

The #1 Source for Nitrates in the Average Person's Diet is...

Bacon? Nope Ham? Nope Sausage? Nope

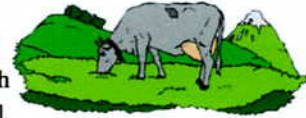
The #1 source for nitrates is **VEGETABLES**, comprising 90% of daily nitrate intake.

If your veggies came with a label, that label would say "Nitrates".

But why? Any farmer with his or her cattle on lush rotated pasture can provide insight!



That's Bessy, my best cow grazing down there in the back 40. I had to make sure her belly was full before I turned her and her herdmates out on that lush pasture. Doggonit anyway if it hadn't been cloudy for the last few days, I wouldn't have had to worry so much, but when those forages are really up'n growing and then all of a sudden slow down due to several days of clouds, I have to worry about Bessy taking in more nitrogen than she can process. Same worry in the fall after a good frost. Now I don't need no book-learnin' to tell you what can happen, but after learnin' the hard way years ago, I thought I'd crack a few to find out just what in tarnation is going on in ole Bessy. Jeepers was I in for a surprise! Turns out that after all these years, I thought I was feedin' ole Bessy when in fact I've actually been feeding billions of microbes in her digestive system. (Just don't tell the government though, otherwise they'll have me ID every one of 'em!) Anyway, as it turns out, ole Bessy's capable of converting excess nitrate to amino acids, as long as she's got the microbe population to do it! If I put her out on those forages after a period of cloudy days, the nitrogen that had built up in the plants due to a slowdown in photosynthesis might overwhelm her system. You could say that greens are to nitrates sort of like orange is to oranges! Knowing this doesn't make me want to stop feeding greens to Bessy. Heck, that would be like throwin' the baby out with the bath water! As long as I manage her consumption at different times, my Bessy thrives on her greens, nitrates and all.



Most of us have been casually consuming healthy high nitrate vegetables all along, never knowing we were consuming the lions share of our nitrates in this form. It is thought provoking to ponder our responses, had those high nitrate veggies been labeled as such! Just like ole Bessy's greens, vegetables contain higher levels of nitrates when picked either in the morning or after extended periods of cloudy weather. We know this as fact, yet there is no evidence suggesting the higher nitrate veggies have been harmful in the quantities we typically consume, the exception being infants who have not yet developed the means to convert these nitrates into amino acids. In an exhaustive search for truth, I have recognized what appears to be a feeding frenzy of copy and paste warnings on nitrates. This is not to say that there is no concern, but rather to recognize that many have promoted fear without substantiating their claims. Certainly, what is clear is that unusually high levels of nitrates in ground water will lead to methemoglobinemia. (In humans, "blue baby". In cows, the blood turns brown.) The circumstances that create this condition are uniquely different than those created when adults consume moderate amounts of vegetables and cured meats. Nitrates can also be converted into nitrosamines which have been associated with an increase of certain cancers. While many sources state this in bold letters, what many fail to disclose is that these nitrosamines are produced when the food is overcooked, flash cooked or burnt, (600 degrees F. or higher). This concern might be more understandable given the propensity for so many people to sizzle their bacon till it's crunchy. People who maximize the nutritious value from their food already know that overcooking and/or cooking too fast at too high a temperature greatly diminishes the nutritional value of the food - especially proteins such as meats. Rather than tell people not to overcook their ham and bacon, people are told not to eat them at all. Furthermore, no one appears to have considered the other implications associated with "processed meats". This category classifies generic hot dogs in the same breath with our pure meat organic products. Anyone interested enough to read this page knows that the ingredients and conditions utilized in creating generic hotdogs is suspect enough to warrant it's own extensive health study - nevermind the nitrates.



Some stores are now offering "nitrate-free" products which exerts pressure on the small farm to find a butcher who will do the same. The obstacle for the small farm and custom butcher lies with the fact that we sell bulk halves and whole, not by the cut. When selling by the cut, the product will generally be consumed shortly after purchase. In speaking with several "nitrate-free" processors, all recognized that the product should be consumed sooner than conventional cures. (Because this is new, some actually weren't sure.) But the plot thickens. Some "nitrate-free" processors have substituted ingredients such as beets in place of sodium nitrate. An investigation into beets reveals it to be one of the vegetables with the highest nitrate content - second only to spinach. The bio-chemical change will be the same for beet nitrates as it is for saltpeter nitrates! The microbes don't care what we humans call it. As nitrates are present in the beets the naturally-occurring microbes in the meat will break this down into nitrites and ultimately amino acids. Raisins are another substitute, yet some raisins, (golden) are sprayed with the preservative sulfur-dioxide. Did we accomplish the same thing yet are trading one concern for the other? On the other hand, without the track record of thousands of years of successful saltpeter cure, will these substitutes inhibit the growth of botulism? The primary objective is to enjoy the characteristics of smoked meats while eliminating pathogen development during smoking.

Right or wrong, the nitrate stigma is now firmly attached. We'd like for you to receive your meat the way that you want it. Every ounce of our meat is 100% free of added nitrates unless you provide other instruction. By taking the cuts in their purest form, you avoid the concern as well as save some money. You won't receive "ham", but rather, high-on-the-hog pork roasts which are absolutely fantastic and foolproof in a slow-cooker. In regards to bacon, have the butcher put this meat into the trimmings for either ground pork or the uncured sausage of your choice. MSG-free is available if you ask! When you need cured ham or bacon and insist on "nitrate-free", pickup a package at the store. Still, others may opt to enjoy their conventionally cured hams and bacon in moderation - cured with saltpeter, as has been proven to inhibit spoilage during cure for literally thousands of years.