

Purchasing Beef

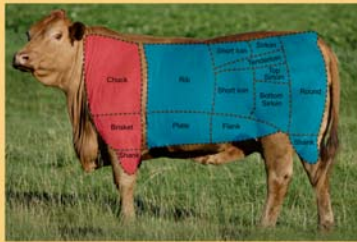


What To Look For

- Shiny, bright red, firm to the touch with a light scent.
- Marbling, a network of white fat, adds a rich flavor and tenderness.
- Reducing fat intake, look for less marbling.

Location, Location, Location

- The Hindquarter provides tender cuts usually cooked quickly by grilling, broiling, pan frying, etc.
- The Forequarter cuts are generally less tender requiring slow-cook and moist-cook methods.



Beef Choices

Beef Producers offer a variety of beef choices to meet the changing lifestyles and nutritional needs of consumers. While each offers something different, they all share three common values: taste, nutrition, and safety.

Grain-fed Beef

The most widely produced and tends to be less expensive. The cattle spend most of their lives eating grass in a pasture before moving to a feedlot where they are fed a high-energy, grain diet.

Grass-finished Beef

The cattle are raised on grass pastures their entire lives. Producing in large volumes is difficult in North America where few regions have the growing season to make it possible.



Certified Organic Beef

The cattle must be fed 100% organic feed and must be certified through the USDA's Agricultural Marketing System. In addition, these cattle can not be given hormones to promote growth or antibiotics. If antibiotics are needed they are not withheld but the animal must be permanently removed from the program.



Natural/Branded Beef

By definition, most beef is natural. According to the USDA "natural" may be used on a beef label if the beef does not contain artificial flavoring, coloring, chemical preservatives or any other artificial or synthetic ingredient. Producers raising cattle for beef marketed with a "natural" label may follow different production practices in order to brand their beef.

Understanding the Beef Grades

- The USDA grades beef by evaluating it according to uniform standards for tenderness, juiciness, and flavor determined by age and condition of the animal and the amount of intramuscular fat (marbling).
- Beef has more grade levels than any other meat. Of the 8 grades, the most common are:

USDA
PRIME

The best grade of beef which includes the finest cuts with an abundant amount of marbling found only in restaurants, fine butcher shops, and custom suppliers of beef.

USDA
CHOICE

The 2nd best grade of beef that has a little less marbling and a slightly tougher texture than Prime. Usually the highest grade found in grocery stores.

USDA
SELECT

The 3rd best grade of beef that has less marbling than Choice and can be somewhat more tough in texture. It is the most common grade of beef available and bought by most people.