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## C H E F ' S C O R N E R



*Executive Chef  
Paul Marks  
shares recipes  
and cooking tips  
with members.*

### SEPARATING FAT FROM FICTION

As far back as I can remember fat has been associated with being "bad." Most of the trendy diets over the past 20 years worked from the assumption that all fat should be eliminated from your diet.

However, there are many fats that are good for you and have health benefits. The key to managing your fat intake is moderation and knowing which fats to consume.

Despite its bad reputation, fat actually has important functions in your body. Just like sugar dissolves in water, some vitamins dissolve in fat. Then the fat is absorbed into the bloodstream and distributed throughout the body. As a fundamental health benefit, fat is impossible to live without. A fat-free diet is not a healthy diet. The more healthy diet is limiting your fat intake while at the same time taking in the right kinds of fat.

Does low fat mean low calorie? Not necessarily. While fat is a concentrated source of energy to the body, excluding or trading out high fat foods for a low fat equivalent may not trim calories. The fat removed from a muffin must be replaced with something to replace the flavor from the fat, and many times it is substituted with an even higher-carbohydrate ingredient.

Eating a whole box of fat free cookies is not a low-calorie experience. As with the rest of your diet, enjoy low fat items in moderation.

To help separate fat facts from fiction, here is a quick guide:

- Your body needs fat in moderation to be healthy.
- Vitamins A, D, E and K as well as carotenoids are fat-soluble. Your body absorbs them best when they are combined with some fat.

- Your body cannot produce certain essential fats, such as linoleic acid, which helps keep your brain and nervous system functioning normally. Yet again, everything in moderation, because only 10-15 calories of these fats are needed daily.
- Fat supplies twice as much energy as carbohydrates and proteins. But fat isn't your body's preferred source of energy, so if you ingest more calories of fat than your body needs it will store the excess fat for future use.
- Fat cushions your organs and bones.
- Including a small amount of fat in the food you eat will help you feel full longer and repress the urge to eat frequently.
- Fat provides desired textures in food that make it more enjoyable and helps with cooking.
- Fat is found in almost all foods, including vegetables and grains.

### Fat Dictionary

With so many descriptions and types of fat it can easily become confusing. To help, here is clarification of the good and the bad.

**Cholesterol:** A waxy fat like substance found in animal products, essential for cell building. Cholesterol is not the same as fat because it is not a source of calories so it does not supply energy.

**Blood (serum) cholesterol:** Mostly manufactured by your body and travels in the bloodstream, although a small percentage is ingested from the foods you eat.

**Dietary cholesterol:** Only ingested from foods of animal origins.

**HDL (good cholesterol):** High-density lipoproteins are produced in your liver in response to physical activity and also from certain foods. These carry fat from your cells to the liver to be broken down and removed as waste.

**LDL (bad cholesterol):** Low-density lipoproteins are manufactured in your liver and circulate the fat in your blood, moving it to where it can be used. If you have an excess of it, it will cause deposits in your arteries.

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**Monounsaturated fatty acids:**

Fatty acids missing a hydrogen pair that trigger less LDL production and more HDL. In other words, they are good fats and are found in canola, nuts and olive oil.

**Polyunsaturated fatty acids:**

Fatty acids missing two or more hydrogen pairs. They trigger both lower LDL and HDL production, lowering cholesterol levels. These can be found in corn, safflower, soybeans, sesame, sunflower and seafood.

**Saturated fatty acids:** Fatty acids not missing any hydrogen pairs. They trigger an increase of LDL. In other words, these are bad fats. They are solid at room temperature and you can find them in meat, full-fat dairy, coconut oils and palm.

**Omega 3 fatty acids:** Fatty acids missing a lot of hydrogen pairs. They lower cholesterol, reduce clotting and prevent hardening of the arteries, which improve your

cardiovascular system. They can be found in fish, walnuts, soy, canola and flax seed.

**Omega 6 fatty acids:** Another polyunsaturated fatty acid that helps lower cholesterol and improve heart health. Found in vegetable oils, soybeans, corn and safflower.

**Trans fatty acids:** Mostly man-made during the partial hydrogenation of fats, a process to make fat more stable and solid at room temperature, which turns this fatty acid into a really bad fat. It raises the LDL and lowers the HDL—it isn't removing fat from your cells, but promoting deposits in your arteries, doing the exact opposite of what you want. The health department is now requiring that restaurants no longer use any trans fats. Most food products you find will proudly display on their packaging that they do not use trans fats.

Fat free? Hardly not—but the following delicious dish has all the right kinds.

**Pasta with Homemade Tomato Sauce:**

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 garlic cloves, sliced thinly
- 1 cup tomatoes, peeled and seeded
- ½ pound pasta of choice
- 10 basil leaves, chopped or torn
- ¼ cup Parmesan cheese
- Salt and pepper to taste

Bring heavily salted water to a boil, and boil pasta to al dente (still firm, but not hard). Heat olive oil in pan until smoking and add garlic, sautéing until edges just start to turn brown. Add tomato, salt and pepper. Sauté tomatoes until they turn warm. Toss with pasta and garnish with basil and cheese. This recipe will yield two servings as an entrée or enough for four to six people as a side dish.

This is a great recipe on its own or served as a side dish for grilled chicken, and grilled or seared fish. It's also delicious simply with sliced, grilled eggplant drizzled with olive oil.

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