



Grass Fed Beef

By Marcia Rae
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According to Mother Earth News, "E. coli 0157:H7, the toxic strain that caused the recent outbreak of food poisoning from bagged spinach, is a fairly recent discovery; it was unknown before 1982. Today, it is common in cattle and in their manure, and it's also now found in healthy goats, sheep and deer. But humans have a tough time with this bug. If we consume even a tiny speck of this new E. coli — even just 10 bacteria — it can make us very ill. Usually we recover, but a few will die or suffer permanent kidney damage."

According to Michael Pollen, author of *In Defense of Food* - "A concentrated diet of corn can give a cow acidosis. Unlike our own highly acidic stomachs, the normal pH of a rumen is neutral. Corn renders it acidic, causing a kind of bovine heartburn that in some cases can kill the animal, but usually just makes him sick. ... Over time the acids eat away at the rumen wall, allowing bacteria to enter the animal's bloodstream. These microbes wind up in the liver, where they cause abscesses. ... In this new, man-made environment new acid-resistant strains of E. coli, including 0157:H7, have evolved ... by acidifying the rumen with corn we've broken down one of our food chain's most important barriers to infection."

Water run-off from feed lots can live for months and show up in unpasteurized milk, juice, raw sprouts, lettuce, and spinach. But cows fed on grass are not as susceptible to carrying E. coli, and their waste stays on the field where it becomes part of a naturally decomposing ecosystem. A good example of this process in action is Sweet Home Farms, near the Holley School. All of their meat products are only grass fed.

Currently, on both a national and state level, we are re-looking at our food safety laws, supposedly with the intent of making sure our food supply is safe from this bacteria. But only an estimated 2,100 people are hospitalized each year with this illness, while the affect of these new laws could significantly hamper small producers of food. And it is not the small producers who are the source of this contaminant. Why is it that we don't, instead, shut down the cattle feed-lots that cause the real problem?

Munch On This – Do you want to support the feed-lot meat industry? You can vote with your dollars by buying locally produced grass fed beef. See WillametteLocalFoods.com.

PS - Munch Night, April 16 is local author, Elin England who will be cooking up local food with Penny of the Bramble House Restaurant. Elin's book, *Eating Close to Home, A Guide to Local Seasonal Sustenance in the Pacific Northwest*, is a perfect inspiration to eat local, healthy food. 6 p.m. Call the Bramble House to RSVP and save your spot as dinner seating will be limited -- 541-466-3511. Or just come for the discussion at 7 p.m.

PSS – See you at the Farmers Market opening April 17, 9 a.m. to noon. Music by Joe Hall.

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