Let’s Get Down to the Meat of the Matter

Timothy Lovett

BEFORE YOU READ:
1) Consider the idiom, “meat of the matter.” What does it mean? Try using it in a sentence.
2) What does it mean to be “at the top of the food chain?”
3) Share what you know about where your meat comes from.

“Beware! I hunger,” I bellow as I enter the hunting ground. The air is cooler here and it triggers a slight tingling sensation along my arms. The scent of prey surrounds me, setting my salivary glands in motion, and my primal instinct is ablaze. I stalk the aroma, paying close attention to my surroundings while heeding the warning signs.

On the “Hunt”
There are other hunters here with me; I give them a nod of respect when we make eye contact. We survey the land for a prize. However there is no competition among us because there is game aplenty here. I lick my canine teeth, which are designed for tearing flesh. My stomach is filled with hydrochloric acid that is designed to break down proteins, but my greatest tool is my fully developed brain. I am the alpha; I sit lonely at the top of the food chain, and I am the greatest species ever to be born of mother earth!

“Number 17… Now serving number 17.” And I am number 17, as the woman behind the deli counter calls out.

I Like My Meat Already Packaged
After my basket is a pound heavier from the sliced deli style turkey, I walk over to the meat section and I think to myself how much I love meat. I love the smell of it cooking over an open flame, the look of the charred lines across the cut, and the juices that flow into your mouth as you chew it. I adore it, but I never really think about how it gets from the animal to the supermarket. As far as I am concerned, it’s just born there. I never try to make the connections between farm and food anymore than I try to make the connection between cotton fields and the shirt I am wearing.

Brisket by the Bucket, Please!
Standing over the tenderloins, I pondered further on this. I drink milk, but I would never drink milk directly from a cow, I would never go up to a slaughtered pig and cut out a rack of ribs. I remember my father taking me fishing as a boy, and I caught a smallmouth bass by its eyeball. Not only did my father make me take the hook out of its eye, he made me cut its head off, and gut its body. I haven’t been fishing since, and I didn’t eat fish for some time after that. “I don’t think I would enjoy you as much if I had to gut you myself,” I say to the pack of pork chops I put in my basket.

We are omnivores so we can survive on beans and broccoli. It’s just that I prefer brisket by the bucket, and I stand by that 100 percent.

“I don’t think I would enjoy you as much if I had to gut you myself,” I say to the pack of pork chops I put in my basket.
Did the Animal Feel Pain? I Don’t Know.  
Just Tell Me if It’s on Sale

Eighty percent lean ground beef is on sale this week, and this is why it goes in my basket over cube steak. The sale plays the biggest part in my meat consumption, not if the animals feel pain or not. I tried to explain this to another supermarket patron while she was trapped in the checkout line with me. “Do you think a lion cares if a gazelle feels pain?” I asked her. “Does an alligator think that young wildebeest may be a little uncomfortable being snapped in half? That’s just nature’s way, and it is neither good nor evil. It is just the way of the world.” The store patron said that I was cruel, and the checkout lady made me bag my own groceries. Now that’s cruel.

“I’m still going to hunt and fish, ladies,” I blurt out as I make off with the spoils. It’s just now I hunt for coupons and fish for my debit card because I want the entire flavor of meat. But I want it without the gore. That’s the true meat of the matter.

**AFTER YOU READ:**
1) According to the author, what is the “meat of the matter”?
2) The author uses humor to make his point. Circle the places in the text that you find funny. Explain what exactly makes them funny.
3) Find out more about where meat comes from. See p. 27.

Timothy Lovett currently lives in Northampton, MA. He is studying computer security and IT at Springfield Technical Community College. He is also an amateur comedian who enjoys Crossfit and creative writing. By next year, Tim hopes to complete his Associates degree, conquer Murph (a workout), get paid for a comedic gig, and complete a collection of short stories.

Describe what you see in this illustration. What elements of the story are captured here? Cartoon by Ann Cleaves.