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Wagyu Beef Nutrition: Health Benefits, Risks and How to Cook It

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In Japanese, "Wa" means Japanese and "gyu" means cow.

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Possibly one of the most tender and flavorful types of beef, Wagyu beef is known worldwide for its intense marbling and expensive price tag. A 1-pound Wagyu steak could cost over \$100, and that's at the low-end.

Wagyu is a Japanese cattle that consists of four different distinct breeds: Japanese Black, Japanese Brown, Japanese Polled and Japanese Shorthorn, according to the [American Wagyu Association](#). Wagyu cattle are now bred and processed in other countries as well, including America and Australia as primary producers.

Beyond the melt-in-your-mouth flavor that Wagyu beef is known for, it's also nutritionally different from other types of beef. The high levels of intramuscular marbling are what make this particular beef unique in flavor and nutrition.

Here are the potential health benefits, risks and tips on how to prepare Wagyu beef.

Wagyu Beef Nutrition Facts

One w-ounce portion of cooked Wagyu beef is equal to a single serving. Three ounces of [ground Wagyu beef](#) contains:

- Calories: 243
- Total fat: 21.3 g
 - Saturated fat: 6.8 g
- Cholesterol: 60.4 mg
- Sodium: 45.9 mg
- Total carbs: 0 g
 - Dietary fiber: 0 g
 - Sugar: 0 g

- Protein: 13.7 g
- Iron: 6% Daily Value (DV)

Macronutrients

- Total fat: A 3-ounce serving of ground Wagyu beef contains 21.3 grams of fat, 6.8 grams of saturated fat and 0.8 grams of trans fat
- Carbohydrates: Three ounces of Wagyu beef contains 0 grams of carbohydrates.
- Protein: Three ounces of Wagyu beef contains 13.7 grams of protein.

Health Benefits of Wagyu Beef

Wagyu beef has been studied for its health benefits and advantages over other types of red meat, most notably its fat content, particularly its omega-6 and omega-9 fatty acids.

1. It's a Good Source of Omega-6 Fatty Acids

"Wagyu beef is an excellent source of conjugated linoleic acid (CLA), an omega-6 fatty acid," says Andrew Akhaphong, RD, LD, a dietitian for Mackenthun's Fine Foods.

"CLA may lower cholesterol levels, reduce the risk of certain cancer and reduce the risk for Alzheimer's disease, although more research is needed in this area."

Eating foods with CLA can help to lower LDL cholesterol levels, according to an August 2015 review in [Public Health Nutrition](#). LDL, or low-density lipoprotein, cholesterol is often referred to as "bad cholesterol" for heart health.

While the CLA in Wagyu beef can potentially lower LDL cholesterol, it's important to look at the whole food and not only individual nutrients. Other [foods that can improve cholesterol](#) include avocados, fish, beans and whole grains.

2. Wagyu Beef Contains Oleic Acid

Wagyu beef is a good source of oleic acid, especially when compared to other sources of red meat.

Oleic acid is a monounsaturated fat often found in [heart-healthy oils](#) such as olive oil. When substituted for fats and oils higher in saturated fat, oleic acid may reduce the risk of heart disease, per the [Federal Drug Administration](#) (FDA).

About 3.5 ounces of Japanese Black Wagyu beef has 16 grams of oleic acid, compared to just 2 grams in grass-fed Angus beef, per a March 2020 study in the [Korean Journal for Food Science of Animal Resources](#).

Oleic acid may help reduce inflammation in the body, per a large May 2007 study in the [Journal of Epidemiology](#). Three thousand people from Japan were surveyed on their intake of foods containing specific fatty acids, including oleic acid. The inflammation marker C-reactive protein (CRP) was measured and indicated that those who ate more foods with oleic acid had lower levels of inflammation.

Health Risks

While the omega-6 and omega-9 fatty acids help Wagyu stand apart from other types of meat, there are still some significant health risks associated with eating

it. Wagyu beef is high in saturated fat and has the potential to cause inflammation in the body.

1. Wagyu Beef Is High in Saturated Fat

Even though most of the fat in Wagyu beef is unsaturated, it still contains 34 percent daily value of saturated fat per 3-ounce serving.

A diet high in saturated fat can increase total cholesterol and LDL cholesterol, which can lead to blocked arteries, according to [Harvard Health Publishing](#). The current recommendation for saturated fat is 10 percent or less of your daily calories.

While studies have not been conclusive in proving a direct relationship between saturated fat and heart disease risk, replacing saturated fat with polyunsaturated fat or complex carbohydrates is linked to a reduced risk of a heart attack or stroke, per a March 2020 meta-analysis of 15 randomized controlled trials in [The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews](#).

2. Wagyu Beef Is Linked to Inflammation

Inflammation is our body's way of healing, but too much inflammation is associated with several diseases. Chronic inflammation can increase the risk of heart disease, Alzheimer's disease, certain cancers and diabetes, according to the [Cleveland Clinic](#).

While the CLA in Wagyu has cholesterol-lowering potential, it may be related to increased inflammation. "A diet high in CLA may increase CRP levels in the blood," says Akhaphong.

A review of 427 studies found that CLA supplementation increased blood levels of the inflammatory marker CRP, in a December 2017 meta-analysis in the [European Journal of Clinical Nutrition](#).

While some inflammation is needed for a healthy body, including [anti-inflammatory foods](#) in your diet can help to minimize the dangerous effects of chronic inflammation.

How to Cook Wagyu Beef

Wagyu beef is known for its delicious flavor and texture, so preparing it the right way is essential.

Things You'll Need

- Wagyu steak
- salt
- pepper
- butter
- heavy pan (like cast iron)

Akhaphong recommends following these tips for a flavorful and tender Wagyu beef steak:

1. Let the beef rest at room temperature for at least 30 minutes so the moisture can evenly disperse throughout the meat.
2. Season with salt and pepper.
3. Over medium-high heat, melt a small amount of butter in a heavy pan and sear both sides of the beef for 2 to 4 minutes.
4. Cook medium-rare to medium-well to experience the tender texture and buttery flavor Wagyu is known for.
5. Let the Wagyu beef rest for 5 minutes before slicing.

References

- [American Wagyu Association: "What is Wagyu?"](#)
- [USDA: "Wagyu Beef"](#)
- [Public Health Nutrition: "Association of foods enriched in conjugated linoleic acid \(CLA\) and CLA supplements with lipid profile in human studies: a systematic review and meta-analysis"](#)
- [FDA: "FDA Completes Review of Qualified Health Claim Petition for Oleic Acid and the Risk of Coronary Heart Disease"](#)
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