

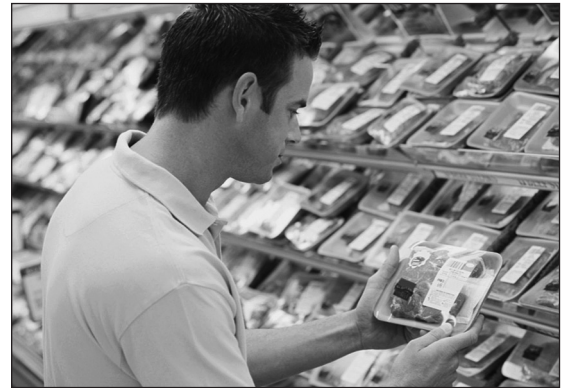
More Meat for Your Money

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Knowing which part of the animal the meat comes from will help you choose leaner and healthier cuts of meat.

Knowing how to identify the factors associated with the cuts of meat can help you make better purchases. When you know which part of the animal the meat comes from it will help you determine leaner and healthier cuts of meat. The USDA defines a lean cut of beef as a 3.5 ounce serving size with less than 10 grams total fat and 4.5 grams of saturated fat. An extra lean cut of meat will have 5 grams of total fat and only 2 grams of saturated fat. Look at the nutrition label to determine if it meets these guidelines. Lean cuts of meat will have “loin” or “round” in the name.



Cooking Meat

Cooking the meat destroys harmful bacteria. It also improves the taste and makes some meat tenderer, because it softens the collagen in the muscle during cooking.

Temperature is vitally important when cooking meat. Cooking meat at the proper temperature will allow it to be juicy, flavorful and easier to carve. Cooking at too high a temperature will make it tough and dry, but cooking at too low a temperature allows bacteria to grow before the meat is finished cooking. It's important not to cook the meat below 325 degrees Fahrenheit and to use a meat thermometer to check the internal temperature by inserting the thermometer into the thickest part of the muscle.

Beef steaks and roasts should be cooked to an internal temperature of at least 145 degrees Fahrenheit or higher for medium, well or well-done. Ground beef should be cooked to an internal temperature of at least 160 degrees Fahrenheit. All pork products should be cooked to an internal temperature of 145 degrees Fahrenheit.

When thawing meat always do so in the refrigerator. It's safe to use frozen meat in the oven, on the stove or grill, but not in the slow cooker.

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When using a slow cooker, there is the risk of harmful bacteria contaminating the meat before it reaches a safe temperature.

When choosing your cooking method, the healthiest ways are grilling, baking or broiling. Cut any visible fat from the meat before you cook it.

Ways to Stretch Meat

- Mix cooked ground meat (beef, chicken or turkey) with beans, lentils, rice, pasta, vegetables and seasonings for tacos or other Mexican-type fillings.
- Make stir-fry or kabobs, and use less meat and lots of vegetables.
- Add rice to meatballs and bread crumbs or oatmeal to meatloaf. Hidden vegetables will help stretch the meat and provide extra nutrition, so add grated carrots or zucchini.
- Leftover roast beef, steak or chicken can become sandwiches, quesadillas or fajitas. Add thinly-sliced onions and bell peppers or shredded cheese.

Ways to Save Money on Meat Purchases

- It's often cheaper to buy a large cut of meat and divide it into several meals or servings than to buy the component cuts separately. Trim out a roast and cube the rest for stew, stir-fry or kabobs.
- Marinate cuts of meat that need to be tenderized. Make your own sauces rather than buying pre-marinated meats.
- Compare prices of packaged deli meats versus the price of the same items in the meat case. Depending on local sales promotions, the difference in price can be considerable but can vary from week to week.

- Shop early in the day to take advantage of marked down meats. Either cook the meat that day or freeze it for later use.

Skillet Pork and Apples

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
4 pork chops (3 to 4 ounces each)
2 teaspoons olive oil
1 tablespoon margarine
1 medium-sliced apple
1/3 cup fat-free, low-sodium chicken broth

Combine seasonings and sprinkle evenly over pork chops. Heat olive oil in a large non-stick skillet over medium-high heat. Add pork and cook for five or six minutes or until browned on each side. Add margarine and heat 15 to 30 seconds until melted. Add apple and chicken broth. Cover, reduce heat to medium-low and cook two to three minutes or until pork reaches an internal temperature of 145 degrees Fahrenheit as measured with a food thermometer. Remove from heat and allow meat to rest for at least three minutes before serving.

Yield: 4 servings, one pork chop each

Nutrition Information per Serving:
185 calories, 10 grams total fat, 2.5 grams saturated fat, 18 grams protein, 6 grams total carbohydrates, 2 grams dietary fiber, 370 milligrams sodium.

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