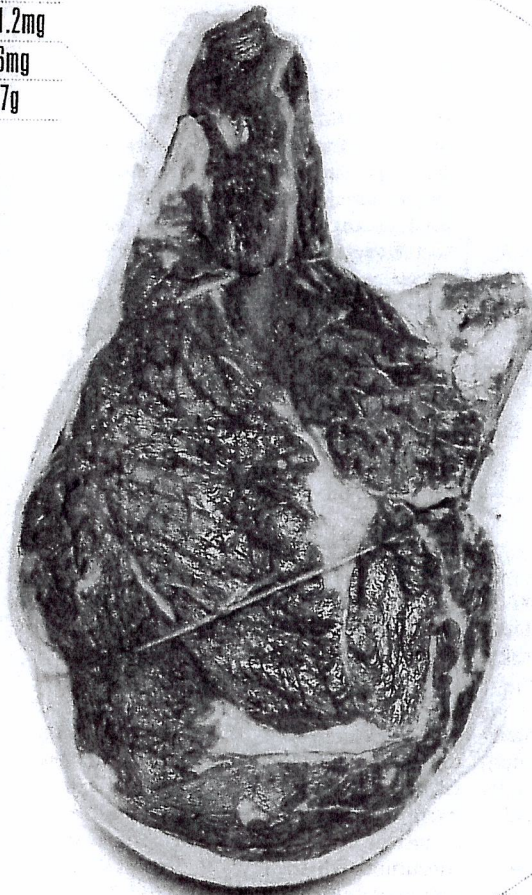
240g

200 almonds  
Cals - 1390  
Vit B12 - 0  
Vit B6 - 0.3mg  
Iron - 9mg  
Sat fat - 8g



522g

9 medium eggs  
Cals - 566  
Vit B12 - 3.5µg  
Vit B6 - 0.7mg  
Iron - 7mg  
Sat fat - 12.4g



600g

1.5 cans kidney beans  
Cals - 762  
Vit B12 - 0  
Vit B6 - 0.7mg  
Iron 13mg  
Sat fat 0.4g



75g

dried crickets  
Cals - 341  
Iron - 4.7mg



Recommended daily allowances for women/men: calories 2000/2500, iron 18mg/8mg, saturated fat 22g/28g, vitamin B12 2.4 µg, vitamin B6 1.3mg