



METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Raw beef liver could mean trip to hospital

Feeling fatigue after a bout of COVID? Eat small healthy meals and, if you are not, consider taking a multiple vitamin-mineral supplement, be active — even if you don't want to get off the couch — and drink plenty of water.



KATHY KOLASA

Some of my friends at the gym have been eating portions of raw beef liver daily, praising the health benefits and help with muscle growth. They learned about this through the “Liver King.” Is it safe to eat raw beef liver daily? Is there something I should know before trying it myself? CC, Greenville

There are lots of crazy diet ideas spread in gyms. Thanks for asking before gorging on raw liver. I know of a patient in our clinic whose “bad” cholesterol skyrocketed when he followed this “training tip.” None of my swimming friends are talking about liver. I asked Caleb Oakley, a fourth-year Brody medical student to answer your question. Here is what Caleb learned.

Consuming raw beef liver carries the risk of infection, regardless of how “fresh” the organs may appear. It is impossible to know whether bacteria are present inside animal organs or meat just by looks alone. For safety’s sake, cook the liver.

Campylobacter, an infectious bacterium, can survive in raw beef liver even when frozen. This type of bacteria, even in exceedingly small amounts, can cause gastroenteritis, or inflammation of your gut and bowels. You could experience symptoms like fever, nausea, diarrhea and vomiting and possibly land a trip to the emergency department.

This infection also has the potential to result in autoimmune reactions causing arthritis and/or ascending paralysis — muscle weakness starting in your legs and going up to your arms. Countries around the world with cultures that enjoy raw animal consumption have had issues with people consuming beef liver. In fact, in 2012, Japan banned restaurants from serving raw beef liver following an E. Coli outbreak.

It’s not just liver, food safety experts tell us that beef, pork, and chicken are best cooked to reduce the risk of infection by killing off any harmful pathogens. Use a meat thermometer to know that your meat is safe. Per USDA, beef liver should be cooked until an internal temperature of at least 160F is achieved. Download the chart of food safety temperatures at <https://www.fightbac.org>. The chart is in many cookbooks, too.

Getting too much of some vitamins and minerals can be harmful, too. Although amounts vary in raw beef liver, one serving, or 3.5 ounces has over five times the amount of Vitamin A you need in a

day. Beef liver may have over 15 times the daily recommended dose of copper. These high levels can damage

your own liver if eaten daily and might also lead to other liver problems like portal hypertension — high pressures in the blood vessels surrounding the liver; ascites — fluid swelling in the abdomen; and esophageal varices — dilation of the veins in your esophagus.

Pregnant women are cautioned against getting too much Vitamin A, especially early in the pregnancy, when high levels can disrupt the development of the growing baby’s nervous and cardiovascular system. If you eat too much cholesterol and have any underlying heart disease or issues with cholesterol, it would be best to limit beef liver in your diet.

We don’t put much weight behind the dietary habits of the self-proclaimed health/fitness expert “The Liver King.” His health claims lack evidence-based research and are based on the lifestyles of “our tribal ancestors” and how lions and wolves eat animals. We found no evidence in the medical literature to support the superiority of raw beef liver consumption for health or muscle growth.

There are no quick food fixes or supplements to help you reach fitness goals faster. Muscle growth is best created and sustained through a consistent exercise routine along with following a healthy eating approach that will give you all the nutrients needed for better health without the risk of infection or toxicity, like DASH or the Mediterranean diet.

Beef liver, when cooked and consumed in limited amounts can fit in a healthy diet, especially since it is an excellent source of iron, containing roughly 4.8 mg per serving. Men need 8.7 mg and women of childbearing age need 14.8 mg daily.

Talk with your primary care doctor or your Registered Dietitian Nutritionist, who have the training to explore with you the risks and benefits of introducing any new exotic foods or supplements into your daily routine. They can help you assess your risks and benefits of diet trends that claim faster muscle growth or weight loss.

If you want to treat your liver like a king, it’s best to talk with someone who isn’t trying to profit from your health goals.

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Skewer flavor with pomegranate molasses

Skewered morsels of meat make for delicious finger food, especially when grilled. Small pieces of chicken, beef or lamb, threaded on skewers, present a bounty of edges and corners that crisp and caramelize for finger-licking goodness. Flavorful marinades enhance grilling success. Not only do they tenderize and infuse the bites of meat with sweet and tangy flavor, but the sugars in the marinade encourage crisping and caramelization. In general, a good marinade will balance sour, sweet, salt and heat. This is achieved with tart acidic ingredients, such as citrus and



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vinegar; a touch of sweetness from sugar, honey, maple syrup or fruit juice; and an aromatic infusion of spice, which can run the gamut in flavor and inspiration depending on your taste and desired heat level. This recipe is a nod to North African and Levantine cuisines, in which pomegranate molasses is a staple and a key marinade ingredient. Pomegranates have a



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Flavor abounds when skewered chicken is grilled with a pomegranate molasses marinade and paired with a yogurt tahini sauce.

distinct sweet-and-sour flavor comparable to cranberries. Pomegranate molasses is made from the reduction of pomegranate juice. It’s rich, syrupy, fruity and puckery. Sugar and lemon are often added to balance and brighten the tangy pomegranate. The molasses adds a glossy sheen to glazes and a satisfying astringency to sauces, stews and marinades.

You can make your own pomegranate molasses if you have access to pomegranates or pomegranate juice. Alternatively, you can purchase pomegranate molasses in well-stocked supermarkets and Middle Eastern specialty shops. It’s a bottle worth having on hand for other uses. It will enhance salad dressings, sauces and dips. It’s a traditional ingredient

in mouhamara, a Syrian red pepper and walnut dip. Add a spoonful to meaty stews for a desired “oomph” in flavor, such as fesenjoon, an Iranian chicken and prune stew, or a classic beef stew. Brush on roasted vegetables for a kick, or simply add a bit to cocktails or sparkling water.

Pomegranate Glazed Chicken Skewers With Yogurt Tahini Sauce

Active time: 25 minutes
Total time: 35 minutes, plus marinating time
Yield: Serves 6
Marinade Ingredients:
1/3 cup pomegranate molasses
2 tablespoons honey
2 tablespoons soy sauce
2 tablespoons lemon juice
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 teaspoon Sriracha

1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon ground coriander
2 to 2 1/2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs
Kosher salt and black pepper

Sauce Ingredients:
1/2 cup whole-milk European-style yogurt
2 tablespoons tahini
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
1 small garlic clove, minced
1/4 teaspoon ground cumin
1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
1/8 teaspoon black pepper
Chopped pistachios, for garnish
Chopped mint leaves, for garnish

Steps:

Whisk the marinade ingredients. Set aside 1/4 cup for basting.

Cut the chicken thighs into bite-size pieces. Place in a bowl, pour in the remaining marinade and turn to coat. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours or up to 24 hours.

Whisk the sauce ingredients in a small bowl. Refrigerate until use.

Prepare the grill for direct cooking over medium heat. Thread the chicken on presoaked bamboo skewers. Lightly season with salt and black pepper.

Grill the skewers until the chicken is cooked through and charred in spots, 6 to 8 minutes, rotating as needed. In the last minute or two, baste with the reserved marinade.

Serve with the yogurt tahini sauce. Garnish with pistachios and mint.

Lynda Balslev is an award-winning cookbook author; recipe developer; tester and editor. Taste Food is distributed by Andrews McMeel Syndication.

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