

November 10, 2015

John Hinderaker has a post on a great lesson about the growing availability of oil. ... *So for thirty-eight years, our government has been predicting the demise of fossil fuel energy and subsidizing, to varying degrees but amounting cumulatively to many billions of dollars, solar and wind energy. What has the result been?*

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Road & Track on how to get the best rental car.

Consider this: Whenever you plan a trip, you spend hours poring over the details. The right hotel location and amenities. Which airline to fly. Restaurants, excursions, nightlife. Yet after you've done all of that, you select the cheapest rental car you can find and accept whatever happens. What's that about?

You can do much better. How do I know? I'm on the road for work more than 40 weeks a year. I've landed at 76 different airports in the United States, and, in the past five years, I've rented nearly 150 cars. For me, travel isn't just an activity, it's a way of life. So when I see people making mistakes with their travel planning, I feel obligated to help. Here are some pointers and rules that will keep you in the best cars at any rental agency.

Pick Your Own Car

Whenever possible, you should choose a rental car agency that allows you to pick your own car—either a specific model when you make your reservation, or from a much wider selection upon arrival. Otherwise, you stand a good chance of getting a Sonic LS just because the attendant behind the counter is having a bad day. Hertz is the only company that allows you to pick a specific model online when you make a reservation, but it's only from the class that you've paid for—no upgrades.

The best option: Several companies have special programs that give you a choice of cars at larger locations upon arrival, including National's Emerald Aisle and Hertz's Gold Choice. You can sign up to be a member of their reward programs at no cost to you. Once you do, you can pay the midsize rate and then you're free to select any car that they have in their Emerald Aisle or Gold Choice areas. With National, after 12 annual rentals, you get bumped up to Executive, which gives you an additional row of upgraded vehicles to choose from. This can often mean an upgrade of two or three car classes for no additional charge. It's not uncommon for me to make a reservation for an intermediate car—think Sentra or Corolla—and drive out in a premium Explorer Limited or a Cadillac CTS. ...

Telegraph, UK on why other checkout lines move faster. And gives tips on picking.

... *How to choose the best queue:*

- *Pick a queue that is mostly men they are less patient than women and more likely to give up*
- *Veer to the left most people are right-handed so we have a natural inclination to turn right. Do the opposite, queues on the left may be emptier*
- *Avoid the supermarket express lane what dictates speed is the number of people in front of you, not the number of items they are buying*
- *Select a cash-only queue. Studies show cash is quickest*
- *Don't overthink it sometimes you are best off just joining the queue with fewest people in it*

Smithsonian on how monster pumpkins are grown.

Waiting in line for their weigh-in, a plethora of lumpy, pale pumpkins sag on their pallets like deflated balloons. But to become a world heavyweight champion, looks don't really matter. When it comes to this competition, decades of intense selective breeding have banished the petite, perfectly ovoid and brilliantly orange fruits with a focus on one exclusive trait: massive size.

Every year, an international community of giant-pumpkin farmers loads up beastly gourds on trailers, carting them to local fairs and weigh-ins for a chance at the title.

The size of these pumpkins is unimaginably large to me—I can barely grow tomatoes without making heart-breaking tears through their delicate flesh, innards dripping to the ground. So I went to scientists and competitive pumpkin growers to ask this burning question: How do you make a monster pumpkin?

The current world record is held by Beni Meier, a Swiss accountant by day, who grew a pumpkin that weighs in at 2,323.7 pounds, roughly the same amount as a small car. ...

Whadayaknow? The governments advice to avoid whole milk was wrong.

Investor's Business Daily is first on the subject.

If you look up "whole milk" in the government's official Dietary Guidelines, it states pretty definitively that people should only drink skim or 1% milk. "If you currently drink whole milk," it says, "gradually switch to lower fat versions."

This is the same advice the government has been issuing for many years. And it's wrong.

Research published in recent years shows that people "might have been better off had they stuck with whole milk," according to a front-page story in the Washington Post on Wednesday. "People who consumed more milk fat had lower incidence of heart disease."

The story goes on to note that the government's push for Americans to eat a high-carb diet "provokes a number of heart disease risk factors." ...

Many more details from [WaPo's Peter Whoriskey](#). Remember, never trust the government. It's run by A students. You know, the ones who sat in the front row.

U.S. dietary guidelines have long recommended that people steer clear of whole milk, and for decades, Americans have obeyed. Whole milk sales shrunk. It was banned from school lunch programs. Purchases of low-fat dairy climbed.

"Replace whole milk and full-fat milk products with fat-free or low-fat choices," says the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, the federal government's influential advice book, citing the role of dairy fat in heart disease.

Whether this massive shift in eating habits has made anyone healthier is an open question among scientists, however. In fact, research published in recent years indicates that the opposite might be true: millions might have been better off had they stuck with whole milk.

Scientists who tallied diet and health records for several thousand patients over ten years found, for example, that contrary to the government advice, people who consumed more milk fat had lower incidence of heart disease.

By warning people against full-fat dairy foods, the United States is "losing a huge opportunity for the prevention of disease," said Marcia Otto, an assistant professor of epidemiology at the University of Texas and the lead author of large studies published in 2012 and 2013, which were funded by government and academic institutions, not the industry. "What we have learned over the last decade is that certain foods that are high in fat seem to be beneficial." ...

Power Line

[The Greatest Energy Chart Ever. Seriously.](#)

by John Hinderaker

The original energy crisis goes back to the Jimmy Carter administration. There was a shortage of gasoline, which the Carter administration made worse by fixing oil prices. Cars lined up around the block to pump what little gasoline was for sale. Carter, of course, had a solution. And it sounds remarkably familiar, as Willis Eschenbach points out at [Watts Up With That?](#) We can't keep relying on fossil fuels. They're running out! We need to subsidize renewables!

From Carter's April 1977 energy speech:

The oil and natural gas we rely on for 75 percent of our energy are running out. In spite of increased effort, domestic production has been dropping steadily at about six percent a year. Imports have doubled in the last five years. ... Unless profound changes are made to lower oil consumption, we now believe that early in the 1980s the world will be demanding more oil that it can produce.

The world now uses about 60 million barrels of oil a day and demand increases each year about five percent. This means that just to stay even we need the production of a new Texas every year, an Alaskan North Slope every nine months, or a new Saudi Arabia every three years. Obviously, this cannot continue.

But it did continue; in fact, it exploded.

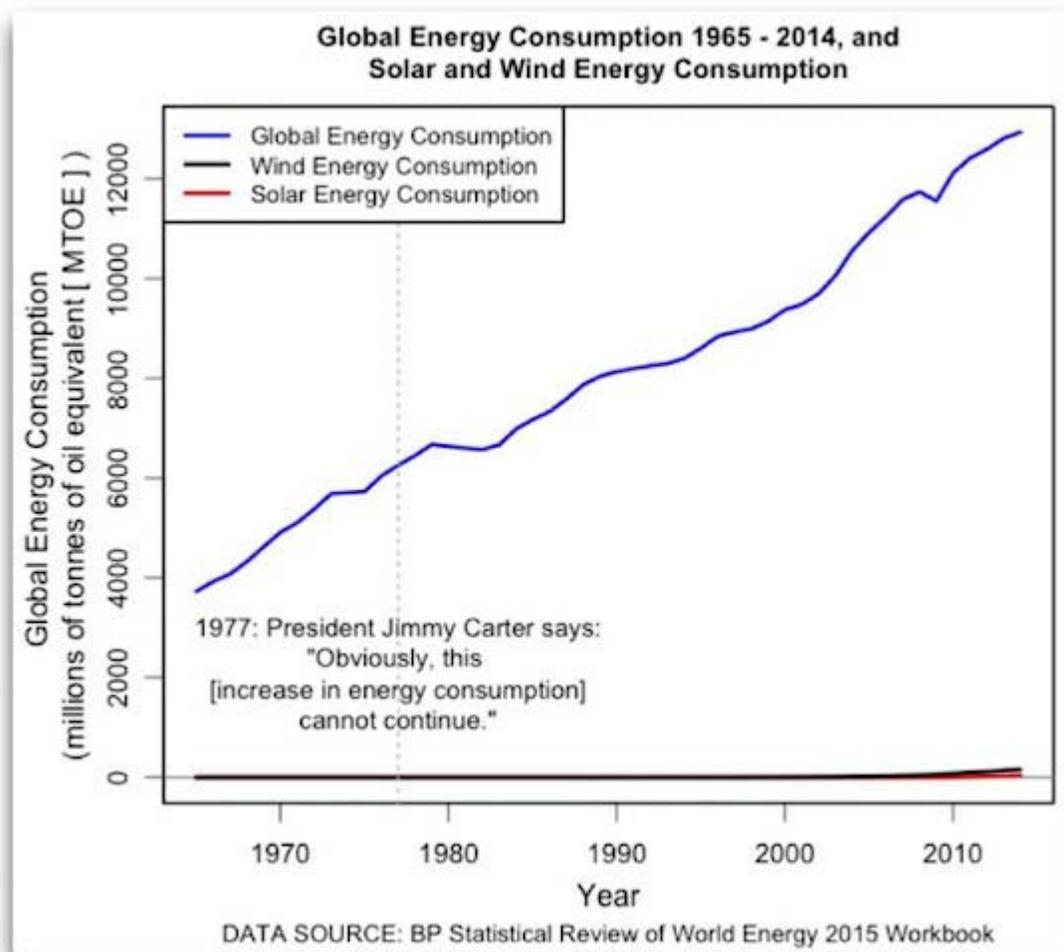
His conclusion was that “We must start now to develop the new, unconventional sources of energy we will rely on in the next century.” So he started throwing money at the problem. His “solution” involved, inter alia:

- A “gas-guzzler” tax on automobiles
- A rebate on electric vehicles
- A gasoline tax
- Subsidies to buses
- Taxes on aviation and marine fuel

Sound familiar? It should, as these are all parts of the current war on fossil fuels.

So for thirty-eight years, our government has been predicting the demise of fossil fuel energy and subsidizing, to varying degrees but amounting cumulatively to many billions of dollars, solar and wind energy. What has the result been?

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Road and Track

[How To Make Sure You Always Get the Best Rental Car](#)

When traveling, what you drive matters just as much as where you sleep at night.

by Bark M.

Consider this: Whenever you plan a trip, you spend hours poring over the details. The right hotel location and amenities. Which airline to fly. Restaurants, excursions, nightlife. Yet after you've done all of that, you select the cheapest rental car you can find and accept whatever happens. What's that about?

You can do much better. How do I know? I'm on the road for work more than 40 weeks a year. I've landed at 76 different airports in the United States, and, in the past five years, I've rented

nearly 150 cars. For me, travel isn't just an activity, it's a way of life. So when I see people making mistakes with their travel planning, I feel obligated to help. Here are some pointers and rules that will keep you in the best cars at any rental agency.

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Whenever possible, you should choose a rental car agency that allows you to pick your own car—either a specific model when you make your reservation, or from a much wider selection upon arrival. Otherwise, you stand a good chance of getting a Sonic LS just because the attendant behind the counter is having a bad day. Hertz is the only company that allows you to pick a specific model online when you make a reservation, but it's only from the class that you've paid for—no upgrades.

The best option: Several companies have special programs that give you a choice of cars at larger locations upon arrival, including National's Emerald Aisle and Hertz's Gold Choice. You can sign up to be a member of their reward programs at no cost to you. Once you do, you can pay the midsize rate and then you're free to select any car that they have in their Emerald Aisle or Gold Choice areas. With National, after 12 annual rentals, you get bumped up to Executive, which gives you an additional row of upgraded vehicles to choose from. This can often mean an upgrade of two or three car classes for no additional charge. It's not uncommon for me to make a reservation for an intermediate car—think Sentra or Corolla—and drive out in a premium Explorer Limited or a Cadillac CTS.

Unless you have a serious corporate discount at another agency, there's no reason to choose, well, not to choose. However, be warned: Emerald Aisle and Gold Choice aren't always available at smaller airports, so you might be better off picking your car in advance with Hertz if you're going somewhere with more cows than people.

Research Your Arrival Airport

Your arrival airport can affect the inventory, so don't be afraid to call and ask about options ahead of time. I find that Miami International Airport, for example, typically has nothing available that one could consider an upgrade. On my most recent trip to MIA, I was given a choice between five different Chrysler 200s. I ended with an "S" model and was thrilled—not good. However, Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood almost always has an endless selection of V6 Mustang convertibles. All things being equal, I always pick FLL. While Detroit Metropolitan's selection isn't bad, Gerald R. Ford in Grand Rapids is much better. My last visit to GRR, I had my choice of four different colors of Ford Flex Limited editions.

Where you arrive can also affect your travel plans. As most people have surely experienced, the physical location of the cars differs from airport to airport—some are located at the terminal, and others are a long bus ride away. Any time that you encounter an off-site set up (LAX, Detroit, George Bush in Houston, Cleveland Hopkins, and Denver come to mind) it can throw off your schedule for your entire trip—if your meeting lasts until 5:00, you probably can't catch a 7:00 flight if you have to return your car first. If flight costs are similar, try flying into one of the smaller surrounding area airports that have cars located at the terminal. For example, New York City's LaGuardia airport has off-site cars *and* a dismal selection. Newark's cars are a short monorail ride away and they normally have many more options.

Time of Arrival Matters

Time of arrival into both the smaller and bigger locations can make a huge difference in your selection choices. If you show up in Fort Wayne, Indiana, on the last flight of the night, you'll be lucky to get a car at all, much less anything desirable. Try to arrive a little bit earlier if you want an improved selection.

What To Choose

National's Emerald Aisle can be a bit overwhelming at times, especially in an airport like Atlanta that has literally a hundred cars lined up in a row like pageant contestants. If you're at a location such as Cleveland, Detroit, or Houston, you're probably entering the lot with a busload of fellow business travelers also on the prowl for the best car. These are some common rental cars you should consider for your situation:

Best vacation hauler: Got a family vacation planned with a herd of kids, each with their own carseat and not-so-collapsible stroller? Try for a Flex, but don't sleep on the magic of the Kia Sedona—the latest models are widely available and are mostly ignored by business travelers. *Do not* grab the keys of that Nissan Rogue Select. It's not the Rogue you'd find at your local dealership, but rather a rental-only reincarnation of the previous generation, complete with buzzy CVT and minimal storage.

Best business-trip ride: Flying solo for a business trip and don't want to make it look like the company blew the budget when you pull up to a client? Ignore those Premier selection cars at the front of the lot and grab the Chevrolet Impala V6 LTZ or the Toyota Avalon XLE. You'll have a gutsy V6, good fuel economy (some companies are requiring employees to rent designated fuel-efficient vehicles now), and a car that connotes just the right level of successful when you take your client to lunch. Don't be tempted by the rows of Altimas, Malibus, and Cruzes. I've yet to find a Chevy Cruze RS with a comfortable seating position.

Best recreational vehicle: Heading to the beach for the weekend? Of course you'll want to grab a Wrangler if you can, but don't overlook the Kia Soul Plus for pure fun. The stereo is solid, the storage is good for a couple of coolers and duffels, and you'll feel younger and even a little bit hipper just by driving one. The Wrangler's stablemates, the Patriot and Compass, however, should be avoided at all costs. I once rented a Jeep on the big island of Hawaii and was rewarded with an underpowered Patriot upon arrival. Do not want.

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Live a Little

The rental car lot can also be a great place to step outside your comfort zone. I've never owned a truck of any kind, but I love to rent them when I'm traveling. Why not? Maybe you've always wanted to own a pony car or a convertible, but it's never been the practical choice for your daily commute. Grab a V6 Premium Plus Mustang convertible and drive around with the top down just because you can. Who cares that it's 64 degrees out? You're on a trip! This is fantasy time, baby. Mix it up a little, and it might turn that dreadful business trip to Beaumont, Texas into a mini vacation.

Find The Right Trim

Of course, just because it's the right model doesn't mean it's the right trim level. Having a car without Sirius XM or no USB port can be a real drag if you've got to live with it for a week—there's a big difference between a Camry LE and an XLE when it comes to livability. Unless you're a savant-level car geek, it's impossible to have every trim level of every make and model of car memorized, so keep these tips in mind:

More From Road & Track

Check the features: Before you commit to a car, take the time to look for the features you want. Does it have leather? A sunroof? USB ports (critical for charging devices and providing entertainment)? If you're used to some of these basic creature comforts in your car, you might be surprised to find out that many rental-spec trim levels don't include any of this stuff. Don't be in a hurry unless your fellow travelers are snapping up cars around you. Take your time, sit in a few cars, and grab the one you like best.

Test the radio: Just because it has a Sirius XM radio on the window, don't assume that the subscription is active. If the car's been in service for more than 90 days, the sat radio service has likely been suspended. Stick the key in the ignition, turn on the radio, and see if your only choice is "XM Preview."

Go with more letters : If you're in a hurry, just remember this: The more letters you see on the trunk, the better. Simple. XLE is better than LE. LTZ is better than LT. SL is better than S. And the word Limited can't be a bad thing.

Be Wary of the Upsell

Finally, you'll be hit up for a few upsells at the exit gate when you drive off of the lot. You'll be asked if you want to prepay for fuel. Never do this. If you're on a business trip, your expense department might not approve it, and it rarely works out to your advantage financially anyway. Just fill up about 10 miles away from the airport (never at the nearest gas station—they inflate the rates up to a dollar or more per gallon) before the return.

You'll be asked if you want GPS. Don't assume that just because your car has MyFordTouch or UConnect that you have navigation in the car. Most rental agencies disable that feature by removing the SD card.

You'll be asked if you want GPS. Don't assume that just because your car has MyFordTouch or UConnect that you have navigation in the car. Most rental agencies disable that feature by removing the SD card. However, if you're a modern human being, chances are that you have a smartphone you can use through a USB port or connect via Bluetooth—just check if you've flown into a state with strict no handheld phone laws. Many of the new Impala LTZs are equipped with Apple's CarPlay, which I've found to be incredibly helpful for navigation, as well as scrolling through my iPhone's Spotify playlists.

You might also be asked if you want TollPass (if you're in some urban areas like Houston or Miami, it will automatically be included), which is a little device that velcros to the window and allows you to zip through the toll booths without stopping. There's a daily rental fee for these in addition to the tolls you incur, so make sure that your route includes toll roads before you say yes.

The best choice? Just to say no everything except insurance. Insurance is tricky. If you're traveling for business, chances are that your corporate rate already includes insurance. Some credit cards, including American Express Platinum, will include insurance for you if you make your reservation with their card. However, if you don't have insurance through your employer or credit card, you may wish to opt for it. Remember, even though your normal auto policy might cover the damages, you'll be charged a daily rental rate for every day that the car you've damaged cannot be rented by the agency, which could end up being thousands of dollars.

Sometimes the Best Choice Is No Choice

As much as you might want to experience a different car, there are definitely cities where it might just be best to take a taxi or Uber. By the time you've paid for hotel parking in NYC or Chicago, you're looking at adding an additional \$60 a day in parking on top of your rental rates, not to mention the hassle of trying to find another parking spot once you get wherever you're going. But in Miami, Detroit, or other more spread-out urban areas, you don't necessarily want to be stuck waiting for an Uber for very long. Sometimes, convenience is worth the extra money.

Telegraph, UK

Why do all the other supermarket checkout queues always move faster than yours?

A new book claims to have the answer: It is simply because you only notice it if you are in one of the slower queues

by Victoria Ward.



A familiar scene for most of us...

It is an age-old mystery that has baffled frustrated shoppers for decades: why do the other checkout [queues](#) always seem to move faster than yours?

But a new book dedicated solely to the topic claims to enlighten us with the simple answer - we only notice how fast the other queues are moving when ours is moving slowly.

Author David Andrews reveals that we experience time differently when waiting as opposed to when we are engaged in a process, the Sunday Times reports.

So if you do happen to choose the fastest line at the checkout, you would not necessarily recognise the fact because you too focused on unloading the trolley and paying.

"Our minds are rigged against us," Mr Andrews writes in *Why Does the Other Line Always Move Faster?*

"Regardless of time actually spent, the slowest line will always be the one you are standing in."

He also points out that there is more chance of being stuck in a slower queue because if there are three queues and you join the middle one, there is a two in three chance that one of those on either side of you will be the fastest, whereas yours has only a one in three chance.

In the book, which is published in December, Mr Andrews provides a brief history of the phenomenon as well as tips [on how to deal with queues](#).

These include how to deal with someone who cuts in, to not making eye contact with others.

He says that if the line is disorganised "stand in such a position ... that anyone approaching will see that you are waiting".

The author expresses astonishment that during the 2011 London riots, looters patiently waited to take their turn when stealing from shops.

But he says the commonly held belief that [Britons have always been a nation of civilised queuers](#) was not strictly true.

"The myth that the British are willing, patient and even eager to stand in line dates to Second World War propaganda during a time of shortages and rationing," he writes.

"Queues were in fact often tense and politically charged affairs that had to be policed in case of riots."

Meanwhile, scientists believe that the way to choose the queue that will move fastest is to choose the one with the most men in it.

Researchers at Surrey University claim that women are more patient than men, who are more likely to just give up if the queue is moving too slowly.

How to choose the best queue:

- Pick a queue that is mostly men they are less patient than women and more likely to give up

- Veer to the left most people are right-handed so we have a natural inclination to turn right. Do the opposite, queues on the left may be emptier
- Avoid the supermarket express lane what dictates speed is the number of people in front of you, not the number of items they are buying
- Select a cash-only queue. Studies show cash is quickest
- Don't overthink it sometimes you are best off just joining the queue with fewest people in it

Smithsonian

[The Secret to Growing the World's Largest Pumpkin](#)

From special seeds to helpful fungi, creating a monster takes more than just sunlight and soil

by Maya Wei-Haas



Giant pumpkins wait in line for their weigh-in at a 2014 competition in Kasterlee, Belgium.

Waiting in line for their weigh-in, a plethora of lumpy, pale pumpkins sag on their pallets like deflated balloons. But to become a world heavyweight champion, looks don't really matter. When it comes to this competition, decades of intense selective breeding have banished the petite, perfectly ovoid and brilliantly orange fruits with a focus on one exclusive trait: massive size.

Every year, an international community of giant-pumpkin farmers loads up beastly gourds on trailers, carting them to local fairs and weigh-ins for a chance at the title.

The size of these pumpkins is unimaginably large to me—I can barely grow tomatoes without making heart-breaking tears through their delicate flesh, innards dripping to the ground. So I

went to scientists and competitive pumpkin growers to ask this burning question: How do you make a monster pumpkin?

The current world record is held by Beni Meier, a Swiss accountant by day, who grew a pumpkin that weighs in at 2,323.7 pounds, roughly the same amount as a small car. But it's likely he won't hold that title long. These giants have been growing in mass by leaps and bounds every year, and there are no signs that they're slowing down.

"The weight is still continuing to go up ... 1,000 pounds was the goal 15 years ago, and everyone thought that was unheard of," says Woody Lancaster, a competitive pumpkin grower and so-called heavy hitter, or someone who consistently churns out monsters. His [1,954-pounder ranked 14th in the world this year](#).

According to Lancaster and other growers, there are a few basic tenants to cultivating giant pumpkins: Keep them at the perfect temperature, give them continuous food and water, protect their delicate skins from drying and cracking and cover them at night for warmth. Competitive growers also lovingly prune their pumpkin plants, reducing their fruit to a few prized gems. But above all, you have to start with a champion seed.

[George Hamilton, extension field specialist in fruits and vegetables](#) at the University of New Hampshire, ranks the relative importance of a grower's checklist something like this: "Number one is genetics, number two is genetics, number three is genetics. And then number four you've got sun, warmth, fertilizer and water," he says.

These days, nearly every prizewinning pumpkin can trace its roots back to Howard Dill's Atlantic Giant. Dill spent 30 careful years cultivating his beasts from the Mammoth pumpkin varieties, which are rooted in the squash species *Cucurbita maxima*.

In 1981, Dill scored a world record with a 493.5-pound beast, trampling the previous record of 460 pounds. He patented the seeds, and an international cohort of growers continued to selectively breed them for bigger pumpkins.

Just under 35 years later, the weight record for the pumpkins has more than quadrupled.

"Basically it's like horse racing. We're breeding big pumpkins into big pumpkins every year to create bigger pumpkins," says [Ron Wallace](#), another heavy hitter who holds multiple growing titles. Last week, Wallace broke the North American weight record with his 2,230-pound behemoth.



Ron Wallace poses with his record-setting 2,230 pound monster. He now holds the record for heaviest pumpkin in North America.

So why can these monsters grow so large? Atlantic Giant pumpkins can pack on close to 50 pounds a day during peak growing season, says [plant physiologist Jessica Savage](#) at the Arnold Arboretum at Harvard University. Though a pumpkin is roughly 90 percent water, there is still a great deal of sugar flowing into the plant's bulk.

Oddly enough, the giant plants aren't any better at producing sugar than their regular-sized cousins, explains Savage. They're just better at moving it around.

To take you back to high school biology, plants have two types of tissue that work to get food and water flowing through them: xylem and phloem. The xylem transports water into the plants, and the phloem is responsible for sugar movement. While all pumpkins easily move large amounts of water, Savage found that giant pumpkins have supersized phloem.

Growers have also harnessed the power of mycorrhizal fungi, which happily colonize the plant's roots and assist water and nutrients flowing into the plant in exchange for carbohydrates, explains Wallace, who originally introduced the fungi to extreme gardeners. With increasing demand for his special fungi-containing elixirs, [Wallace started selling the mixes this past February](#), and business is booming.

So is there a biological factor that will eventually limit their size?

Not really. These monsters are so good at moving sugars, that given the proper conditions, there isn't anything glaring that limits their growth, says Savage. "It seems like everything in the plant just increased with the fruit size."

Another grower, Matt DeBacco, suggests that the limit may be in the cells. Plants get large in two stages. First they divide and multiply their cells, then the cells begin expanding. Each individual cell can expand up to a thousand times its original size, so if the pumpkin has more cells to start with, it can expand much faster in the late season, when growth often becomes sluggish, DeBacco explains.

DeBacco, dubbed "mad scientist Matt" by his local community, is currently tinkering with a brew of hormones and amino acids to prolong the initial period of cell growth. Already his method has produced gourds estimated to weigh over 2,000 pounds, and he thinks there may still be room for some tinkering.

"I think that is the last thing that we try before we actually sequence them and change the G's, the A's, the T's and the C's," says DeBacco, referring to the chemical base pairs that make up DNA.

In the end, the limit may come down to physics. Giant pumpkins already sag under their own weight, developing heart-wrenching cracks if they grow too quickly or unevenly. But the sagging may actually be one of the keys to continued growth, according to [researched published in the *International Journal of Non-Linear Mechanics*](#).

Lead author David Hu and his team used vices to test how much force some ill-fated pumpkins could withstand. They discovered that round pumpkins could put up with a lot. Based on these tests, they estimated that a perfectly uniform pumpkin could grow up to a whopping 20,000

pounds. As the pumpkins flatten, things get more complicated, but flattening does seem to help the gourds hold up their massive bulk without cracking.

So although we might not ever have pumpkins big enough to serve as chariots, we already have some [large enough for boat rides](#), and maybe they'll keep expanding horizontally. The extreme gardeners will just have to go on growing their massive gourds to find out.

IBD

[Got Incompetence? The Federal Gov't Has Misled Public About Milk For Decades](#)

by John Merline



If you look up "whole milk" in the government's official Dietary Guidelines, it states pretty definitively that people should only drink skim or 1% milk. "If you currently drink whole milk," it says, "gradually switch to lower fat versions."

This is the same advice the government has been issuing for many years. And it's wrong.

Research published in recent years shows that people "might have been better off had they stuck with whole milk," according to a front-page story in the [Washington Post](#) on Wednesday. "People who consumed more milk fat had lower incidence of heart disease."

The story goes on to note that the government's push for Americans to eat a high-carb diet "provokes a number of heart disease risk factors."

As the Harvard School of Public Health's Walter Willett put it, the "campaign to reduce fat in the diet has had some pretty disastrous consequences."

The Post goes on to note that this "has raised questions about the scientific foundations of the government's diet advice."

It should.

Based on flimsy evidence, the USDA first started urging people to eat low-fat diets in 1977. As evidence grew that this advice was misguided — at best — it steadfastly refused to change course.

So what we have here is the U.S. government using its power and might to push Americans — quite successfully — to change their eating habits in ways that likely killed many of them.

If a private enterprise had done this, it would face massive class action lawsuits, its executives would be in jail, and its reputation permanently ruined.

But the government simply brushes off its own disasters, and goes right on telling people what they should and shouldn't eat. The public would do well to tell government officials to stay out of the kitchen.

Washington Post

[For decades, the government steered millions away from whole milk. Was that wrong?](#)

by Peter Whoriskey

The United States government once considered butter and margarine as one of seven food groups to consume daily. Look back at other advice that unfortunately is no longer a part of the USDA's dietary guidelines. (Jayne W. Orenstein/The Washington Post)

U.S. dietary guidelines have long recommended that people steer clear of whole milk, and for decades, Americans have obeyed. Whole milk sales shrunk. It was banned from school lunch programs. Purchases of low-fat dairy climbed.

“Replace whole milk and full-fat milk products with fat-free or low-fat choices,” says the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, the federal government's influential advice book, citing the role of dairy fat in heart disease.

Whether this massive shift in eating habits has made anyone healthier is an open question among scientists, however. In fact, research published in recent years indicates that the opposite might be true: millions might have been better off had they stuck with whole milk.

Scientists who tallied diet and health records for several thousand patients over ten years found, for example, that contrary to the government advice, people who consumed more milk fat had *lower* incidence of heart disease.

By warning people against full-fat dairy foods, the United States is “losing a huge opportunity for the prevention of disease,” said Marcia Otto, an assistant professor of epidemiology at the University of Texas and the lead author of large studies published in 2012 and 2013, which were funded by government and academic institutions, not the industry. “What we have learned over the last decade is that certain foods that are high in fat seem to be beneficial.”

This year, as the “Dietary Guidelines for Americans” undergoes one of its periodic updates, the federal bureaucrats writing them must confront what may be the most controversial and weighty question in all of nutrition: does the consumption of so-called saturated fats -- the ones characteristic of meat and dairy products -- contribute to heart disease?

It is, without doubt, an important question. Heart disease is the leading cause of mortality in the United States, and the federal government has long blamed saturated fats.

But the idea that spurning saturated fat will, by itself, make people healthier has never been fully proven, and in recent years repeated clinical trials and large-scale observational studies have produced evidence to the contrary.

After all the decades of research, it is possible that the key lesson on fats is two-fold. Cutting saturated fats from diets, and replacing them with carbohydrates, as is often done, likely will not reduce heart disease risk. But cutting saturated fats and replacing them with unsaturated fats -- the type of fats characteristic of fish, nuts and vegetable oils -- might.

This shift in understanding has led to accusations that the Dietary Guidelines harmed those people who for years avoided fats -- as instructed -- and loaded up excessively on the carbohydrates in foods such as breads, cookies and cakes that were marketed as "low fat."

It also has raised questions about the scientific foundations of the government's diet advice: To what extent did the federal government, and the diet scientists they relied upon, go wrong? When the evidence is incomplete on a dietary question, should the government refrain from making recommendations?

The dietary science has drawn the skepticism of some on Capitol Hill. On Wednesday, a House committee will air concerns regarding the evidence for the guidelines with Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia Burwell.

The Dietary Guidelines have stepped back slightly from their blanket advice to reduce saturated fats, adding the caveat that saturated fats ought to be replaced with unsaturated fats. But Dariush Mozaffarian, a cardiologist, epidemiologist, and dean of the Friedman School of Nutrition Science & Policy at Tufts University said that in his view the Dietary Guidelines have yet to retreat far enough from the idea that saturated fat is a dietary evil, and their suspicion of whole milk is a good example. Judging a particular food solely on how much fat it contains, he said, can too easily blind people to its other benefits.

"If we are going to make recommendations to the public about what to eat, we should be pretty darn sure they're right and won't cause harm," Mozaffarian said. "There's no evidence that the reduction of saturated fats should be a priority."

Some, including representatives of the American Heart Association, disagree. In their view, the evidence for the dangers of saturated fats arises from these two ideas: Consuming saturated fats raises levels of so-called "bad" cholesterol in the blood, and higher levels of "bad" cholesterol, in turn, raise risks of heart disease.

In support of their position, they point to the trials of statin drugs, which show that the drugs lower "bad" cholesterol levels and lower risks of heart disease.

There is a "mountain of evidence" explaining how consumption of saturated fats raises the risk of heart disease, said Penny Kris-Etherton, a nutrition professor at Penn State University and a former member of the Dietary Guidelines advisory committee.

The case against saturated fats begins

Over the long tortured course of fat research, it certainly seemed at times that there was strong evidence in the case against saturated fats.

The history of the fat warning is usually traced to the work of Ancel Keys, a scientist at the University of Minnesota, whose study of heart disease in the 1950s startled the medical world.

Keys examined fat consumption and rates of heart disease in various countries. In places where people eat lots of fat, he found high levels of heart disease. One of his famous charts, from 1953, showed that in the United States, where close to 40 percent of the diet came from fat, people suffered a disproportionate number of heart disease deaths. People in Japan and Italy, by contrast, consumed less fat and died of heart disease less often.

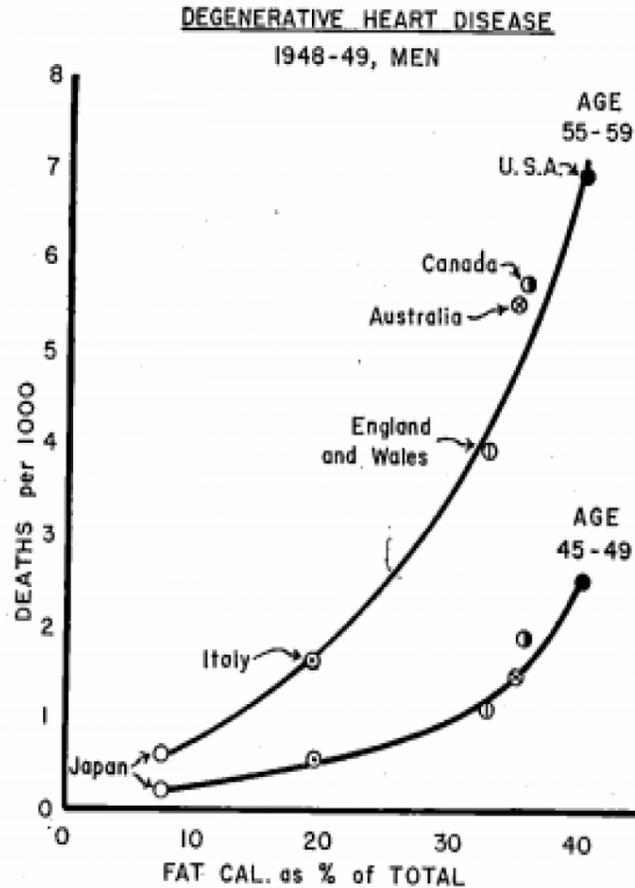


FIG. 2. Mortality from degenerative heart disease (categories 93 and 94 in the Revision of 1938, categories 420 and 422 in the Revision of 1948, International List. National vital statistics from official sources. Fat calories as percentage of total calories calculated from national food balance data for 1949 supplied by the Nutrition Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

In 1953, scientist Ancel Keys linked national fat consumption to heart disease.

To Keys, the data offered proof that Americans could improve their health by reducing the fats in their diets.

"It is now abundantly clear that degenerative heart disease is not an inevitable consequence of aging," he wrote in the 1953 medical journal article.

More evidence was coming. In the '60s, several clinical trials -- from Oslo, Los Angeles, Finland, London and Minnesota -- put his suspicion to the test. Three of the five suggested that he was right.

The Oslo study, for example, studied 412 men who'd previously had a heart attack. Half were given a special diet that was low in saturated fat; the other half was allowed to eat their usual diet, which was richer in saturated and trans fats. The special diet seemed to work: After five years, 64 subjects on the special diet had a relapse of heart disease, while of those eating their regular diet, 90 people did.

Public health authorities, including those in the United States, were soon recommending that people reduce their consumption of saturated fats -- meat, eggs and dairy -- as a means of lowering heart disease risks.

The idea became a part of U.S. official advice in 1977, when the U.S. Dietary Goals, a forerunner of the Dietary Guidelines, embraced the position.

How a hypothesis became dogma

But even as a Senate committee was developing the Dietary Goals, some experts were lamenting that the case against saturated fats, though thinly supported, was being presented as if it were a sure thing.

"The vibrant certainty of scientists claiming to be authorities on these matters is disturbing," George V. Mann, a biochemist at Vanderbilt's medical school wrote in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Ambitious scientists and food companies, he said, had "transformed [a] fragile hypothesis into treatment dogma."

Indeed, the subsequent 40 years of science have proven that, if nothing else, the warning against saturated fats was simplistic.

By itself, cutting saturated fats appears to do little to reduce heart disease. Several evidence reviews -- essentially summing up years of research -- have found no link.

"There is no significant evidence for concluding that dietary saturated fat is associated with an increased risk of coronary heart disease," said one published in 2010 in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*.

"Current evidence does not clearly support" guidelines linking saturated fat and heart disease, according to a review of experiments and observational studies published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

"Saturated fats are not associated" with mortality, heart disease, strokes or type 2 diabetes, a major review in the *British Medical Journal* reported in July.

One of the most noted experiments on fats was the Women's Health Initiative, which involved more than 48,000 older women. Some had counseling to eat less fat and more vegetables and fruits; others continued, more or less, with their normal diets. Subjects in the diet group cut their saturated fat intake from 13 percent of their diet to 10 percent, as well as their consumption of

other fats. Their levels of "bad" cholesterol dropped. Yet when it came to heart disease, researchers found no significant difference between the two groups.

To many critics, the trouble with the fat warning was not merely academic.

The "campaign to reduce fat in the diet has had some pretty disastrous consequences," Walter Willett, dean of the nutrition department at the Harvard School of Public Health has said. "With more fat-free products than ever, Americans got fatter."

Best-sellers such as "Good Calories, Bad Calories" by Gary Taubes and "Big Fat Surprise" by Nina Teicholz went further in their critique of the government position.

"There's a large body of scientific literature to show that a high-carb diet, as recommended by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, provokes a number of heart-disease risk factors," said Teicholz, whose critique of the guidelines appears in a recent issue of the British Medical Journal.

The case weakens

For the bureaucrats writing the forthcoming Dietary Guidelines, the shifting evidence against saturated fats may be a lesson, experts said: there were weaknesses in each of the three lines of evidence used.

First, there were those studies by Keys showing that a country's fat consumption was linked to its rate of heart disease. After Keys' paper appeared, scientists began adding other countries to his graph, and when they did, the pattern suggesting a link between fat consumption and heart disease became less distinct.

More importantly, by the very nature of his research, Keys' data could only show that saturated fat consumption was *associated* with heart disease, not that consuming saturated fat *caused* heart disease. That's because his study was "observational" -- that is, it was based on merely observing subjects rather than randomly assigning them to high-fat and low-fat diets. It was possible, in other words, that some unaccounted factor caused the varying rates of heart disease.

The second line of evidence in the case against saturated fats came from those controlled experiments in the '60s -- in Oslo, Finland and Los Angeles. These suggested that subjects who consumed less saturated fat suffered less from heart disease.

As further scientific review showed, none of the experiments was perfectly designed to assess the danger of saturated fats, and the results in some cases were modest. Moreover, the diets showing a benefit were not just low in saturated fats, they were also high in unsaturated fats -- the ones common in fish, nuts and vegetable oil.

Indeed, these trials, along with more recent studies, have led many scientists to conclude that merely cutting back on saturated fats provides no benefit, but replacing them with unsaturated fats does. By contrast, cutting back on saturated fats and eating breads and cookies instead won't help.

"We have strong evidence that replacing saturated fats with carbohydrates has no effect on cardiovascular disease," said Alice Lichtenstein, a Tufts University nutritionist who served this year on the Dietary Guidelines advisory panel.

No more "blanket recommendations"

Even so, the advisory panel has continued to tout the benefits of limiting saturated fat to 10 percent of the diet, and of swapping whole milk for fat-free.

In doing so, the panel is relying on the third piece of the argument against saturated fats, which is that two-step chain of logic: that saturated fats raise the levels of "bad" cholesterol in the blood, and that higher levels of "bad" cholesterol in turn raise the risks of heart disease.

Scientists generally agree on the premises of that argument. The trouble, according to critics, is that connecting the two and drawing the conclusion that saturated fats lead to heart disease is a vast oversimplification, for a handful of reasons.

First, while consumption of saturated fats tends to raise levels of "bad" cholesterol in the blood, they also tend to raise the levels of "good" cholesterol levels, too, and that may have compensating effects.

Second, saturated fatty acids come in chains of carbon of varying lengths, and each one differs in its effects on heart disease risks. Some molecules appear to raise the amount of "bad" cholesterol in the bloodstream, while other longer chains appear to have no appreciable effect.

And it gets even more complicated. It turns out that "bad" cholesterol comes in two forms. One consists of particles that are smaller and denser and these appear to be strongly linked to heart disease; the other type of "bad" cholesterol consists of lighter, fluffier particles that appear to have lesser effects on heart disease. Saturated fats do raise the levels of "bad" cholesterol, but seem to produce mainly the lighter, fluffier and less dangerous particles.

As a result of such complexity, as well as the ways in which food sources vary in their health effects, "blanket recommendations to reduce total saturated fats may not be appropriate," according to the most recent Annual Review of Nutrition, an academic publication that provides summaries of the latest research.

So what about whole milk?

While nutrition advice is often presented in terms of "macronutrients" -- fats, proteins, carbohydrates -- foods may be more than the sum of their scientific parts.

Milk is a good example.

Repeated research on milk, not funded by the industry but by public institutions, has provided evidence that the fats in milk are, for some reason, different.

In 2013, New Zealand researchers led by Jocelyne R. Benatar collected the results of nine randomized controlled trials on dairy products. In tallying the tests on 702 subjects, researchers could detect no significant connection between consuming more dairy fat and levels of "bad" cholesterol. (Four of the nine studies included in the tally were funded by the industry. Those results were consistent with those of the trials funded by government entities.)

The same year, Otto and Mozaffarian, then both at the Harvard School of Public Health, conducted another study on the effects of milk. Their study sought to address a key weakness in the previous research.

One of the flaws of nutrition studies is that they rely on people to accurately recall what they've eaten over the course of a year. Those recollections are vulnerable to inaccuracy, especially for dairy fats which can be found in small amounts in many different foods. This inaccuracy may be one of the reasons studies have yielded contrary results on the link between milk and heart disease.

To improve estimates, Otto and Mozaffarian used a blood sample for each of more than 2,800 U.S. adults. Using the blood sample, they could detect how much dairy fats each had consumed. And over the eight-year follow up period, those who had consumed the most dairy fat were far less likely to develop heart disease compared to those who had consumed the least.

The advocates of whole milk allow that it has more calories than its low fat cousins, and for some, that might be reason to avoid it. But the traditional case against whole milk -- based on the risk of heart disease -- has frayed enough now that many argue the Dietary Guidelines should yield to the new findings.

"There is no scientific basis for current dietary advice regarding dairy," Benatar said. "Fears [about whole milk] are not supported by evidence. The message that it is okay to have whole fat food, including whole fat milk, is slowly seeping into consciousness. But there is always a lag between evidence and changes in attitude."





Das Cheater.



Bed and Breakfast

