

THE NEW BAD FAT

There's a new fat to fear, and it's hiding in the most unexpected places. Read on to find out when cheesecake can actually be your healthiest choice!

BY MARGIT FEURY



The good, the bad—and the deadly

■ **For years, saturated fat** (found mostly in meat, eggs, cheese, and milk) has been tops on the must-avoid-fats list. But now, there's mounting evidence about an even more dangerous type of fat: trans fat. Generally found in processed foods—in which fats and oils are hydrogenated to extend shelf life—trans fat raises cholesterol and damages blood vessels significantly more than saturated fat. (Trans fat also occurs naturally, in small amounts, in beef and dairy products.) Worse still is that trans fat is hard to track, since

it's not listed on nutrition labels. Your best bet? Scan ingredients lists. "If 'hydrogenated' or 'partially hydrogenated' oils are among the first words, that food contains heaps of trans fat," says Cindy Moore, R.D., of the Cleveland Clinic Foundation in Ohio.

■ **But don't avoid fats altogether.** Seek out heart-healthy monounsaturated fat (found in olive oil and avocados) and polyunsaturated fat (in walnuts, tofu, and seafood). These 'good' fats may even prevent certain cancers and wash away cholesterol deposits on artery walls.

GREAT NEW FAUX FATS

Soy fat: Healthy Econa—a mostly soy-based oil—is all the rage in Japan. It reportedly slides right through your body without the cramping and diarrhea associated with Olestra. It could come to the U.S. as early as 2003.

Low-fat fries: French fries made from rice flour absorb 25- to 50-percent less oil—and taste just as good! They'll likely hit frozen-food aisles within two years. What's next? USDA food scientists are now trying to create guilt-free doughnuts.

What's your fat IQ?

Trans fat is tricky. Can you guess which foods are healthier?

grilled hamburger OR grilled cheese

Healthier choice: The burger. Three-and-a-half ounces of ground beef has 19 total grams of fat and 1 gram of trans fat. Grilled with margarine, the sandwich has 51 total fat grams and 5 grams trans fat (4 from the margarine, 1 from the cheese).

stick margarine OR butter

Healthier choice: Both have 10 fat grams per tablespoon, but margarine has 3 grams trans fat—and butter has zip! For even less saturated fat, use light whipped butter.

3.5 oz. candy bar OR 3.5 oz. vanilla ice cream

Healthier choice: The ice cream. It has 12 grams of mostly saturated fat, but only 0.5 grams of trans fat. A Twix-like candy will cost you a whopping 31 fat grams—7 of which are trans fat.

store-bought cheesecake OR store-bought yellow cake

Healthier choice: The cheesecake. It may have 30 fat grams, but a slice has only 1 gram trans fat. Commercially prepared cake and frosting is filled with hydrogenated oil and can equal 43 total fat grams and 6 grams trans fat! Cake mixes are just as unhealthy; instead, bake from scratch with butter.

3.5 oz. crackers OR 3.5 oz. walnuts

Healthier choice: The walnuts win, hands down. They're loaded with polyunsaturated fat; in the average snack cracker, one-third of the fat is trans fat from hydrogenated oil.

7 oz. microwave popcorn OR 7 oz. tortilla chips

Healthier choice: The tortilla chips. They have less total fat than microwave popcorn (56 grams versus 64) as well as half the amount of trans fat (8 grams instead of 16).