

Iron levels in venison highest of all meats

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New study offers hope for 97% of women lacking iron in diet

Tired, lacking energy, feeling faint or breathless? Then you're not alone. A whopping 97% of UK women aged 19-49 aren't getting nearly enough iron in their diet* – and those symptoms are all common complaints of iron deficiency, the most common nutritional deficiency in the world.*

So why is this a problem? Iron is an essential mineral responsible for a huge number of vital roles in our bodies, including carrying oxygen from the lungs to all organs and tissues.** Prolonged lack of iron can lead to iron-deficiency anaemia, a disorder which in severe cases can cause angina, headaches and leg pains.

The problem is that it isn't easy to get most dietary sources of iron into our bodies since they are difficult to absorb. A long course of tablets is usually recommended, but common side effects include constipation and nausea. And vegetarian foods that are known to be high in iron, like broccoli and leafy spinach, contain a form that is not easily absorbed, as well as other containing other dietary components that can impede absorption.

Now new research has identified an easy way to get the maximum benefit from iron-rich foods. Venison stands out as the highest source of iron in all meats tested - an average serving will set you well on the way towards the recommended daily goal of 8.7-14.8 mg(Dept. of Health, 1991).

Dr Kelly Johnston, a nutritionist at Leatherhead Food International, an independent research organization that carried out the analysis, said: "Iron intakes from dietary sources in women in the UK are way below what is considered adequate. This study has shown venison has a significantly higher amount of iron per 100g when compared with other types of meat. As such, including venison as part of a healthy, balanced diet may help to improve the iron status of those women who currently don't get enough from their diet."

Test results showed venison contains 2.4mg of iron per 100g of meat, compared to 0.2mg in chicken and 1.4mg in beef. It also has 2 1/2 times as much iron as broccoli and spinach and the type of iron that venison contains, haem iron, is much more easily absorbed – eat your heart out Popeye!

But the best news is that venison is now easy to shop for and available all year round. Campaigns like Game-to-Eat, dedicated to improving our enthusiasm for game meat, have led the way with a succession of quick to cook game recipes, which use venison and other game meat in everyday recipes including pasta, kebabs and stir-fry dishes. And supermarkets now stock a broad range of game, including venison joints, cubes, mince, sausages and burgers.

Alexia Robinson, of Game-to-Eat, said: "We have known for a long time that venison is not only delicious but also low in fat and good for you. This research on iron levels now gives all women another excellent reason to choose venison over other meat."

*National Diet & Nutrition Survey (NDNS) carried out in GB 2000-2001.

**Henderson et al 2003

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