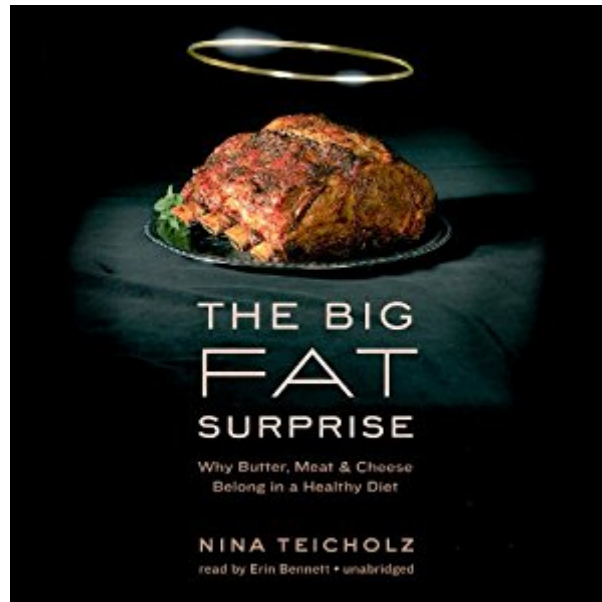


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The Big Fat Surprise: Why Butter, Meat, And Cheese Belong In A Healthy Diet



Synopsis

Dish up the red meat, eggs, and whole milk! In this well-researched and captivating narrative, veteran food writer Nina Teicholz proves how everything we've been told about fat is wrong. For decades, Americans have cut back on red meat and dairy products full of "bad" saturated fats. We obediently complied with nutritional guidelines to eat "heart healthy" fats found in olive oil, fish, and nuts, and followed a Mediterranean diet heavy on fruits, vegetables, and grains. Yet the nation's health has declined. What is going on? In *The Big Fat Surprise*, Teicholz reveals how 60 years of nutrition science has gotten it so wrong: how overzealous researchers have made basic scientific mistakes that, through a mix of ego and bias, allow dangerous misrepresentations to become dogma, and how scientists who dared oppose this consensus have been ostracized. For eight years, Teicholz has pored over the massive research literature and interviewed hundreds of leading experts to unravel the shockingly distorted claims of nutrition studies. She brings these researchers to life and shows how their ambitions, loyalties, and rivalries have undermined a field of research already full of difficult pitfalls. With a lively narrative style akin to Michael Pollan's in *The Omnivore's Dilemma* and the scientific rigor of Gary Taubes in *Good Calories, Bad Calories*, Teicholz convincingly upends the conventional wisdom about all fats. Her groundbreaking claim is that more dietary fat leads to better health, wellness, and fitness. Science shows that reducing the saturated fat in our diets has been disastrous for our health as a nation, and we can, guilt-free, welcome these "whole fats" back into our lives.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

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.

What can I say? I'm blown away by the impeccable research and fact presentation in this book. At first, I thought this would be a mildly interesting book with some interesting insight. Nope. Nina Teicholz brought out the big guns. She lays out her well substantiated thesis and systematically digs in. She "specifically avoided relying upon summary reports which tend to pass along received wisdoms" and she went "back to read all the original studies" [in some cases [seeking out] obscure data]. In other words, she meticulously lays out the evidence, slam dunking the point: fat ain't bad. My first instinct for a book that venerablizes one food would villainize another. This sort of happens here; those villains being: sugar, white flour, and refined carbohydrates. Most modern health articles seem to easily coincide with this. More paradoxical: "Our rush to banish animal fats from our diet has exposed us to the health risks of trans fats and oxidizing vegetable oils." This oxidization of vegetable oils was the big one for me. Now, about that yummy fat. Teicholz goes through the history of fat research, presenting hundreds of footnotes, showing previous cases of extreme selection bias, selective reporting, and overlooking of methodological problems.

Furthermore, these clunky studies were presented to the public by the AHA since 1961 and adopted by the USDA in 1980 as health recommendations. Time magazine put it on their front cover, newspapers proclaimed the goodness of low-fat diets, and everyone bought in wholeheartedly. Teicholz turns that tide through her research, not only using the source material, but often going back to interview the original researchers.

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