

This region is a great place to raise livestock on pasture. Buying it, however, isn't limited to the simple task of picking out a package at the supermarket. What are the opportunities for buying, preparing and enjoying meat raised locally?

Two Simple Methods of Buying Local Meat

1. Buy one frozen cut in a store or at a farm

Many meat producers offer single cuts of meats for sale directly from their farm. In this region you can find beef, goat, lamb, pork, elk, emu, bison, deer (venison), beefalo, and others.

Find those farms on the centerfold map index pages 28-29, under "Farms That Sell Their Farm Products Retail From the Farm".

Why are they frozen? Because when the producer has an animal slaughtered and processed, it is an entire animal, and if the farmer offered it for sale fresh, they would need to sell all the various parts within a matter of days. This is virtually impossible, so local meat is almost always offered frozen.

Many retailers also offer local meats in their freezers.

2. Buy a selection of cuts from a farmer

Producers who offer retail sales from the farm often have available popular selections of cuts: a barbecue pack (ribs, steaks, burgers and kabobs); winter pack (stew meat, ground, short ribs, and roasts); and other combinations. Sometimes you can ask to customize your package.

The Freezer Meat Method

3. Buy a portion of an animal—a side or quarter

A "side" is one half of an animal, including a front portion and a back portion. A "quarter" may be from the front or rear, and the rear is more expensive because it has better cuts. Lambs are small, pigs are medium-sized, and beef are large. A more substantial investment of time and money, this method puts a reliable supply of meat in your freezer for easy defrosting any time.

Questions to answer BEFORE calling farmers:

- How much freezer space do I have available? (you'll need about one cubic feet for every 30 pounds of meat; a side of beef is 150-250 pounds and will about half fill a full-sized chest freezer)
- Do I want lamb, beef, pork, or other meat?
- When in the year will I be ready to order, and when to take delivery?
- How much can I afford for the purchase? Payment to the farmer is usually up front.
- Is there a friend interested to go in on it with me?
- Do I want information on how the animal was raised?

* pastured (grazed on grass outside) or fed grain in confinement?

* fed organic feed and medicated organically?

* not fed any feed including other animal parts?

* that the farm is near my home or work?

* that I know the farmer personally?

Then search our *Locally Grown Guide* in print or online for a farmer that meets your needs.

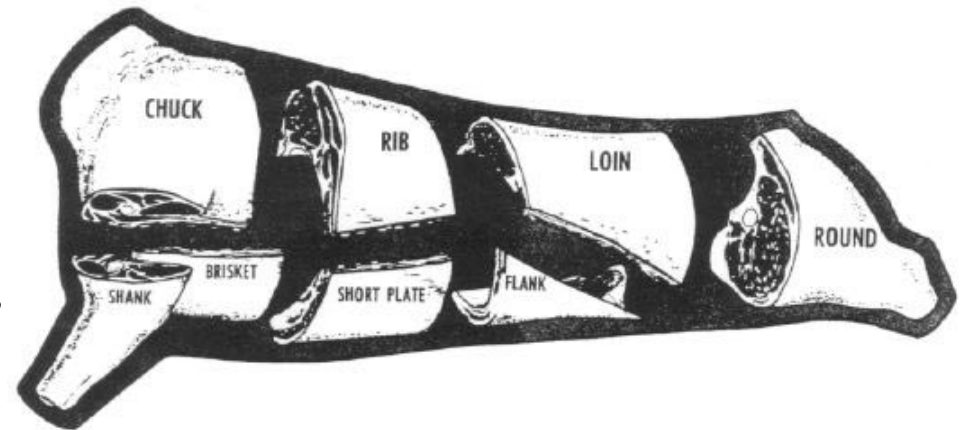
Questions to answer WITH farmers' help:

- How lean or fatty do I want my ground meat to be?
- Do I prefer more burger or roasts or stew meat?
- How many pounds do I want in each package?
- How thick do I want your steaks to be?
- How large do I want your roasts to be?

*** Remember, a beef isn't all steaks! You will get a lot of stew meat and/or ground meat. Talk this over with the farmer so you know what to expect.

Paying the farmer is different too:

Payment is (unless the farmer is licensed to sell retail) not by the cut and wrapped pound, but by the animal. Don't try to get a firm estimate on a price-per-pound so you can compare with the supermarket lamb price. Local will not be cheaper, in most cases. And freezer meat cannot be sold that way. It's



a lump sum for a portion of a live animal. A great deal of the original weight will be lost in processing.

Example:

Live weight of whole beef (2 sides) ~ 1000 lbs.

Hanging Weight may be ~ 500-600 lbs.

Less the bone, fat, etc. leaves ~ 300-500 lbs. of beef or 2 sides at about ~ 150-250 lbs. each

You will not pay for this example beef side by the finished pound, but at the lump price the farmer tells you ahead of time. When it is in your freezer, you can compare your total price per finished pound, but remember—you will now have a mixture of tenderloin and chuck roast, so it's hard to compare.

Farms that have retail licenses can sell you the side or quarter by the pound, because they are licensed to do so.

Enjoy every bite and have comfort in a full freezer.

Defrosting Meat or Cooking It Frozen

Allow somewhat more cooking time for defrosted meat than for fresh. It should be defrosted in the original wrapping in the refrigerator. Defrosting meat at room temperature is not a recommended procedure. The following is a timetable for defrosting frozen meat in a refrigerator:

*Large roast 4-7 hours per pound
Small roast 3-5 hours per pound
Steak, one-inch thick 12-14 hours*

Once the raw meat defrosts, it will be safe in the refrigerator for 3 to 5 days before cooking. During this time, if you decide not to use it, you can safely refreeze it without cooking it first.

Frozen roasts require more cooking time than defrosted or fresh, depending on thickness, surface area, and broiling temperature. Broil frozen cuts farther from the heat so they don't brown too quickly.

Taste

A major difference in local meat is the taste and fat. In the supermarket, pork is pretty much pork. Pigs of different breeds, though, all have different tastes. When you order, ask the breed of animal and keep track over the years—do you prefer Angus or Scottish Highland? Dorset lamb or Montadale? Tamworth pigs or Large White?

Meanwhile, enjoy meat from animals fed on local grasses, raised by your neighbor, carefully processed by a local butcher's hand, and ready for you to prepare with love and gratitude.