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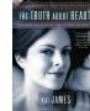


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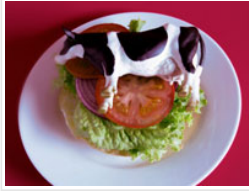
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- The New York Times: Bitten

## Cooking for Cholesterol

### Lower Cholesterol Naturally by Eating Less Meat

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(Getty Images)

By [Mara Betsch](#)

Can you be a vegetarian and still eat meat? Here are the confessions of a social carnivore.

My love affair with meat is *almost* over. Although I have packed a turkey sandwich in my brown-bag lunch for most of my life, I've been eating less and less meat over the years for a number of reasons.

For one, I know a plant-based diet is good for my health; in some studies, vegetarian diets have been associated with lower LDL, or bad, cholesterol and blood pressure, and a decreased risk of type 2 diabetes and some types of cancer. [High cholesterol](#) runs in my family (my mother recently discovered she had [high LDL levels](#)), plus meatless meals can be cheaper, have less impact on the environment, and are just plain easier when I'm dining out with my vegetarian boyfriend.

There's just one teensy problem: I actually like the taste of meat. Who doesn't want turkey on Thanksgiving or a bowl of chicken soup when she's sick?

And I'm not alone. The results of a national survey published in 2003 in the *Journal of Clinical Nutrition* found that a majority of self-described vegetarians eat meat once in a while. In fact, two-thirds of people who identified themselves as vegetarians ate meat, fish, or poultry on one or both of the two days they were asked to recall.

Although I stick to my meat-free diet 90% of the time, social occasions have posed some serious problems for my almost-vegetarian lifestyle. My mind says, Veggies only, but my mouth says, Meat, please! There was the chicken wing incident after a long-distance run and a bit of impossible-to-resist foie gras a few weeks ago.

I've always felt a twinge of guilt after a slipup, but I'm feeling less ashamed after speaking with Dawn Jackson Blatner, RD, the author of *The Flexitarian Diet: The Mostly Vegetarian Way to Lose Weight, Be Healthier, Prevent Disease, and Add Years to Your Life*. According to Blatner, there's a name for people like me, and that's a social carnivore.

She says that less meat is nearly as good for your health as no meat. Even if I cut out just red meat, it can help keep my ticker in tip-top shape. A 2009 study in *Archives of Internal Medicine* found that if people were to slash their daily red meat intake to about 9 grams per 1,000 calories (roughly a bite of a Quarter Pounder a day), it would result in an 11% [decrease in cardiovascular disease](#) mortality in men and a 21% decrease in women.

The [saturated fat](#) in meat is a big culprit in patients with high cholesterol. So do your heart a favor and use these six dietitian-approved tips to cut down on meat and [lower your cholesterol naturally](#).

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