



Beef

Fresh beef has cream-colored fat and bright red meat. The best beef is marbled with fine strands of fat, which bastes the meat as it cooks and makes it tender and juicy. Lower grades of beef have thicker marbling or no marbling, so the meat's tougher after you cook it. Choice breeds include Angus, Kobe, Chianina, and lean but tender Piedmontese.

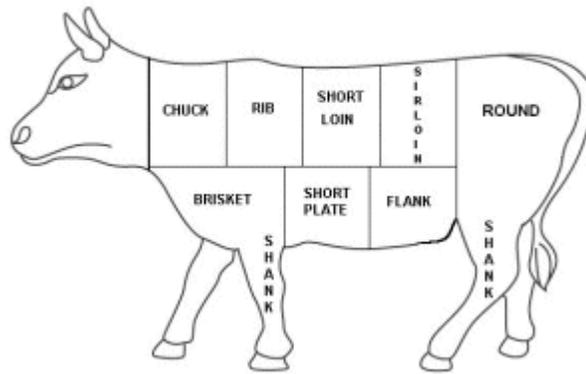
Substitutes: venison (If substituting venison or other game for beef, consider adding some vinegar to the sauce to tone down the gamy flavor.) OR veal OR pork OR ostrich OR chicken OR turkey OR tempeh OR tofu OR TVP (textured vegetable protein, a meat analogue)

Cuts:

Chuck: The chuck section comes from the shoulder and neck of the beef, and it yields some of the most flavorful and economical cuts of meat. The downside is that these cuts tend to be tough and fatty, and they have more than their fair share of bone and gristle. It's usually best to cook them slowly in a liquid.

Rib: Meat from the rib section tends to be tender and well marbled with the fat that makes steaks and roasts juicy and flavorful. Rib steaks and roasts are sometimes called "prime rib" even when the meat isn't good enough to be graded "prime" by the USDA. It's best not to marinate rib cuts.

Loin: The loin yields the most tender and expensive cuts of beef--but not the most flavorful. The choicest portion is the tenderloin, which is exquisitely tender and lean. The top loin and sirloin aren't as tender, but they're a bit more flavorful. Cuts from the loin require very little work to taste great. Indeed, steak lovers consider it almost a sacrilege to marinate them, or to cook them beyond medium rare.



Understanding Beef

Comprehending all the different cuts of beef can be a little confusing. For example, did you know that a strip steak, New York strip, Kansas City steak, club steak, shell steak, and top loin steak all come from the same section of beef? Who wouldn't be confused with such jargon? The diagram below depicts all the cuts found on your typical bovine.

Beef is muscle tissue. The first thing that must be understood is that frequently used muscles are tougher and generally require long, slow, moist heat cooking methods to loosen their connective tissue, while lesser used muscles are tender and need dry heat methods. Moist heat cooking methods for beef include braising, boiling and stewing. Dry heat methods include sautéing, grilling, roasting, and broiling.

The chuck, brisket, round and shank are the most exercised muscles and hence, the toughest. A pot roast can be made from chuck via braising, (cooking the meat in a small amount of liquid for an extended period of time). Chuck is also useful for stew meat, making stock, and ground beef. Your average hamburger is mostly ground chuck.

The brisket is home to corned and barbequed beef. The infamous corned beef and cabbage is made from boiling the meat. Pot roast can also be done with brisket, again by braising.

The round includes the top round, bottom round, heel round, eye round, and rump roast. Sometimes ground beef is made from the round as well. Although all round cuts are tough, the top round is the tenderest, relatively speaking. Because of this, it can be roasted. London broil comes from the top round and can also be grilled. All of the others however, do best made into roasts with moist heat methods. One exception is your deli roast beef. Because it is sliced thin, producers can get away with roasting, (dry heat), the bottom or eye round which are cheaper than the top round. Notice that making a "roast" does not necessarily mean that the meat will be roasted. At the risk of belaboring the point for clarification, roasts such as pot

roasts from tough cuts, require braising. Roasts made from more tender meat are made by actually roasting.

The shank is definitely best when braised as in the classic dish osso buco. It can also be used for stews and stocks.

The short plate and flank contain meat of medium toughness. The muscle fibers are relatively coarse but contain sufficient intramuscular fat to maintain tenderness. The short plate gives us short ribs which are braised or boiled as in New England boiled beef. Skirt steak, (from the short plate) and flank and hanger steaks, (from the flank), are delicious when grilled. However, they must not be overcooked, benefit from being marinated, and should be cut against the grain for a softer texture. Mexican fajitas are often made from marinated strips of flank steak.

The rib, short loin, and sirloin render the most delicate cuts of beef. Broiling, grilling, sautéing and roasting reign supreme here. Rib steaks, (also known as delmonico or prime rib), rib eye steaks, (without the bone), and rib roasts, naturally come from the rib. The sirloin provides a variety of sirloin steaks differing on where in the sirloin they are cut from. Sirloin can also be ground and mixed with ground chuck for primo hamburgers.

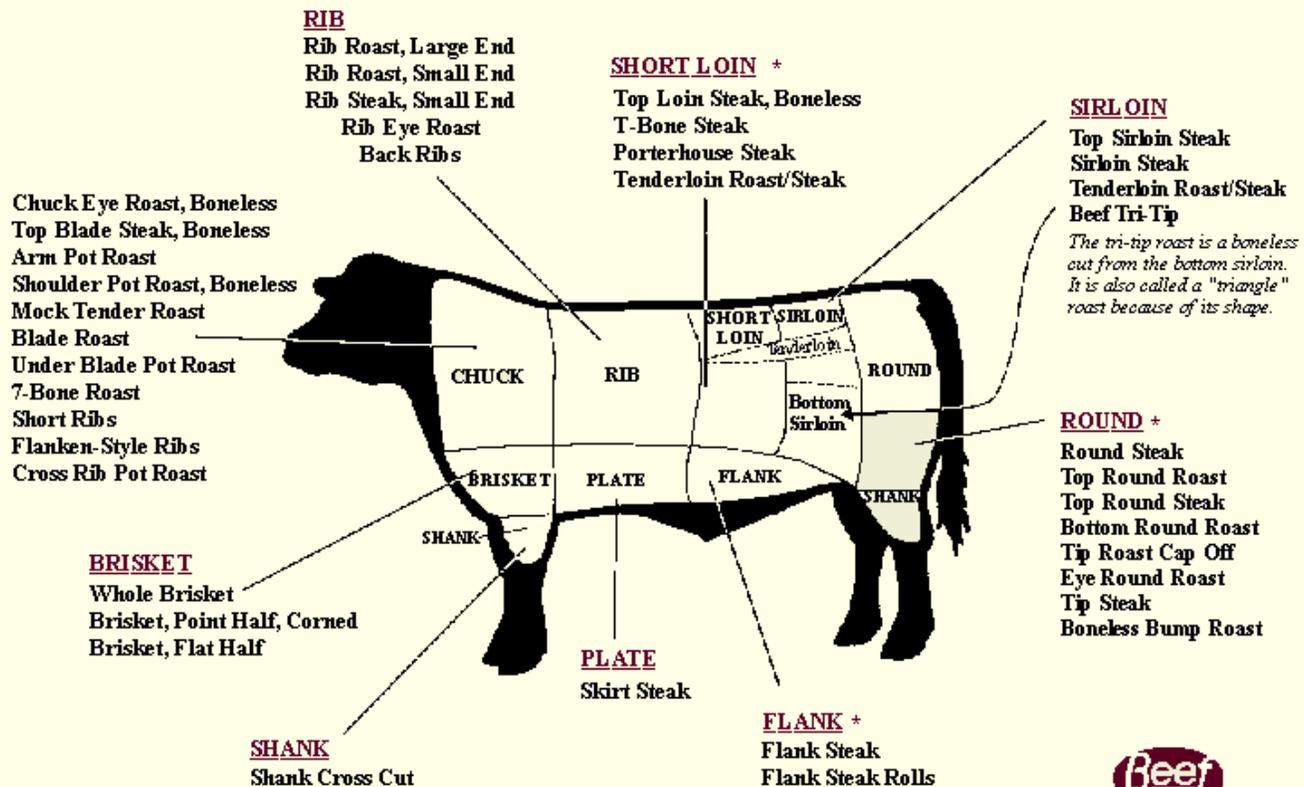
Finally, the crème de la crème of beef: the short loin. Picture a porterhouse or T-bone steak. The larger side is referred to by all the names at the top of the article: top loin, strip, New York strip, shell steak, etc. The smaller side is the tenderloin or filet mignon. The porterhouse and the T-bone are the same except that the porterhouse is cut from the larger end of the short loin and thus provides more of the filet mignon. Both the top loin and the tenderloin can be cut into individual steaks, or larger roasts. In the case of the top loin, the steaks may or may not be attached to the bone. The tenderloin is always boneless except when part of a porterhouse or T-bone steak.

Round: The round is a kind term for the rear end of the carcass. Those muscles are well exercised, so round cuts tends to be a bit tougher and leaner than cuts from the loin. Round cuts do well if they're cooked with moist heat and many of them can also be roasted, as long as they're not overcooked.

Breast & flank: The breast and flank yield an assortment of cuts, including the flank steak, skirt steak, hanger steak, brisket, and short ribs.

Miscellaneous cuts: This category includes cuts taken from different parts of the carcass, including ground beef, stew meat, and soup bones.

-BEEF CUTS- Where They Come From



* Beef primals that feature cuts lowest in fat.



BEEF INDUSTRY COUNCIL