

FACT SHEET: Beef Choices

Beef Choices	The more than 800,000 beef producers throughout the United States offer a variety of beef choices to meet the changing lifestyles and nutritional needs of consumers. Beef producers have adapted their practices to provide consumers with the grain-fed, grass-finished, certified organic or "natural" beef they desire. While each kind of beef offers specific value to consumers, all beef is safe and nutritious.
Nutritional Value of Beef	<p>U.S. beef is leaner than ever and is a premier, naturally nutrient-rich food, which helps consumers get more nutrients from their calories.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 29 cuts of beef (including 15 of the 20 most popular cuts) meet government guidelines for lean, like the tenderloin, sirloin and 95% lean ground beef. • Beef has eight times more vitamin B₁₂, six times more zinc and two and a half times more iron than a skinless chicken breast.
Beef Safety	All beef goes through a rigorous inspection process and is subject to strict government guidelines to ensure the highest level of safety. All cattle are inspected by a public health veterinarian before entering the packing plant and those with any signs of illness are not allowed into the food supply.
Grain-fed Beef	Grain-fed is the most widely produced type of beef by the more than 800,000 beef producers across the United States. Grain-fed cattle spend most of their lives eating grass in pastures, then move on to a feedlot where they are fed a high-energy, grain diet for four to six months.
Grass-finished Beef	<p>All beef is grass-fed, as cattle spend the majority of their lives in pastures eating grass. However, grass-finished beef comes from cattle that have been raised on pasture their entire lives.</p> <p>Grass-finished cattle may be raised according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Organic Program (NOP) standards. However, grass-finished beef is not automatically considered certified organic as grass-finished cattle may be given Food and Drug Administration-approved antibiotics and/or growth promotants.</p>
Certified Organic Beef	<p>Beef must be from cattle that meet USDA's NOP livestock production requirements to be classified as certified organic. The Organic Foods Production Act, effective October 2002, sets the standards for all food labeled organic (http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/FactSheets/ProdHandE.html). For beef, this means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cattle must be fed 100-percent organic feed, but may be given certain vitamin and mineral supplements. • Organically raised cattle may not be given hormones to promote growth or antibiotics for any reason. If an animal is sick, it cannot be denied treatment to ensure its health; however, animals treated with antibiotics must be taken out of the NOP. • All organically raised cattle must have access to pasture, but the majority of cattle in the U.S., regardless of how they are raised, meet this requirement. • Organic beef is certified through USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). Cattle must be raised using organic management from the last third of gestation.
Natural Beef	<p>By definition, most beef is natural. According to USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), natural may be used on a label for meat if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The product does not contain any artificial flavor or flavoring, coloring ingredient, chemical preservative or any other artificial or synthetic ingredient; and • The product and its ingredients are not more than minimally processed (FSIS Directive 7220.1 Policy Memo 55 "Natural Claims"). <p>The government's definition of natural does not consider the manner in which animals are raised or what they are fed. Natural beef can be grain-fed, grass-finished or organic as long as it is minimally processed and contains no additives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some beef products may be marketed and labeled "natural" based on the specifications of the company that owns the brand, such as "raised without growth promotants and antibiotics."

**For more information, visit www.BeefFromPastureToPlate.org
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