

Buying, cooking and preparing red meat



As well as being enjoyable and offering a huge variety for different meal options, lean red meat can make an important nutritional contribution to a healthy balanced diet. To get the best out of red meat try following these tips.

Selecting and buying red meat

- Plan meals in advance and make shopping lists so that you buy only what you need.
- Buy the leanest red meat you can afford (there's less waste).
- Cuts such as shin of beef, shoulder of lamb and pork belly are more economical. They tend to be tougher and require longer cooking times but when cooked slowly with vegetables and stock will give delicious results. These cuts are sometimes more fatty, however some of the fat can be trimmed before cooking or skimmed off during or after cooking.
- Where appropriate, choose trimmed, lean or extra lean varieties, e.g. lean mince. Even some of the tougher cuts of meat can be purchased trimmed of fat.
- If you don't like preparing meat, buy easy-to-prepare options such as those that are already trimmed, rolled and/or stuffed. Alternatively, ask your butcher to do it for you.
- Check labels for portion sizes.
- Buying boneless steaks rather than chops means smaller portions per person are required and it avoids having to pay for bone that has to be disposed of as plate waste.
- Remember that offal (liver, kidney) is great value and high in vitamins and minerals.

Storage and preparation tips

- Check your fridge is operating at the correct temperature: between 0 and 4 degrees centigrade.

- Cover and store raw and ready-to eat foods separately in the fridge; raw meat should be placed in a sealed container on the bottom shelf of the fridge to prevent contamination with ready-to eat or cooked foods.
- Don't consume meat after its use-by-date.
- Ensure that hands, surface and equipment are scrupulously clean before and after handling food and between handling raw and cooked foods.
- Keep a separate, hard, durable chopping board for preparing raw meats and clean thoroughly after preparing the meat. Never put raw and cooked meats on the same chopping board or use the same knife.
- Cover meat when marinating and store in the fridge.
- Cut off visible fat before cooking meat.
- If freezing, make sure the meat is properly wrapped with aluminium foil or grease proof paper, or place in a sealed container. This helps to prevent freezer burn which can affect the texture and taste of the meat.
- Defrost frozen foods thoroughly (unless otherwise stated), ideally overnight in the fridge and do not re-freeze raw meat once thawed. However, if you use defrosted meat to make a dish, you can freeze any leftovers.

Cooking

- Grill or roast meat in preference to frying and avoid adding extra fat.
- Try making your own burgers and meat balls from lean minced meat
- Drain the fat from roast meats.
- Skim gravies and sauces to remove any excess fat.
- The addition of vegetables, beans or pulses to meat dishes is an economic and healthy way to add fibre to dishes.
- Ensure joints of pork, burgers and sausages are thoroughly cooked until the meat juices run clear and piping hot before serving.
- When roasting a stuffed joint remember to weigh the joint after stuffing, then calculate the cooking time.
- Food thermometers can be used to ensure internal food temperatures are sufficiently hot.
- Cool leftovers as quickly as possible, ideally within two hours, and refrigerate or freeze.

- When re-heating meat dishes ensure that the food is piping hot throughout.
- For recipes and a comprehensive cooking time guide visit www.meatmatters.com .

For more information please visit: www.meatandhealth.com