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Omega-3s now in Bacon and Pork Chops

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For those who love pork but are trying to watch their health, there maybe a new solution out there to solve your nutritional dilemma. Dr. Jing Kang a Harvard Medical School researcher, one of the 17 authors of the paper which appeared in the online edition of the *Nature Biotechnology Journal*, modified a microscopic worm that converts Omega-6 into Omega-3 giving it the ability to function in mammals. Significant amounts of Omega-3s are believed to stave off heart disease. This means that pork, the other white meat, laden with Omega-3s could quite possibly help brain development, reduce your risk of Alzheimer's, and ward off depression as well.



This development in hogs signals the opportunity to do the same in other animals such as chickens, turkeys and cattle. We have already seen eggs, rich in Omega-3s, drive a huge increase in the sales of what was a dormant category in the supermarket.

There is a slight problem though: the Food and Drug Administration has never approved food derived from genetically engineered animals. The FDA views these items as similar to medicine, meaning extensive testing is needed before approval. And that is a good thing.

Although there is no doubt that genetic modification of plants has created more bountiful harvests, there are issues that have yet to be addressed. France is one of the outspoken critics of genetically modified (GM) foods saying that they have not been properly tested and that it is too soon to say if the consumption

of GM foods is safe. Not only that, but GM plants have different characteristics, for example resistance to herbicide which encourages the usage of higher quantities of herbicide which causes side effects in not only humans but the environment. The question just begs to be asked ... if GM plants have side effects, why wouldn't GM animals?

What if genetically modifying pork also has the unintended consequence of increasing their resistance to viruses, thus forcing viruses to adapt into more virulent strains that may more easily pass on to people. Will GM animals, with similar genes, be as healthy as non-GM animals which have more diversity in their genes to deal with nature's selective forces? Remember what happened to Dolly – the first cloned animal?

Genetically modified Omega-3s from pork, which is higher in fat than tuna for example (which is naturally high in Omega-3s) might have a different consequence on the human body. And lets not forget that pork also has saturated fats and cholesterol which increases heart disease risks, so is adding Omega-3s a way to balance the bad with the good? Obviously having a label that says "rich in Omega-3s" would encourage more consumption of pork ... and more nutrition confusion.

It seems that most Americans are accepting of GM crops including soy and corn, but GM animals is another matter. We believe that GM animals are a benefit to science enabling researchers to study (and hopefully cure) human diseases ... but as for consumption ... a lot more research needs to be done before we would take a bite.

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