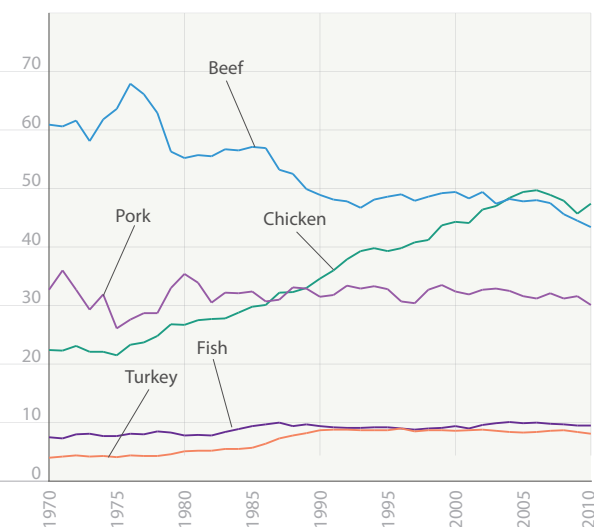


Meat, Poultry, & Seafood: B

Pounds per person



The good news: beef hasn't been this low since the 1950s. That may cut the risk of heart disease and colon cancer and help curb greenhouse gas emissions.

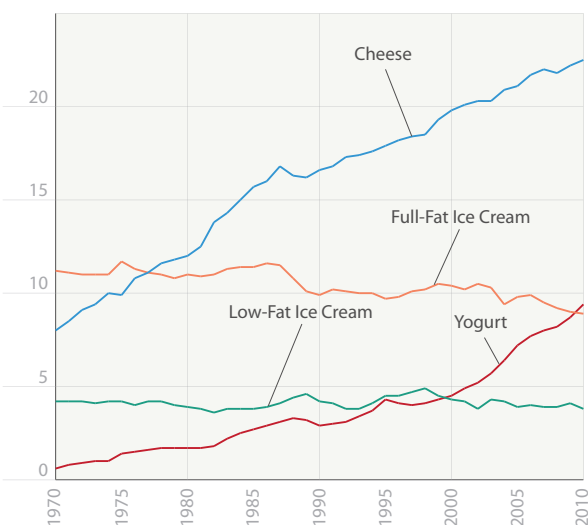
On the downside, chicken can't seem to pull away from beef. What's more, red meat (mostly beef plus pork) is at 74 pounds per person per year. That still trumps white meat (poultry plus seafood), at 65 pounds.

We're on the right track, but we're moving too slowly away from burgers and friends.

Dairy: C-

Pizza, burgers, burritos, nachos, quesadillas. There's cheese in our salads, our sandwiches, our soups, and our pizza crust. Since 1970, we've gone from 8 pounds per person per year to 23 pounds. That's bad news for our arteries and waistlines. On the bright side, full-fat ice cream is dipping, and (mostly low-fat) yogurt is booming. We're up to 9 pounds per person. If only it weren't so sugary.

Pounds per person

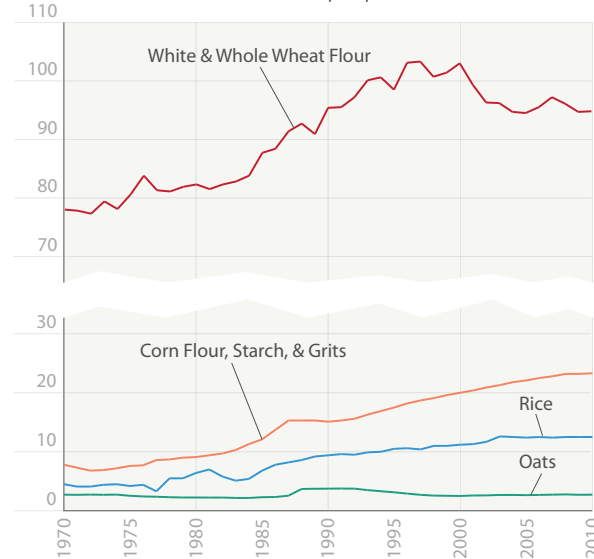


Grains: C

Breads, bagels, cereal, pasta, rice, crackers, granola bars, pizza, burritos, wraps, pretzels, paninis, cookies, scones, muffins, and other grain foods are still going gangbusters. All told, we eat 109 pounds of flour per year. Thanks to the rise in corn flour, that's not too far from the 116-pound peak of 2000 (right before the low-carb craze).

We need to switch to whole grains...and cut back on all grains.

Pounds per person



The Changing American Diet

A REPORT CARD

BY BONNIE LIEBMAN

This isn't a report card you'd want to post on the fridge. Fruits and vegetables have barely budged, the cheese craze shows no signs of slowing down, and we're eating 450 calories more per day than we did in 1970.

Yes, there are some signs of improvement. We're cutting back on sugars, shortening, beef, whole milk, and white flour. And we're eating more chicken and yogurt. But we're moving slowly.

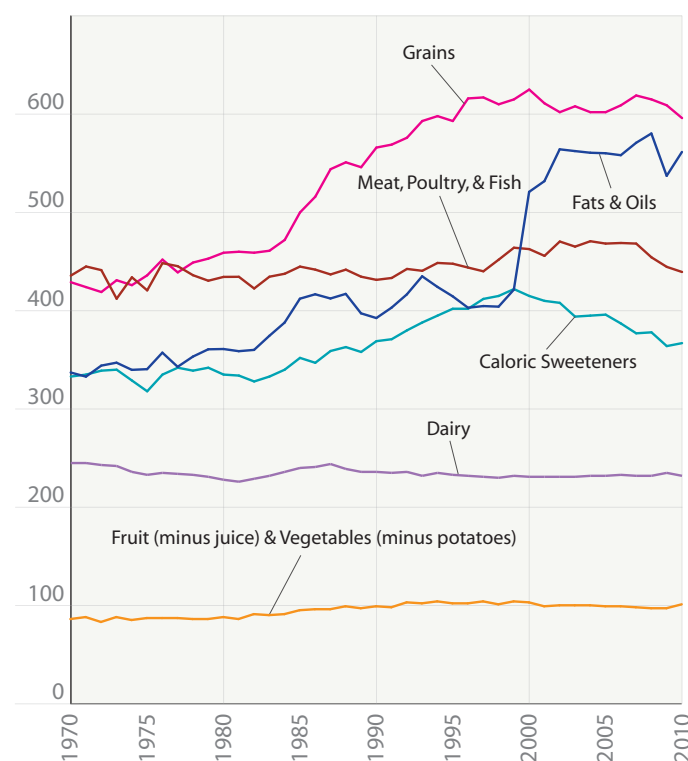
One way to see the bigger picture is to look at where our calories come from. Americans have gone from eating an estimated 2,075 calories a day in 1970 to scarfing down 2,535 calories in 2010. (From 2000 to 2007 we were as high as 2,600 calories a day.) Most of the increase has come from eating more flour, more

cheese, and more fats, with an extra shot of sugar thrown in.

Bottom line? It's time to eat less—less red meat, less cheese, less starches, and less sweets (and the shortening that they often contain).

If Americans want straight A's, they've got a little work to do.

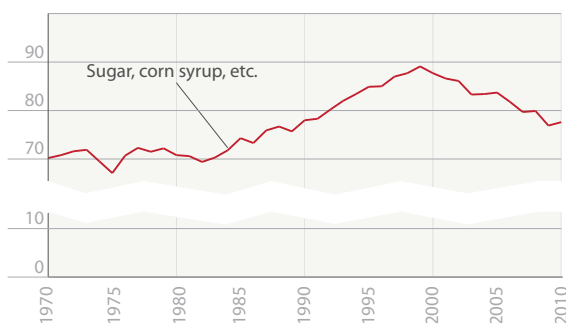
Calories per person per year



Source for all graphs: U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Sweeteners: D+

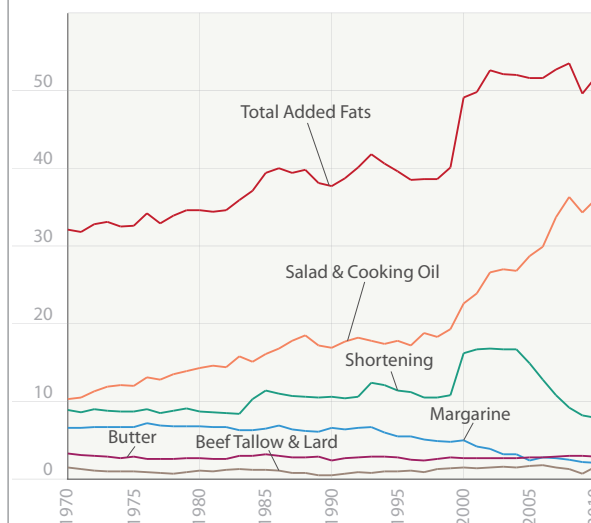
Pounds per person



We're coming down from a sugar high of 89 pounds per person in 1999. That mirrors the drop in sugary soft drinks over the last decade or so. Still, 78 pounds of mostly sugar and high-fructose corn syrup is too much. A big chunk of our added sugar comes from sodas and other sugar-sweetened beverages, which are linked to a higher risk of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. Who needs 'em?

Fats & Oils: B+

Pounds per person



Ignore people who say that we've been on a low-fat diet. Total fats and oils have climbed fairly steadily since 1970. (In 2000, the number of companies reporting data to the USDA jumped, so the rise was probably less steep than it appears.)

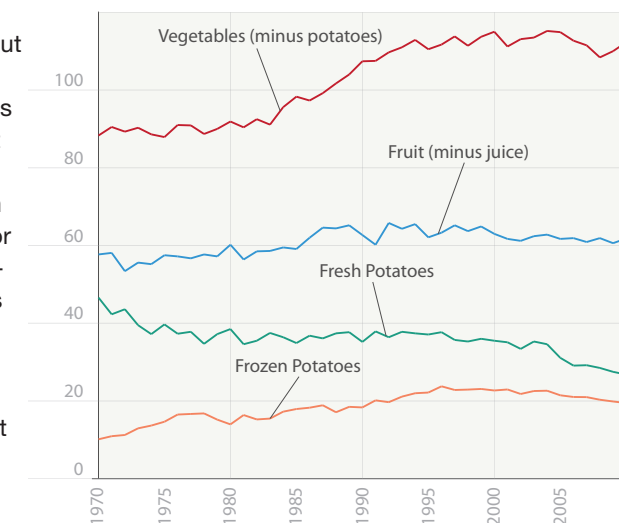
The good news: shortening and margarines now have less trans. And (largely unsaturated) salad and cooking oils have replaced (more saturated) shortening. Less shortening would be even better. Who needs all those pies, pastries, and cookies?

Fruits & Vegetables: B-

We started eating more vegetables (not counting potatoes) in the 1980s, but the rise has stalled. And fruit (not counting juice) is still pretty much where it was in 1970. We need to replace sandwiches with salads, swap starches for veggies, and trade cookies, cupcakes, and chips for fresh fruit.

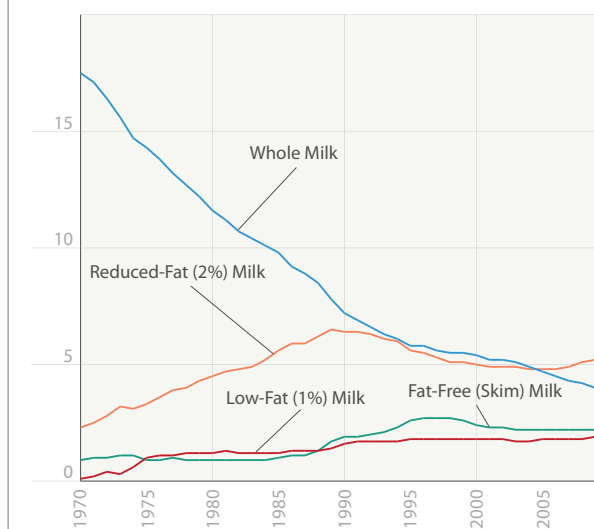
Potatoes have been flat (if you add fresh plus frozen). At least we're not eating more french fries.

Pounds per person



Milk: B

Gallons per person



In 1970, the average American drank 21 gallons of milk per year. Now we're down to 13 gallons. And whole milk has plummeted from 18 gallons to just 4. That's a success story. But fat-free and low-fat (1%) milk still account for only a third of the milk we drink, so we could do even better.

Unfortunately, we're still consuming much of the butterfat we used to get from whole milk. The difference: now we get it from cheese.