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Welcome to this edition of the LFN newsletter. In this edition we will discuss labeling for meat products.

In January 2012, new labeling laws will place nutrition facts panels on meats. These panels will be the same ones you see on other foods such as soda, bread, and cereal. The new labels will list calories, calories from fat, total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, protein and vitamins for 40 of the most commonly purchased cuts of meat. Once these labels are in place, you will be better able to choose lower fat meats according to serving size.

But for now, you should know what the words used with meat mean. One of the most confusing parts is when someone sees a label claiming 90% lean. Well what does that mean? One thing to realize is that meats are labeled according to weight not caloric content. Take lean ground beef containing 10 percent fat, which means it's 90 percent lean. The percentage refers to product weight, not the percentage of calories from fat.

Four ounces of raw ground beef that is 90% lean (10% fat) is worth 199 calories, with 11g of fat. Since there are 9 calories per gram of fat, which would make this have 99 calories from fat. That's about "50%", not the 10% eluded too.

Four ounces of raw extra-lean ground beef 95% lean (5% fat) is worth 155 calories, with 5.6g of fat. That would make about 50 calories or close to a third of calories coming from fat.



The best way to read the label is to look for the serving size, and then how many calories per serving. Then look for the grams of fat, multiply that by 9. That will give you the fat calories.

I don't mean to pick on red meat. These claims apply to all meats, even poultry and pork. Limited amounts of red meat can be healthy and is a great source of high quality protein. Just make the best choice available. All red meats are not created the same. Try to go for flank, tenderloin, sirloin, filet mignon, or top round roast. Limit T-bone or prime rib. These meats have a higher fat content. When looking at the grades of meats go for the cuts that are labeled "select." A "prime" grade of meat generally has the highest fat content. For a healthier alternative to red meat you could try buffalo, bison, or venison.

Until next time,
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