

Natural Health Tips

Salmon - Is it always a "superfood"?

Good fats – bad fats, we all heard that story already many times.

So after years of believing we need to avoid any fat in order to be lean and healthy, we now understand that some fats are not only not-harming, but actually essential to our health.

One of these good-fat containing foods is salmon. It is rich in omega 3 fatty acids, the unsaturated, good type of fat.

But what many of us do not realize is that in order to get these fatty acids, the fish needs to swim in cold, deep arctic waters. That's how these acids are formed in its tissues, in the fat layer beneath its skin. In other words – it needs to be WILD. The pink salmon meat gets its color from the fatty acids. The darker the pink, the richer the fat content. Sockeye salmon has about 16% fat content and its meat is a darker pink than the King salmon, that has about 5% fat content.

The salmon raised in farms is paradoxically fatter (up to 50% more fat) than the wild fish, but has a much lower omega 3 content. Its fat is saturated fat, not "good" omega-3 fat – due to its different lifestyle (raised in bins packed with other fish, not being able to swim around so much, plus it is fed on grain pellets, not on its natural wild diet). The farm-raised salmon also contains food colors to cause it to look like the wild one. Well, almost like the wild one. (The chemicals used to turn farm raised salmon pink are canthaxanthin and astaxanthin.)

You wouldn't buy the farm-raised salmon if its appearance was gray instead of pink, right?

Well, I stopped buying it when I realized where its pretty pink color is coming from!

(See June 2008 Tip Of The Month for more about good and bad fats.)