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# BUYING MEAT

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Market Basket Mastery Series

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# BUYING MEAT

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**A**MERICANS are meat eaters. In 1960 we averaged 178 pounds per person. The prediction for 1975 is an average of 205 pounds per person. Approximately 25 percent of the food budget is spent for meat. Therefore, knowing how to buy and how to cook meat is vital for every homemaker.

## Look for Signs of Quality

The better grades of meat have these characteristics:

### Beef

Uniform bright cherry red color.

Firm fine-textured lean.

A large amount of meat in proportion to bone.

A moderately thick layer of firm, creamy-white fat.

A moderate amount of fat streaking through the lean (i. e. marbling).

Red, porous bones (indicating young animal).

### Veal

Meat is a light grayish pink, fine grained, fairly firm and velvety in texture.

Only a small amount of smooth firm white external fat.

Bones soft, red, and small.

### Pork

Color is grayish pink to rose.

Fine grained, firm velvety with a modest amount of marbling.

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Fat is firm and white.

Bones soft and red.

### Lamb and Mutton

Color varies from light to dark pink.

Lean is firm and fine textured with modest amount of marbling.

Fat is creamy white or slightly pink.

## Graded Meat is Your Best Guide to Quality

Quality in meat includes appearance, composition, tenderness, flavor, juiciness and nutritive value.

Federally graded meat may be identified because it is marked with a shield containing the grade name. Harmless blue coloring is used for the stamp. It need not be removed before cooking the meat. Meat is given USDA grades only on request of the packer.



### Beef

There are eight official grades of beef. For all practical purposes, six are of most interest to the homemaker—USDA Prime, Choice, Good, Standard, Commercial and Utility. Only young animals are used in the first four grades.

You will find little **Prime grade beef** in retail markets because most of it is sold to hotels and restaurants. Choice and Good are the highest grades generally found in retail markets.

**Choice Grade Beef** is of high quality but usually has less fat than Prime beef. **USDA Good grade beef** has less fat but is of fairly good quality. Although cuts of this grade lack somewhat the juiciness associated with a higher degree of fatness, their relative tenderness and high proportion of lean to fat make them the preference of many.

**Beef of the USDA Standard grade** has a very thin covering of fat. It is mild in flavor and though lacking the juiciness found in beef with more marbling, it is usually relatively tender when properly prepared.

## Lamb and Mutton

Meat produced from sheep is divided into three classes according to its age when slaughtered—lamb, yearling mutton and mutton. The official grades for lamb and yearling mutton are USDA Prime, Choice, Good, Utility and Cull.

The official grades for mutton are USDA Choice, Good, Utility and Cull. Typical mutton is dark red in color and because it is produced from mature animals, it may lack natural tenderness.

## Calf and Veal

The official grades for veal and calf are USDA Prime, Choice, Good, Standard, Utility and Cull. Typical veal is produced from animals that are 3 months or less in age and which have subsisted largely on milk. Typical calf is produced from animals between 3 and 8 months old, and which have subsisted partially or entirely on feeds other than milk for a substantial period of time. Calf is intermediate between veal and beef in its color, texture, flavor, tenderness and juiciness.

## Pork

Pork is sold on a weight and packer brand name basis almost entirely.

Some meat packers have their own brand names for grades. These they give instead of grades. In buying meat by brand name you should understand what that means in terms of quality.

## Look for the Inspection Stamp

Seventy-five percent of the meat slaughtered is federally inspected at a cost of only 1 cent/month/person. The federal meat inspection stamp on meat indicates (a) meat is from disease free animals, (b) slaughtered and prepared under sanitary conditions, and (c) no harmful ingredients have been added. This seal appears on all meat that is sold interstate.



Harmless blue coloring is used for the stamp. It need not be removed before cooking the meat.

## Self-Service Meats

In self-service markets, you may be aided in your selection by the information appearing on the label.

Usually this information consists of:

1. Name of cut.
2. Packer, retailer or government grade.
3. Weight.
4. Price per pound and total price.

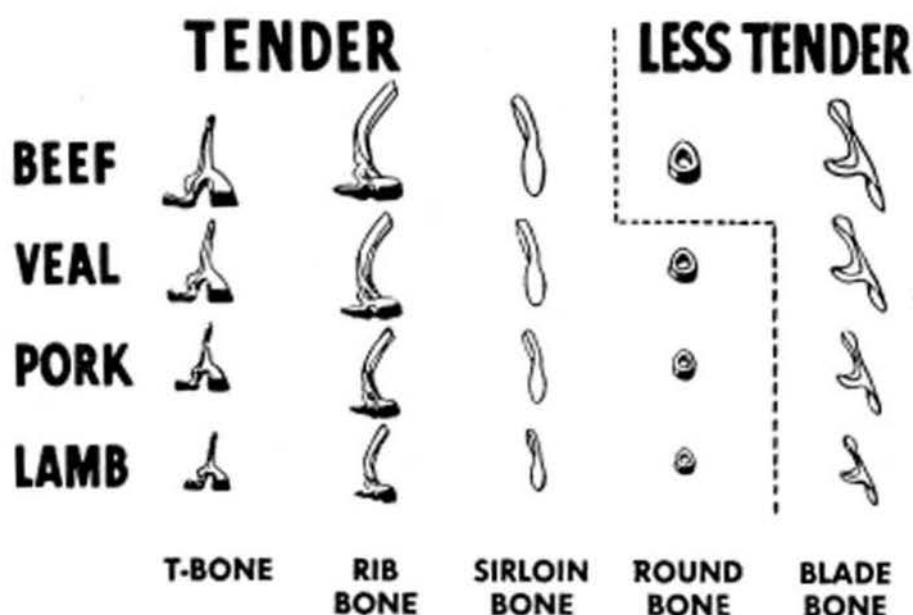
Some pre-packaged meats have the method for cooking and directions for serving.

## Which Cut to Buy

Usually there is a good deal of overlapping in palatability between various grades and cuts of the same grade. A higher quality cut is usually more tender and costs more per pound than a similar cut of a lower quality. The total cost should be considered, that is, the cost of fuel and any waste in preparation should be added to the original cost of the meat. It may be that a tender cut will prove the less expensive in the end. A less expensive cut from a high-grade carcass is a better buy than the best cuts from a low-grade animal.

Choose the grade and cut of meat on the basis of the use intended and the time you have for preparation. Lower grades of meat and less tender cuts are just as nutritious. If suitable methods of cookery are used, they make pleasing and appetizing dishes.

Pictured below are familiar bone shapes. These can help you identify a cut of meat and predict tenderness.



Courtesy Swift and Company

Watch for specials and lower prices because of heavy seasonal supply. In general the supply of cuts such as pot roasts are more abundant and therefore cheaper in the summer months whereas broiling steaks are in better supply during the winter months.

## Variety Meats

These include liver, heart, tongue, kidney, tripe, sweetbreads and brains. Variety meats are more perishable than cuts of meat. Therefore, the most important factor to look for is fresh odor and moist exterior. Look, too, for bright color and meats which are plump and well rounded. Some of these such as liver are especially high in food value. Often they are lower in cost than some other meats.

## Compare Prices on a Cost-Per-Serving Basis

The number of edible portions per pound is one of your best guides to the value of meat. Buy the cut that gives you the greatest number of servings per dollar. If a cut has much bone, connective tissue, and gristle, it may be an expensive purchase even though the price per pound is low. Don't buy meats with more fat than is



needed for flavor and quality. With the less expensive cuts avoid those with large amounts of gristle, fat and bone. The percentage waste ranges from 9 to 76 depending on the cut.

## How Much to Buy

This depends on how many people you will be serving, the cut purchased, the method of preparation and the group's liking for meat. A rule frequently given is to allow from one quarter to one half pound, as purchased, per person, per meal. (Hearty eaters may eat more). This varies with the amount of bone and gristle in a cut of meat.

Generally . . . .

	<b>Amount needed per serving</b>
Much bone and gristle -----	1/2 to 1 pound
Medium amounts of bone -----	1/3 to 1/2 pound
Little bone -----	1/4 to 1/3 pound
No bone -----	1/4 pound

Buying a larger cut of meat can save money and shopping time. If you have adequate refrigerator storage space, buying a larger cut of meat for use in more than one meal is being economical. Have the butcher cut it as you want it, or cut it yourself.

Buy where good quality meat is carried. Generally the store will carry the grade (or quality) most requested by customers.

## Cooking Meats

To get the most from your meat dollar, proper cooking is essential.

There are two general methods of meat cookery.

**Tender cuts:** Cook by dry heat methods (oven roasting, broiling, pan broiling and pan frying).

**Less tender cuts:** Cook by moist heat methods (braising, stewing, simmering in water).

The bone shapes pictured earlier can help you decide tenderness of the cut.

With either method, moderately low cooking temperatures are recommended to save flavor, food value and money.

## **Meat is an Important Part of the Diet**

It is valued for protein which is needed for growth and repair of body tissues—muscle, organs, blood, skin and hair. Meat also provides an abundant supply of iron, thiamin, riboflavin, and niacin. Internal organs such as liver have stores of vitamin A and iron in addition to protein. Meat (plus poultry, fish, eggs, dry beans and nuts) makes up one of the groups in the Daily Food Guide. Two or more servings a day are recommended. Active men and women, and teenagers will usually eat more than this minimum amount. Two to three ounces of lean cooked meat count as a serving.

This is No. 4 in the series "Market Basket Mastery." Others are:

1. First Aids to Food Buying.
2. Buying Fresh Fruits and Vegetables.
3. Buying Canned and Specialty Foods.
5. Buying Convenience Foods.

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