

alpha-rumenic acid (conjugated linoleic acid) and more recently has done research at Wisconsin suggesting this same dairy fat “may have properties that tend to normalize body fat deposition.” On page 134 of Dr. Enig’s comprehensive and well referenced examination she notes, “Butter is known for its content of short-chain and odd-chain fatty acids. Milk fat is considered one of the most complex natural fats in existence. Butter made from cream from animals grazing on grass contains high levels of vitamin A and other factors such as conjugated linoleic acid, which are known to have special health benefits.” She further notes on page 260 the following excerpts: “The fat in most milk contains about 48 to 50 percent of the calories in whole milk and almost all the flavor. . . . Since milk fat is highly emulsified it is very digestible. . . .”

[** more in the future about the effect of separation and homogenization — author]

Weighing the Evidence

Truly at the heart of the conflict of many who stand at the vendor booths of Milk Thistle Farm is the tension between what some would call a healthy natural instinct for the value of whole milk versus the nearly “theological-like force” that pervades our institutionalized beliefs that science has proven that fats are a huge problem and that coronary heart disease and atherosclerosis are undeniably causally related to dietary consumption of fat.

We are blessed with and burdened by our current age of information. Ironically, few have availed themselves of the enormous amount of evidence in the decades of scientific research and study regarding causal relations between saturated fats, cholesterol and atherosclerotic heart disease as has physician, author and researcher Uffe Ravnskov, M.D., Ph.D. For more than a decade, Dr. Ravnskov has brilliantly and systematically reviewed and critiqued thousands of research papers and oft-quoted studies by professional associations and government commissions. He has systematically presented a body of evidence contradicting the current “everybody knows”. From the enormous body of evidence compiled by Dr. Ravnskov, based on a tenacious critique of research and adherence to scientific methodology, the

dietary fat/coronary heart disease association is revealed to be resting on belief. This has rankled, to be sure, the little hunchback pulling the puppet’s strings referred to earlier.

Critics of the enormous research of Dr. Ravnskov have, as Dr. Ravnskov would agree, violated the methods of scientific prerequisites by demanding that in order to acknowledge the overwhelming scientifically transparent absence of proof for causal relations between dietary fat and heart disease, another hypothesis must be proposed. Dr. Ravnskov is not lacking in other hypotheses, but more importantly, this is not necessary for recognizing error where error reveals itself.

In our times the research material is available to all those who are interested to look. The detailed references in Dr. Ravnskov’s exacting research are presented in his books, *The Cholesterol Myths: Exposing the Fallacy That Cholesterol and Saturated Fat Cause Heart Disease* and *Fat and Cholesterol are Good for You* and many are directly available on the internet-based MEDSCAPE and the website THINCS.

In conclusion then, I, as medical doctor, dairy farm hand, field tender, and co-worker of Milk Thistle Farm Organic Dairy urge you to consider for yourself, and possibly investigate the scientific research for yourself that allows you to enjoy whole milk for what it naturally and organically is.

— Kent S. Hesse, MD

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MILK, YOU & FATS



Milk Thistle Farm
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This article is written to milk product consumers or those who would be but who think that they shouldn't. It in no way presumes that milk is a need for anyone or everyone, nor THE perfect food. It is written as a consequence of personal experiences this writer has had at the vendor booths of the Milk Thistle Dairy Farm in the New York City Green Markets. It is our intention to bring some degree of transparency to perspectives pertaining to the nutrition of milk fats. We have no interest whatsoever in participating in or cultivating the polemic confrontations between zealous camps of good and bad foods. The references provided in this article allow the interested "consumer" to avail themselves of self determined decisions free of institutional bias.

As a member of this family-based rural organic dairy farm 130 miles north of the city, I bring to my vendor booth experience a number of backgrounds. On the one hand, I am a practicing doctor of medicine in the states of New York and Massachusetts. On the other hand, I am a coworker with son Dante Hesse who has spearheaded Milk Thistle Farm in Columbia County. This article in no way is given as personal medical advice, such advice needing to arise between the reader and their own trusted health care providers.

Your Role in the Farm

You, the milk consumer or potential milk consumer, are very integrally embedded in a circle of caring activities to which we at the farm are tending twenty four/seven. While the consumer might consider them self to come first ("the customer is always right") we find ourselves in a delicate and fragile balancing process. It is our responsibility to care for the earth as a whole (i.e. carbon footprint, etc.); to care for the pastures upon which our Jersey cows spend the greatest part of their lives; to care for the warmth and cleanliness of their winter barn and milking parlor; to care for the various machines that help us tend the needs of fields and cows; to care for the social and physical health of our farm's human family; to tend the economic realities that can be formative on the tussle between quantity and quality and thereby to care for you, the milk consumer.

The Dairy Fat Question

Why describe this? Because, at just this juncture between you and Milk Thistle Farm, many consumers participate in a transaction without hesitation. But then are those instances that would seem so unnecessarily painful and burdened. The question of dairy fat comes like a cloud over a person's countenance. Time and again, we encounter an individual thinking of their own health or their spouse's, or witness a young child's disappointment over being denied whole milk.

Week after week, the doctor and farmer have wondered. So we researched the state of our knowledge of milk and milk fat. We found some truly notable references about milk itself, and because milk contains butterfat, I also found remarkable books about fats. Of greatest interest, but requiring considerably more vigor to penetrate are the hundreds of individual and review research papers which scientifically support or invalidate the views, policies and practices of individuals, clinicians, nutritional and health commissions, educational institutions and government agencies. You would think since "Everybody knows fats are more or less bad for you" that there would be very irrefutable evidence to this effect. This now seems very obviously not to be the case.

Research

Our first foray into this field of literature was E. Melanie DuPuis' historical survey of milk's place in American history, *Nature's Perfect Food*. The quote of William Benjamin on the facing page of this book can be seen to be prescient for decades of polemics regarding all and any food substances:

"The story is told of an automaton constructed in such a way that it could play a winning game of chess, answering each move of an opponent with a countermove. A puppet in Turkish attire with a hookah in its mouth sat before a chessboard placed on a large table. A system of mirrors created the illusion that this table was transparent from all sides. Actually, a little hunchback who was an expert chess player sat inside and guided the puppet's hand by means of strings. One can imagine a philosophical counterpart to this device. The puppet called 'historical materialism' is to win all the time. It can easily be a match for anyone if it enlists the

services of theology, which today, as we know, is wizen and has to keep out of sight."

This perspective is mentioned here out of the recognition of the theological-like character of varying views about dietary substances and health. DuPuis' book is a scholarly and detailed sociological history of the many agricultural, technological, economic and governmental factors and beliefs resulting in an "industry" that is probably the most regulated food chain in world history.

Palpably pleasing to the palate is the reading of Anne Mendelson's warm and loving history of milk, written with the heart, soul and artistry of the cook. Here in, *Milk: The Surprising Story of Milk Through the Ages* one has a wonderful treatise of the history of milk worldwide as a cultural phenomenon and of practical wisdom become custom. The pragmatic development of the now increasingly treasured soured milk products (probiotics!) are enriched by the historical/cultural context. The last words of the first section of her book, before turning to the many recipes utilizing all aspects of milk, ends with the following words:

"Enough of a market for decent-tasting [*i.e. not ultra-pasteurized*] cream remains to keep a few small dairies supplying specialty stores [*or green markets*] here and there especially in large cities. I'd hazard a guess that demand will increase rather than decrease, given the resurgence in small scale farm dairies and the many doubts now being cast upon the superior healthfulness of low-fat dairy products."

A next step in surveying the extensive field of fats and human health can be undertaken by studying the book *Know Your Fats* by nutritionist/biochemist Mary Enig, Ph.D. This is a complete primer, again executed with scholarly level-headedness, examining the nature of all nutritional fats and oils.

On page 46 of the first chapter entitled, "Knowing the Basic Facts about Fats", Dr. Enig refers to the unique fatty acid discovered by Australian lipid biochemist, Peter Parody which he called alpha-rumenic acid as its origin is found almost exclusively in the rumen of the ruminant animals and in dairy fat. Dr. Enig further notes that biochemist Michael Pariza at the University of Wisconsin headed up a research group work which identified anti-carcinogenic properties of