Ginger Thyme Butter Poached Halibut Over Warm Asian Slaw

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I know what you're thinking, has this cardiologist lost his mind; has *he* had a stroke? He must have, and it was probably from eating things like butter-poached halibut. In fact, for anyone who has followed me for even a short time knows, I am a firm believer that fat is PHAT (Protective, Healthy And Tasty). And as I detail in my book, *Food Shaman: The Art of Quantum Food*, butter has suffered as the poster child for all things fat shaming.

So without getting lost in the weeds, and before we get to the recipe, I will highlight an excerpt from my editorial published in the *Journal of Integrative Cardiology*. Without too much techno-speak, this hopefully provides a brief and well-documented overview on the overblown balderdash regarding the recommendations of excluding naturally occurring fats, and particularly saturated fat like that found in butter, as part of our diet. Fats are flavor and here are the fat facts:

> *While the fat and saturated fat hypothesis is attractive on the surface for its simplicity (fat makes you fat and causes obesity, diabetes, and heart disease); the facts do not support the conclusions. The original recommendations (1973 in the US, 1983 in the UK) had no basis in any scientific evidence derived from randomized, controlled clinical trials (RCT)—the recognized gold standard in such matters. The analysis examining the approval of these guidelines concluded that "The dietary fat guidelines were not supported by RCT or epidemiological evidence available at the time of their*

introduction. [1].”

• A study which systematically reviewed saturated, not just total, fat had mortality as the end point. They found that “Saturated fats are not associated with all-cause mortality, CVD [cardiovascular disease], CHD [coronary heart disease], ischemic stroke, or type 2 diabetes [2]”

• Another meta-analysis also looked at saturated, not just total fat, with disease as the end point concluded that “Meta-analysis of prospective epidemiologic studies showed that there is no significant evidence for concluding that dietary saturated fat is associated with an increased risk of CHD or CVD [3].”

• Yet another group of scientists examined the saturated fat question, concentrating on saturated, not total fat, and its relationship with the risk for CAD. They looked in detail at saturated, monounsaturated, polyunsaturated, and trans-fatty acids (TFAs). They also examined the specific long chain saturated fatty acids, palmitic (C16:0) and margaric (C17:0); because even among classes of fats (like long chain saturated fatty acids), the body is built to utilize many fats uniquely according to their individual characteristics. The conclusion of their analysis was that “Current evidence does not clearly support cardiovascular guidelines that encourage high consumption of polyunsaturated fatty acids and low consumption of total saturated fats [4].”

• A 2009 meta-analysis conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials and prospective cohort studies looking at total and saturated fat and the risk of CHD and mortality. The take-away was that “Intake of total fat was not significantly associated with CHD mortality. Intake of total fat was also unrelated to CHD events [5].”

• A recent investigation “Finds that the epidemiological

evidence currently available does not support the dietary fat guidelines. …The conclusion of the four systematic reviews and three meta-analyses is that there was no evidence to support the dietary fat guidelines being introduced and there is no evidence currently available to support them. Not one review has found evidence to support [current] public health dietary fat guidelines [6].”

Yet despite the data, professional organizations like the American College of Cardiology (ACC) and the American Heart Association (AHA) continue promulgate the mythos that dietary redemption lies in the continued avoidance of fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol. What modern nutritional science has clearly demonstrated are the limitations of drawing conclusions about health effects of any food product based on theories about its nutrient contents [7].

With that being said, here is the recipe!

Ginger Thyme Butter Poached Halibut over Warm Citrus Asian slaw

Ingredients:

Poaching Liquid

- 6 ounces high quality organic butter
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme
- 2 teaspoons powdered ginger

• 1 teaspoon powdered turmeric

Fresh, Skinless Halibut Fillets, 2 for this recipe
• Salt
• 2 tablespoons butter

Warm Asian Slaw
• ¼ head finely sliced cabbage
• 2 carrots, skin removed, peeled thinly, and cut
• 2 tablespoons fresh cilantro

Slaw Dressing
• Juice of 1 grapefruit
• 3 tablespoons soy sauce
• 3 tablespoons rice wine vinegar
• 1 tablespoon sesame oil
• 1 tablespoon fresh, grated ginger
• 1 tablespoon sriracha, or other hot sauce
• Juice of 2 limes
• 1 tablespoon mirin
• 1 garlic clove, finely minced

Directions:

Lightly salt both of the halibut fillets and allow to rest for 15 to 30 minutes. Preheat the oven to 325°F. Bring a pot of salted water to a boil on the stove top. In a small saucepan, combine all the poaching liquid ingredients and heat them gently over very low heat until all the butter is melted. Melt the remaining 2 tablespoons of butter with a dash of oil in a sauté pan over medium heat. When the pan is hot, sear off one side of the halibut fillets, 2 to 4 minutes. Remove the fillets and place in ramekins or another ovenproof pan where they can fit closely together.

Remove the infused butter poaching liquid, strain and pour into the container holding the halibut fillets so the butter reaches about three quarters of the way up the fillets. Place the halibut in the oven for approximately 15 minutes.

The fish should be lightly translucent and starting to flake easily when it is done.

While the fish cooks, prepare the warm citrus Asian slaw. You may use any assortment of vegetables you like along with your favorite variety of cabbage. Place the cabbage in the boiling water for 3 to 4 minutes. For the carrots, after the outer skin is removed, using a vegetable peeler continue to peel the carrots into thin slices and then divide them into 1 to 3-inch lengths. At these to the cabbage and continue to cook another one to two minutes until the vegetables are soft and vibrant color. Remove and place in an ice bath to rest the cooking process. Drain the vegetables.

Add the fresh cilantro. Toss with some of the slaw dressing. Using the slaw as a base, place the cook halibut fillets on top, garnish and serve immediately.

Footnotes

1. Harcombe Z, Baker JS, DiNicolantonio JJ, Davies B, Sculthorpe N, et al. (2015) Evidence from randomised controlled trials did not support the introduction of dietary fat guidelines in 1977 and 1983: a systematic review and meta-analysis. Open Heart 3: e000409.

2. de Souza RJ, Mente A, Maroleanu A, Cozma AI, Ha V, et al. (2015) Intake of saturated and trans unsaturated fatty acids and risk of all cause mortality, cardiovascular disease, and

type 2 diabetes: systematic review and meta-analysis. BMJ 351: h397.
3. Siri-Tarino PW, Sun Q, Hu F, Krauss RM (2010) Meta-Analysis of Prospective Cohort Studies Evaluating the Association of Saturated Fat with Cardiovascular Disease. Am J Clin Nutr 91: 535-546.
4. Chowdhury R, Warnakula S, Kunutsor S, Crowe F, Ward HA, et al. (2014) Association of dietary, circulating, and supplement fatty acids with coronary risk: a systematic review and meta-analysis. Ann Intern Med 160: 398-406.
5. Skeaff CM, Miller J (2009) Dietary Fat and Coronary Heart Disease: Summary of Evidence from Prospective Cohort and Randomised Controlled Trials. Anal Nutr & Metab 55: 173–201.
6. Harcombe Z, Baker J, Davies B (2017) Evidence from prospective cohort studies did not support the introduction of dietary fat guidelines in 1977 and 1983: a systematic review. Br J Sports Med 51: 1737-1742.
7. Mozaffarian D, Ludwig DS (2010) Dietary guidelines in the 21st century–a time for food. JAMA 304: 681-682.