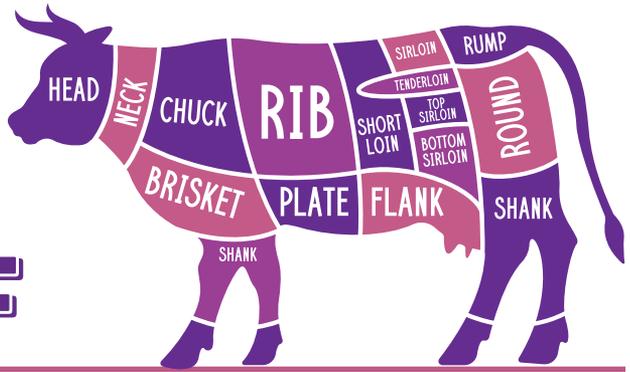


How to Select the Best BEEF



HOW TO SELECT:

- Beef should be a bright, cherry-red color when raw. Meat in a sealed bag typically has a darker purplish-red color. When exposed to the air, it will turn a bright red.
- Meat should be firm to the touch.
- Ensure that the package that is cold with no holes or tears. Some liquid in the package is normal.
- Beef should have marbling. Marbling is the little white specks of fat in the meat, and it is key to flavor.
- Check the dates on the package to ensure you buy fresh products.

COOKING:

- The safe minimum cooking temperature for beef is an internal temperature of 145°F with a three-minute rest time. Ground beef should be cooked to a minimum temperature of 160°F. ¹
- Washing meat before cooking is not recommended.¹

NUTRITION:

- Beef provides 10 essential nutrients including protein, iron, choline, vitamin B6, vitamin B12, phosphorus, zinc, niacin, riboflavin, selenium.
- One serving of beef is 3 ounces or roughly the size of a deck of cards. ¹

STORAGE:

- Most sealed, raw beef products can be safely kept in the refrigerator for 3-5 days after purchase. Raw ground beef that is sealed tightly can be kept in the refrigerator for 1-2 days after purchase.¹
- Cooked beef products can be safely stored in the refrigerator for 3-4 days after preparation.¹
- Beef products freeze well. Products can be frozen in their original packaging but should be transferred to airtight packaging to preserve quality. Raw beef products generally keep well in the freezer for up to 12 months. Raw ground beef keeps well in the freezer for up to 3 months. Cooked beef products should be used within 3 months.¹
- Always thaw meat in the refrigerator, microwave, or immersed in cold water.¹

LABELS YOU MIGHT NOTICE:

- **USDA Grades:** There are eight grades of beef designated by the USDA. The common grades you will see labeled in the store are Prime, Choice, and Select, which are the top three grades on the scale. Grades are based upon factors like marbling and maturity, indicating tenderness of the product. A higher grade typically indicates more marbling and is more tender than lesser grades.
- **Natural:** Generally recognized as a product containing no artificial ingredients, added color, or chemical preservatives, and is only minimally processed (processed so the product is not fundamentally changed).¹
- **Organic:** Identifies practices employed while raising or growing the product. In organic production, animals are raised in living conditions freely accommodating their natural behaviors (like the ability to graze on pasture), fed 100% organic feed and forage, and not administered antibiotics or hormones at any point during the animal's lifetime. The organic label does not indicate that the product has safety, quality, or nutritional attributes that are any higher than conventionally raised products.¹
- **Grain-fed/Grain-finished:** Cattle spend most of their lives eating grass and forage in pastures but are free to eat grain (such as corn), as well as hay and forages as they reach maturity.
- **Grass-fed/Grass-finished:** Cattle spend their entire lives grazing and eating from pastures. Supplemental feed may include hay and forages when grass is not as readily available. Grass-fed cattle are never offered grain as part of their diet.
- **Antibiotic-free:** All beef in the grocery store is antibiotic-free. When antibiotics are used, withdrawal periods are observed that allow ample time for the antibiotic to completely exit the animal's system after it was last administered.²
- **Raised without Antibiotics:** While no beef in the grocery store contains antibiotics, this label denotes that no antibiotics were used to treat illnesses during the animal's lifetime.
- **Gluten-free:** There is no gluten (a grain product) in beef, except for instances where the meat may be pre-seasoned or contain a marinade.
- **Non-GMO:** There is no GMO beef. Genetic modification is a technique applied to plant breeding.
- **Raised without Hormones/No Added Hormones:** All animals naturally have hormones, therefore all beef will naturally contain a small amount of hormones. These labels are indicators that the cattle were raised with no supplemental hormones. Supplemental hormones are sometimes used with cattle to help promote healthy growth and are regulated by the FDA and USDA. Research on the effects of using hormones in livestock production have not found any impact on human health.²



¹ Source: United States Department of Agriculture

² Source: Stewart, L. 2013. Implanting beef cattle. Univ. of Georgia. Bulletin 1302.