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The Big Fat Surprise: Why Butter, Meat And Cheese Belong In A Healthy Diet



Synopsis

A New York Times bestseller Named one of The Economist's Books of the Year 2014 Named one of The Wall Street Journal's Top Ten Best Nonfiction Books of 2014 Kirkus Reviews Best Nonfiction Books of 2014 Forbes's Most Memorable Healthcare Book of 2014 Named a Best Food Book of 2014 by Mother Jones Named one of Library Journal's Best Books of 2014 In *The Big Fat Surprise*, investigative journalist Nina Teicholz reveals the unthinkable: that everything we thought we knew about dietary fat is wrong. She documents how the low-fat nutrition advice of the past sixty years has amounted to a vast uncontrolled experiment on the entire population, with disastrous consequences for our health. For decades, we have been told that the best possible diet involves cutting back on fat, especially saturated fat, and that if we are not getting healthier or thinner it must be because we are not trying hard enough. But what if the low-fat diet is itself the problem? What if the very foods we've been denying ourselves—the creamy cheeses, the sizzling steaks—are themselves the key to reversing the epidemics of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease? In this captivating, vibrant, and convincing narrative, based on a nine-year-long investigation, Teicholz shows how the misinformation about saturated fats took hold in the scientific community and the public imagination, and how recent findings have overturned these beliefs. She explains why the Mediterranean Diet is not the healthiest, and how we might be replacing trans fats with something even worse. This startling history demonstrates how nutrition science has gotten it so wrong: how overzealous researchers, through a combination of ego, bias, and premature institutional consensus, have allowed dangerous misrepresentations to become dietary dogma. With eye-opening scientific rigor, *The Big Fat Surprise* upends the conventional wisdom about all fats with the groundbreaking claim that more, not less, dietary fat—including saturated fat—is what leads to better health and wellness. Science shows that we have been needlessly avoiding meat, cheese, whole milk, and eggs for decades and that we can now, guilt-free, welcome these delicious foods back into our lives.

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Customer Reviews

"Teicholz may be the Rachel Carson of the nutrition movement..." (Leah Binder

Forbes) "Solid, well-reported science| Like a bloodhound, Teicholz tracks the process by which a hypothesis morphs into truth without the benefit of supporting data."

(Kirkus Reviews (Starred Review))"Nina Teicholz reveals the disturbing underpinnings of the profoundly misguided dietary recommendations that have permeated modern society, culminating in our overall health decline. But The Big Fat Surprise is refreshingly empowering. This wonderfully researched text provides the reader with total validation for welcoming healthful fats back to the table, paving the way for weight loss, health and longevity." (David Perlmutter, MD, author of the #1 New York Times bestseller Grain Brain: The Surprising Truth About Wheat, Carbs)"A page-turner story of science gone wrong: what Gary Taubes did in Good Calories, Bad Calories for debunking the connection between fat consumption and obesity, Nina Teicholz now does in Big Fat Surprise for the purported connection between fat and heart disease. Misstep by misstep, blunder by blunder, Ms. Teicholz recounts the statistical cherry-picking, political finagling, and pseudoscientific bullying that brought us to yet another of the biggest mistakes in health and nutrition, the low-fat and low-saturated fat myth for heart health." (William Davis, MD, author of the #1 New York Times bestseller Wheat Belly: Lose the Wheat, Lose the Weight and Find Your Path Back)"At last the whole truth about the luscious foods our bodies really need!" (Christiane Northrup, M.D., ob/gyn physician and author of the New York Times bestseller Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom)"This meticulously researched book thoroughly dismantles the current dietary dogma that fat--particularly saturated fat--is bad for us. Teicholz brings to life the key personalities in the field and uncovers how nutritional science has gotten it so wrong. There aren't enough superlatives to describe this journalistic tour de force. I read it twice: once for the information and again just for the writing." (Michael R. Eades, M.D., author of the New York Times bestseller Protein Power)"The Big Fat Surprise delivers on its title, exposing the shocking news that much of what "everybody knows" about a healthy diet is in fact all wrong. This book documents how misunderstanding, misconduct and bad science caused generations to be misled about nutrition.

Anyone interested in either food or health will want to read this book." (Nathan Myhrvold, author of *Modernist Cuisine*) "Nina Teicholz has a gift for translating complex data into an engaging forensic narrative . . . [The Big Fat Surprise] is a lacerating indictment of Big Public Health . . . More than a book about food and health or even hubris; it is a tragedy for our information age. From the very beginning, we had the statistical means to understand why things did not add up; we had a boatload of Cassandras, a chorus of warnings; but they were ignored, castigated, suppressed. We had our big fat villain, and we still do." (The Wall Street Journal) "This is a striking study..which may well change the way you eat. I, for one, won't ever hesitate to order a steak again." (Financial Times) "Read Teicholz's excellent book and tell me you aren't convinced she's right." (Chicago Sun-Times) "Teicholz has done a remarkable job in analysing. . . [the] weak science, strong personalities, vested interests, and political expediency." (British Medical Journal) "This is the most provocative and assumption-shredding food book I've read in years.... All in all, a must read." (Tom Phillips Mother Jones) "It's so important for everyone to read this book." (Alice Waters) "Nina Teicholz's *The Big Fat Surprise* is an essential reading on the saturated fat debate . . . Blew my mind." (Malcolm Gladwell) "The Big Fat Surprise is a gripping narrative. . . Teicholz reminds us to critically question research and, more importantly, challenge unjustified extrapolation. . . Researchers, clinicians, and health policy advisors should read this provocative book." (Stuart Spencer The Lancet) "This book should be read by every nutritional science professional...All scientists should read it as an example of how limited science can become federal policy....well-research and clearly written....Teicholz compiled a historical treatise on how scientific belief (vs. evidence), nongovernment organizations, food manufacturers, government agencies, and moneyed interests promised more than they could deliver and, in the process, quite possibly contributed to the current world-wide obesity epidemic." (The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition)

Nina Teicholz is an investigative science journalist and author as well as an advocate for evidence-based nutrition policy. Her work has appeared in The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Independent, The Atlantic, and The New Yorker, among other places. She grew up in Berkeley, California, and now lives in New York.

Okay, look. I'm about as biased a reviewer as you can get. I read Gary Taubes' *Good Calories Bad Calories* in 2008 and was so moved by it that I radically overhauled my diet and started writing and researching about nutrition and obesity as a hobby. So when I had the opportunity to review an

advance copy of Nina Teicholz's Big Fat Surprise, I assumed I would enjoy it and agree with her conclusions... but I was in no way expecting to be so surprised and delighted by it... and so infuriated by the nasty nutrition politics that she exposes. Could a single man, Ancel Benjamin Keys, indirectly be responsible for more mayhem than any other figure from the 20th century? Was Keys' so-called "diet-heart hypothesis" -- which convinced a generation to eschew eating fat and turn instead to sugar, carbohydrate and processed vegetable oils -- one of the most deadly ideas of modern civilization? These and other troubling thoughts can't help but bubble to mind as you read Teicholz's nutritional thriller. I'll get to the juicy details in a second. But first, the overview: In the middle of the 20th century, thanks to Ancel Keys and several other arrogant researchers, we began to fear dietary fat as an agent of heart disease and other ills. So we revised our diet to be "healthier" and wound up, ironically, suffering through profound epidemics of obesity, type 2 diabetes and other metabolic diseases as a result. Teicholz's lucid summary of this disaster, *The Questionable Link Between Saturated Fat and Heart Disease*, was the #1 most read editorial in a recent issue of the *Wall Street Journal*. Her piece prompted conservative pundit, Rush Limbaugh, to do a lengthy expose on his talk show about the low fat diet myth. I hesitate to be optimistic, but we may be witnessing a wave of mainstream support for Teicholz and Taubes' signature ideas about nutrition and health. In addition to Limbaugh's harangue against Keys and the low fat diet, Dr. Oz -- arguably the most influential doctor on TV -- recently admitted that he was "wrong" about saturated fat being dangerous. Guest appearances by Dr. Peter Attia and Dr. David Perlmutter on Oz's show also attest to Oz's change of heart. Meanwhile, documentarian Morgan Spurlock (of *Supersize Me* fame) recently admitted: "I am not eating carbohydrates, no bread, no pasta, no sugar. I feel better than I ever have." Katie Couric's new documentary, *Fed Up*, which opens this weekend (as I write this review), also calls B.S. on the low fat high sugar diet and questions the idea that all calories are equal. And a massive meta-analysis of 72 studies published in February in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, which exonerated saturated fat in no uncertain terms, is just the latest in a growing fusillade of attacks on the conventional "eat less fat and more carbs" nonsense. We've still got a long road ahead, though, and many misconceptions persist. That's one of the reasons Teicholz's book is so important. Interview with Jeremiah Stamler

Stamler was a colleague and contemporary of Keys, and he and Keys advocated

aggressively for the diet-heart hypothesis. Stamler led the Multiple Risk Factor Intervention Trial (MRFIT), a \$115 million dollar experiment carried out from 1973-1982. It was a catastrophic failure for the diet-heart hypothesis, as Teicholz describes, yet its failure changed nothing about how the nutrition establishment operated. In an interview with Stamler, she pointed out the following paradox: a 1997 follow up to MRFIT found that the treatment group had higher rates of lung cancer than the control group did, despite the fact that 21% of the treatment group had quit smoking compared with 6% of the control group. Stamler responded: "I don't know! That could be a chance finding, it's just one of those findings. Troublesome. Unexpected. Not explained. Not rationalized! Fascinating stuff. Slaying Dean Ornish's Cherished Study Claiming That His Diet "Reversed" Heart Disease. Teicholz also interviewed Dean Ornish, the most celebrated modern advocate of low fat diets, and analyzed the study that made him a nutritional star. A 1998 article published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) helped make Ornish a household name. But this study was PLENTY flawed and got outsized pressed. Teicholz writes: "Curious about the findings, I called Key Lance Gould, director of cardiology at the University of Texas, who helped Ornish launch his research career and was a co-author with Ornish on the JAMA papers. On the phone, I could almost hear Gould's incredulity over how Ornish promoted their study results. "Most people do a study and get one paper. Dean does one study and gets a bunch of papers. There's a certain skill in marketing a small little piece of data. He's really a genius at PR." Fascinating Critical Reappraisal of Olive Oil and the Mediterranean Diet. We all "know" olive oil is one of the healthiest substances known to humanity. Right? Well, how did these beliefs develop, and is there good science to back them up? Teicholz's explosive expose on the origins of the Mediterranean Diet and our (modern) fetishization for olive oil will blow your mind. Here's a nice gem: "When [famous Harvard University nutrition professor] Walter Willett unveiled the Mediterranean pyramid in 1993, no controlled clinical trials of the diet had ever been done. The Scary Rise of Soybean Oil. Teicholz recounts the bizarre story of multimillionaire, Philip Sokolof, who bought a full page ad in the New York Times in 1988 trumpeting "THE POISONING OF AMERICA by saturated fats. She also reveals a deeply disturbing graph published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition showing how soybean oil consumption has skyrocketed. "Americans now eat over 1,000 times more soybean oil than they did in 1909, the

biggest change in the American diet. I could go on. The book is a brilliant whodunnit, and I cannot recommend it highly enough. Stop. Do not pass go: get your copy NOW.

The Big Fat Surprise is not a diet book or a book about dieting, though you will learn a lot about what you should and shouldn't eat if you read it. It's more of an exposé on how today's diet recommendations came to be and why they're so out of whack with reality and actual scientific research. The basic conclusion is that we should eat more fat and protein and fewer carbohydrates. That will help keep us healthy and lean. Important points the author brings out:- Our misunderstanding and misuse of cholesterol measurements often drives treatments and diet changes that are unnecessary and counterproductive.- Carbohydrates, even complex carbs (like those found in whole wheat products), are unhealthy when eaten in large quantities.- Overall, a diet based on meat (fatty is better than lean), eggs, and full-fat dairy products, including real butter, is better for you than one based on breads, cereals, potatoes, corn, rice, and sugary products (even fruit). This type of high-fat diet will also help you keep your weight down, believe or not.- Overuse of vegetable oils in restaurants, especially for deep-frying, could be especially bad for our health. As the author points out, we tend to jump to conclusions based on hype and promotion instead of science and long-term research. The Big Fat Surprise brings to light the results of the best, most current research and lays it out for you so you can make your own decisions about what, and what not, to eat. I'm having bacon & eggs!

The basic facts about the story of low-fat diet advice were no surprise. Personal research and experience had already led me to realize the benefits of a low-carb diet. However, this went way beyond the basics and I learned a lot! The Big Fat Surprise is really an excellent book. But it is not just facts that makes this so interesting. Teicholz puts it into a narrative of how smart and well-meaning people have affected all of us for the worst due to human ego and greed. It was kind of shocking to learn about some of the foibles that have happened concerning nutrition. She takes the story to the present day where similar behaviors are perpetuating a disaster in health. The Big Fat Surprise will contribute to eventually reversing the trends of metabolic syndrome. That's huge so this is a critically important work. I have already become more careful to avoid heat-processed vegetable and seed oils. I was dipping carrots in ranch dressing (soybean oil), but not now. The story of oxidized vegetable oils and how health institutions used to recommend trans fat was really interesting. I was aware of some of the issues with polyunsaturated oils though I had no idea that, after nearly getting rid of trans fats, we are still left with a lot of potentially toxic compounds. Nina

Teicholz has written a fantastic book. Anyone interested in health should make this one a priority.

Presented clearly and copiously documented. I have unwittingly been testing the main hypotheses in this book for years by eating a relatively high fat low carb diet - not as part of any "diet" but simply because the foods I liked to eat fit this profile. I always thought I would start taking the "official" dietary advice if I ever started gaining weight and occasionally wondered why I never did. Now I know! I am a 67 year old, 5' 11", 160 lb male with low cholesterol and normal blood pressure who wears the same 30W 32L size pants I have been wearing for 45 years. I told my athletic 28 yr. old "foodie" daughter about the book, and since abandoning her "grains and fruits" obsession for whole milk, prime rib, and sushi she has lost 15 lbs, gained strength, and loves the fact that she is "not constantly hungry" anymore.

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