

## WebMD Feature: *The Caveman Diet*

### Free-Roaming Meat Under the Microscope

A new study takes a closer look at meats people ate 10,000 years ago and compares them to garden-variety beef found in supermarkets.

Bruce Watkins, PhD, director of the Center for Enhancing Foods to Protect Health at Purdue University, conducted a chemical analysis of both types of meats. He's published his results in a book called *The Paleo Diet*. In his analysis, he looked only at animals from the Rocky Mountains, "where free-roaming animals don't have access to corn or soybeans like they do in the Midwest," he tells WebMD.

Watkins found that wild game -- venison, elk, antelope -- contains a mixture of fats that are healthy for you, lowering cholesterol and reducing risk of heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.

"The meat of wild [game] has more omega-3 fatty acids," he says. Also, wild beasts have a ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 fatty acids that mirrors what's recommended today to lower risk of heart disease.

"If it's grass-fed bison, it will have a higher omega-3 than if it's bison that's finished in the lot with grains," Watkins tells WebMD.

The American Heart Association advises eating sources of food that have high levels of omega 3. That includes oily fish, such as salmon, halibut, swordfish, and tuna.

"The Paleolithic diet is sometimes misunderstood," Watkins says. "We're not saying eat a bunch of fat, eat a bunch of meat."

"It's a lean-meat diet, but with lots of fruits and vegetables," he says. "There weren't buckets of starch in the Paleolithic age. Donuts, cakes, cookies, and breakfast cereals were not part of the Paleolithic diet. Even 150 years ago, people didn't eat a lot of the refined carbohydrates that we eat today. There were whole grains, fruits, and vegetables."

But bison? He has analyzed bison meat from several suppliers and found that it does have a higher omega-3 content -- but only if the animals were grass-fed. Some bison are "finished in the lot with grains," which makes it less healthy, Watkins tells WebMD.