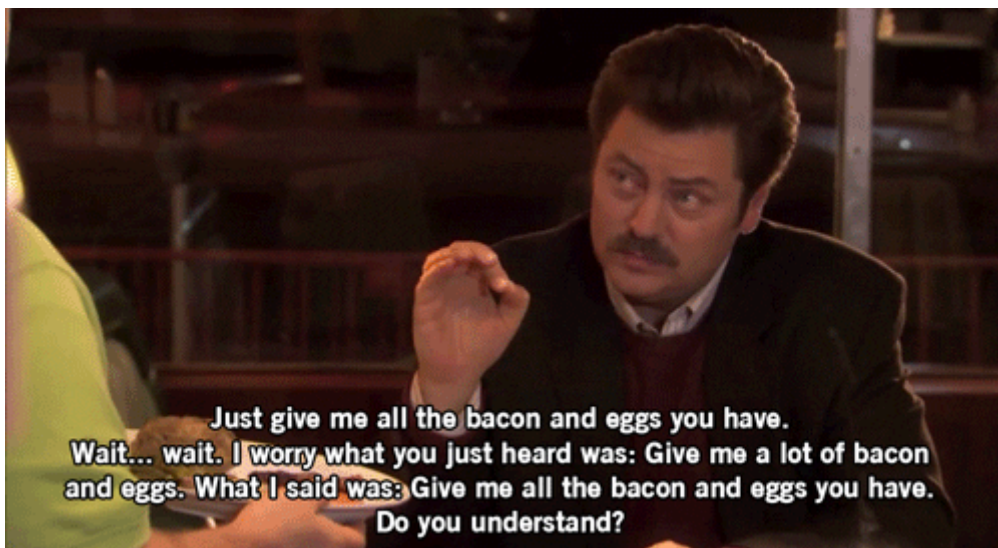


# 15 Economic, Historical, and Health Facts About Bacon

Many may not realize that thousands of Americans annually celebrate National Bacon Day every December 30. Honoring a breakfast staple with a day of observance might seem odd, but bacon is not your typical food.

The tasty snack has become a cultural obsession and [a fixture of American pop culture](#). Who can forget eight-year-old King Curtis on ABC's *Wife Swap* running away when he is told he can't eat bacon? Or Ron Swanson, after being served a rather meager-looking steak, [ordering a waiter](#) to "just bring me all the bacon and eggs you have"?

To help you better understand the majesty of bacon, we've compiled a list of 15 economic, historic, and health facts about this wondrous food.\*



## 1. Americans spend \$5 billion on bacon ... annually

America is currently in the midst of a decades-long trend of

[“bacon mania.”](#) In 2018, bacon accounted for \$4.9 billion in US sales, up from \$4.7 billion the previous year and an increase of [more than](#) 20 percent from 2012.

## **2. Research suggests there are cognitive benefits of eating bacon**

Most health research focuses on bacon’s negative impact. (So typical, right?) However, some research shows positive health outcomes associated with bacon consumption. A University of North Carolina [study](#), for example, found that choline, a micronutrient in bacon, is key to healthy brain development in unborn babies. You got that, moms? You have an excuse to eat bacon.

## **3. Bacon is environmentally friendly**

Americans don’t appear to need more reasons to eat bacon (beyond its deliciousness), but they might have some. Turns out bacon and pork have a *much* smaller carbon footprint than beef. One [recent study](#), for example, concluded that growing beef requires 28 times more land and 11 times more water than bacon and pork (as well as other foods such as eggs and chicken.)

## **4. Bacon is 86 percent cheaper than it was 100 years ago**

In 2014, *Fox News* [reported](#) that bacon prices hit “a new all-time high” after reaching “a whopping \$6.11 per pound.” As bacon lovers worldwide already knew, the price, which soon fell when consumers and producers adjusted, was abnormally high – up 40 percent from just two years before. However, bacon wasn’t really more expensive than ever.

As Marian Tupy [has shown](#), the price of bacon, when adjusting for wages and inflation, is about 86 percent less today than it was 100 years ago. (Think about this next time you're at the grocery store selecting a package of delicious bacon, and give thanks to your free-market economy.) If *Fox News* had used [real prices instead of nominal prices](#), they would have found that those "all-time high" prices were still a fraction of the real cost of bacon in, say, 1919, when the nominal price was \$0.53 a pound and average nominal wages were \$0.25 an hour.

## **5. Bacon first appeared in China thousands of years ago**

Americans may love their bacon, but the savory snack predates the discovery of the New World by thousands of years. Food historians [say](#) salted pork belly first appeared in China around 1500 BC.

## **6. Americans eat 18 lbs. of bacon ... annually**

A typical American consumes 18 pounds of bacon each year. That weight is slightly less than your average car tire.

## **7. The word "Bacon" has German and Frankish roots**

As previously mentioned, bacon was popular in China and, later, in the Roman world. But they didn't call it bacon, of course. The Romans called it Petaso, and I don't know what the Chinese called it. But in the Middle Ages, Germanic people began to refer to cured pork as "[bak](#)," meaning the back of a pig. The Franks adapted this to "bakko," which evolved to "bakkon" in English.

## 8. Bacon is really nutritious

Bacon is high in saturated fat and contains additives such as nitrates and nitrites that cause concern among scientists who fear [it could be linked](#) to gastric cancer (more on that later). However, overall bacon is a hearty and nutritious food packed with essential vitamins and nutrients. As *Healthline* [points out](#), bacon contains:

- Vitamins B1, B2, B3, B5, B6, and B12
- 37 grams of high-quality animal protein
- 89 percent of the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for selenium
- 53 percent of the RDA for phosphorus
- Plenty of minerals such as iron, magnesium, zinc, and potassium

In fact ...

## 9. There are fewer calories in three slices of bacon than a can of pop

A serving of bacon is three average-sized slices. Each serving, the *San Francisco Chronicle* [reports](#), contains 7.5 grams of protein; nine grams of fat (3.8 of which are saturated); 30 milligrams of cholesterol; 435 milligrams of sodium; and 120 calories. A 12-ounce [can of Pepsi](#), meanwhile, has zero grams of protein and 150 calories.

## 10. A serving of bacon accounts for about one-fifth of the recommended

## daily fat

To put that nine grams of fat figure (see above) into perspective, the RDA of fat is [44-77 grams per day](#). That means three pieces of bacon counts for at most 20 percent of your daily recommended fat intake. Sure, the saturated fat intake is higher than one would like, but hardly off the charts.

## 11. 70 percent of bacon is consumed at breakfast

Bacon is popular in restaurants where it's used in a variety of ways by chefs – on sandwiches and burgers, pasta and appetizers. Still, it remains predominantly a breakfast food. In fact, [70 percent](#) of all bacon is consumed at breakfast, surveys show.

## 12. A majority want to make bacon America's national food

America's enthusiasm for bacon goes well beyond pseudo churches and fringe academies, however. A [survey](#) conducted in 2014 by Smithfield Foods, the world's largest pork supplier, found that 65 percent of Americans would make bacon America's "national food."

## 13. There's a bacon academy in the U.S.

Ancient Romans and Chinese may have enjoyed bacon, but they probably didn't have bacon academies. The United States does. [Camp Bacon](#), held annually in Ann Arbor, Michigan, allows bacon enthusiasts to listen to speakers, take cooking classes, and learn about all things bacon. If you think that's crazy, consider this next factoid ...

## 14. Some Americans worship bacon (sort of)

Few people likely know that there is officially a bacon religion. That's right. The United Church of Bacon has more than 25,000 members around the world. The church, whose official symbol is two slices of bacon worshipping the sun, has even performed hundreds of weddings. True, the faith was launched as a parody religion by skeptics, but that doesn't necessarily mean its tried and true believers don't take its [seventh commandment](#)—to praise bacon—seriously.

## 15. The World Health Organization says bacon can cause cancer, BUT ...

Scientists have [long suspected](#) there was a link between bacon and cancer. For many, the link became official in 2015, when the World Health Organization (WHO) [concluded](#) that every daily portion of processed meat (including bacon) raises the risk of colorectal cancer by 18 percent. What many overlooked was how small the relative risk was, according to the 22 medical researchers.

"We're talking about relative risk," Lisa Cimperman, a registered dietitian at University Hospitals Cleveland Medical Center, [told](#) *Time* magazine. "That means that, for a healthy person, eating bacon every day will raise their overall risk of colon cancer from something like 5% to 6%."

## Trade-Offs and Bacon

So is eating bacon good or bad? Like many things, it's all about trade-offs.

In economics, it's the idea that we sacrifice one thing to gain another. By foregoing bacon, one can lower the intake of

saturated fats and marginally lower one's risk of cancer and [heart disease](#). But by doing so she'll also miss out on certain vitamins and nutrients important to human bodies (not to mention its delicious taste). Better understanding the benefits and costs of bacon can help individuals make informed decisions, but people will ultimately decide for themselves if the benefits outweigh the costs. For now, at least, Americans are siding with Ron Swanson.

*\*Disclaimer: This writer endorses the consumption of bacon and believes it should be eaten at every reasonable opportunity. However, he (thankfully) is not a nutritional expert.*

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*This article was originally published on FEE.org. Read the [original article](#).*

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