

JUNE 2016

# MECCA

## **BIG FAT LIE**

About 20 years ago some pro cyclists told me an interesting story. While they were preparing for another big day of racing during the Tour DuPont in Atlantic City, the teams had gathered for breakfast in a large dining room when a Russian cyclist walked in and filled his plate with a colossal pile of bacon and eggs and nothing else. My friends probably wondered if the Russian rider would have a heart attack that day. At the time Americans were being told in no uncertain terms that high-fat foods clogged the arteries and caused heart disease. The guy's breakfast looked like a heart attack waiting to happen. Nevertheless, the Russian rider devoured his mountain of high-fat food, then dominated the race that day to win by a huge margin. My friends didn't know what to make of it. Perhaps it was a fluke. Or, on the other hand, maybe the Russian rider knew something the Americans didn't. For more than half a century, going back to at least 1961, Americans have been told by doctors, medical authorities, the news media and our own government that the fat in our foods was making us gain weight and causing heart disease. Today, however, that idea is being reexamined and challenged, and the nutritional policies of America look like they might be about to change in a big way.

In July of 2002, Gary Taubes—a Harvard and Stanford-trained scientist and writer—published a major article in the New York Times that raised the question of whether low-fat diets were actually causing the obesity epidemic sweeping our country. Taubes, who titled his Times article “What if It's All Been a Big Fat Lie?,” revealed that he had originally become interested in the subject of nutrition when he was trying to lose weight himself. Upon trying out a high-fat diet, Taubes lost weight so quickly that he was stunned by the results, and he began researching the subject in earnest. When his Times article came out in the summer of 2002, it turned out to be one of the most influential newspaper articles ever written on the

subject of food. In his Times article Taubes cited an abundance of evidence that the fat we eat actually helps control our appetites and keeps us from gaining weight. What's more, by cutting fat from our foods, we were actually causing ourselves to gain weight. In his research Taubes found numerous experts in the scientific community who felt the same way he did, but they feared that it would destroy their careers if they said so. The idea that fat consumption was bad for us was so well-established in America that anyone who questioned it was considered a fool. Nevertheless, Taubes' article was so well-written, carefully researched and thoroughly convincing that it opened the minds of doctors and researchers around the country once it appeared. Follow-up studies on the subject soon began to show up in the Times, and they repeatedly showed that Taubes was right. When low-fat diets were tested against high-fat diets, the high-fat diets worked better; the people on the high-fat diets lost more weight.

Past research on nutrition commonly focused on how dietary fat was thought to be the main cause of obesity and heart disease. Since fat had more calories, gram for gram, than sugar, it was widely believed to be the biggest culprit in causing obesity. It sounded like it made sense. What's more, there were some studies that seemed to suggest that there was a statistical correlation between the prevalence of heart disease and the amount of fat consumption in some countries.

In the last few years, however, various researchers have gone back and reexamined those original studies and found that they were terribly flawed in their design and their analysis. The man who first proposed that fat in the diet caused heart disease and obesity, a man named Ancel Keys, had apparently rejected any evidence that didn't match his theory—and there was a lot of it. Nevertheless, Keys was so successful in convincing others that his research was valid that he persuaded the U.S. government to adopt his point of view, and his low-fat-diet advice became the cornerstone of U.S. nutritional policy for more than 40 years. In fact, last year, for the first time ever, the U.S. nutritional guidelines panel actually increased the suggested amount of



dietary fat Americans should consume in their foods.

Besides helping mountain bikers lose weight so they can go faster uphill and in races, adding saturated fat to one's diet can offer other benefits for cyclists. Saturated fat in the diet is a critical nutrient for hormone production in the body and thus for testosterone formation in men. Increasing the amount of saturated fat in the diet raises testosterone levels in men naturally without violating anti-doping rules. Professional bodybuilders commonly add coconut oil, which is very high in saturated fat, to their diets to increase the size of their muscles and reduce belly fat. In the same way, higher testosterone levels can benefit mountain bikers too. The hormone boosts endurance, raises pain tolerance levels, makes muscles grow larger, increases physical strength, improves agility and causes abdominal fat deposits to shrink.

A further side effect of adding fat to one's diet is that bones get stronger. It makes one wonder if the increasing threat of osteoporosis in women might be connected to the reduction of fat in their diets for the last 50 years.

The latest studies, including *The Big Fat Surprise: Why Butter, Meat and Cheese Belong in a Healthy Diet* by Nina Teicholz (Simon and Schuster, 2014), are now causing experts to reexamine and even reverse the low-fat-diet recommendations of the last 50 years.

In her book, Teicholz examines the evidence and lays out a very convincing argument that it was really the sugar, the trans fats, the hydrogenated shortenings, the liquid vegetable oils and the misguided nutritional advice that brought on the obesity epidemic in America. To her credit, she presents an extremely well-researched, highly readable history of science gone wrong and offers a very convincing argument that butter, meat, cheese and eggs are the healthiest foods we can eat.

**MECCA  
Contact Us**

# SUMMER!!!

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*Always looking for  
stuff to put in this  
newsletter - send  
me something!*

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CALENDAR-

July 19 - Tuesday - Cleveland Days Bike  
Ride - 6:00 p.m. Cleveland City Park -  
Offering a sideway ride for the littles and a  
10 mile and 20 mile ride for the biggers.

May 13-14-15 - Was our 30<sup>th</sup> Annual MECCA  
Spring Festival!!! - John Wesley Powell Museum -  
Green River, Utah. It WAS A BLAST - once  
again. Saucer Basin was great fun - so were all  
of the other rides. Only blood I saw was a few  
who were "Bit by the Dragon" - Coming Down  
Black Dragon on Sunday. But the smiles were all  
intact.

WHAT ELSE IS GOING ON?

Let death be what takes us, not a lack of  
imagination. - Dr. B.J. Miller

"Good judgement comes from experience and  
experience comes from bad judgement." -  
Uncle Val Geissler

**Life is like riding a  
bicycle. To keep your  
balance, you must  
keep moving.**

## CLUB BUSINESS

#####  
\* Plan fun rides then email time &  
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so we can invite club members to  
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