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### Poached Wild Salmon with Avocado Pico

Wild salmon

1 medium tomato

¼ c chopped cilantro

¼ c chopped onion

1 avocado, removed  
from skin and chopped

1 garlic clove

Salt to taste

Lime juice to taste

Fill a pan with water  
that will cover the  
salmon by about an  
inch. Bring water to a  
simmer, add salmon.  
Cook about 10 minutes  
or until the fish is  
opaque.

Combine tomato,  
cilantro, onion, avocado,  
garlic, salt and lime  
juice to create pico.

Remove salmon from  
the pan and top with  
pico. You can also make  
tacos from this meal.  
Enjoy!



## Cholesterol – villain or victor

Hippocrates once said, "Let food be your medicine and medicine be your food." It seems we have strayed from this idea and turned some foods into villains, cholesterol being a major one of discussion. Cholesterol is a fat found in the cell membranes of all body tissues, and it is transported in the blood plasma of all animals.

From 1979 to 1992 in Scandinavia, 16 young athletes died of sudden cardiac arrest. The athletes who died had very low levels of cholesterol. This "epidemic", it was called, changed the notion that cholesterol alone is a risk for heart disease. Several years following the deaths of these athletes, Swedish researchers tried to find the cause of their sudden deaths. Postmortem examination revealed inflammation of the heart caused by a chronic infection of Chlamydia pneumonia.

Since this discovery, researchers have found other organisms responsible for an increased risk of heart disease. The organisms trigger inflammation which has become a better predictor of heart disease. Free radicals, hypertension, infections and microorganisms can damage the inside of an artery which can cause a small rupture or tear. The body recognizes the irritation and sends fibrin, a stringy, insoluble protein to patch up the wound by sealing and coating it. Cholesterol then comes along to add its final coat to seal off the dangerous site and a coating of plaque forms, thus the reason cholesterol has gotten the bad rap for causing heart disease. Yes we still need to pay attention to our good and bad cholesterol numbers, but really only 10% of the population has a genetic predisposition to high cholesterol. Our focus should be on reducing inflammation.

The average person makes about 75 percent of blood cholesterol in his or her liver, while only about 25 percent is absorbed from food. In a study of over 80,000 female nurses, Harvard researchers actually found that increasing cholesterol intake by 200 mg for every 1,000 calories in the diet (about an egg a day) did not appreciably increase the risk for heart disease. Long vilified for their high cholesterol content, eggs are now making a bit of a comeback. While it's true that egg yolks have a lot of cholesterol, and therefore may slightly affect blood cholesterol levels, eggs also contain nutrients that may help lower the risk for heart disease, including protein, vitamins B12 and D, riboflavin and folate. Powdered eggs, and milk, actually increase bad cholesterol because they have been heated to such high temperatures, leading to oxidation, which damages the fat.



(Powdered milk is added back into reduced fat milks to give them their body. Powdered milk and eggs are also used in various packaged products.) And this is where it all goes wrong. Fat in any source that has been heated to such high temperatures becomes damaged and then promotes inflammation in the arteries. High cholesterol levels are just our body's way of telling us it needs more cholesterol to protect us from the altered, free radical-containing fat or injury. Cholesterol is an antioxidant (meaning it is good for health) and tries to protect us from arterial damage. Here are some other important facts on cholesterol:

- Cholesterol is present in every cell in the body; it strengthens cell walls and assists in the exchange of nutrients and waste materials across the cell membrane.
- The brain and spinal cord, the central nervous system, contain nearly one-fourth of the body's store of cholesterol. As much as 50 percent of the myelin (the insulating sheath on many nerve fibers) is cholesterol. Cholesterol is essential for the conductivity of nerve impulses.
- Bile acids, formed from cholesterol, are vital for proper fat digestion.
- Cholesterol is the precursor of stress and reproductive hormones.
- Surface cholesterol makes the skin resistant to chemicals and disease organisms thus hindering their entry into our pores. The cholesterol stored in our skin assists in the conversion of sunlight to vitamin D.
- Cholesterol is needed for proper function of serotonin (our feel-good chemical) receptors in the brain. Low levels of cholesterol have been linked to aggressive behaviors, depression and suicidal tendencies.
- Mother's milk is especially rich in cholesterol and contains a special enzyme that helps the baby utilize this nutrient. Babies and children need cholesterol-rich foods throughout their growing years to ensure proper development of the brain and nervous system.
- Dietary cholesterol plays an important role in maintaining the health of the intestinal wall.

So what should you do? Eat food that nature provides; our bodies know what to do with this food. The more altered from its natural state the more negatively altering it will be to the body. Remove all trans fats and hydrogenated fats from your diet – fried foods, margarine, Crisco, packaged or processed food containing oil because these oils have become damaged. Eat foods that are anti-inflammatory like fruits, vegetables, raw nuts and seeds, fish, flax oil or olive oil. Eat more whole grains, legumes, slow cooked meats and foods because they haven't been damaged by such high heat. (Just like it knocks you out in the summer, excess heat is knocking a lot of nutrition out of your food).

May food be your medicine...

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