

FACT SHEET: Grass-Finished Beef

<p>What is Grass-finished Beef?</p>	<p>Cattle spend the majority of their lives grazing in pastures. However, grass-finished beef comes from cattle that have been raised on pasture their entire lives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grass-finished cattle may be entered into the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Organic Program (NOP) as long as the animals are also raised according to NOP standards. However, beef from grass-finished cattle is not automatically considered certified organic because they may be given Food and Drug Administration-approved antibiotics and growth promotants.
<p>AMS Grass (Forage) Fed Claim</p>	<p>In 2006, USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) proposed a standard for grass (forage) fed marketing claims. The proposal calls for producers to prove 99 percent or more of their animals' energy came from grass and/or forage, with the exception of milk consumed by animals prior to weaning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forage is defined as any edible, non-woody plant material, other than separated grain, which can be grazed or harvested for feeding. An AMS-verified claim of grass (forage) fed is not the same as a claim of organic or free-range (not in confinement). These claims require additional standards and verification. AMS is reviewing approximately 19,000 comments received in response to its proposal in order to define a U.S. standard grass (forage) fed claim (http://www.ams.usda.gov/LSG/stand/Is0509.pdf#search=%22Federal%20Register%20Vol.%2071%20No.%2092%20May%2012%2C%202006%20Notices%20Page%207662%22).
<p>Grass-finished Beef Production</p>	<p>Producing grass-finished beef in large volumes is difficult in North America where few regions have the growing season to make it possible. Most grass-finished beef is imported from Australia and New Zealand where grass is in greater abundance than feed corn and grows year-round.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suitable types of grass for grazing include bluegrass, orchardgrass, bromegrass, endophyte-free tall fescue with a 30 percent to 50 percent composition of legume and alfalfa in some situations. Hay, haylage, baleage, silage, ensilage and post-harvest crop residue without separated grain may be included in some producers' feeding regimes. Most cattle go to market weighing between 1,000 and 1,250 pounds, which may take longer for grass-finished animals to achieve than grain-fed cattle that receive a high-energy grain diet at a feedlot.
<p>Nutritious Value of Grass-finished Beef</p>	<p>Like all kinds of beef, grass-finished beef is naturally nutrient-rich, with eight times more vitamin B₁₂, six times more zinc, and two and a half times more iron than a skinless chicken breast. There are 29 cuts of beef that meet government guidelines for lean.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grass-finished beef contains slightly more omega-3 fatty acids; but in general, beef is not considered a primary source. One 3.5-ounce serving of grass-finished beef offers 15 milligrams (less than one-tenth of a gram) more omega-3 than other kinds of beef. Grass-finished beef can contain more conjugated linoleic acid (CLA), a polyunsaturated fatty acid health professionals believe has cancer-fighting properties, than other kinds of beef. However, research has not determined if there is a health benefit in this difference. Grass-finished beef provides slightly more of the Daily Value for Vitamin E (4% compared to 1.5% for other beef), but Vitamin E-rich foods like spinach can provide up to nine times more.
<p>Taste of Grass-Finished Beef</p>	<p>Compared to grain-fed beef, grass-finished products are often described as having a distinctively different taste.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Culinary experts say that different preparation methods may be necessary for grass-finished beef. Research shows consumers generally prefer the taste of grain-fed beef because of its tenderness and flavor-enhancing marbling. In a series of taste panels conducted by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, consumers rated domestic corn-fed beef significantly higher than Australian grass-finished beef for desirability of flavor, juiciness, tenderness and overall acceptability (http://ianrpubs.unl.edu/beef/mp80.pdf).
<p>Safety and Inspection</p>	<p>Like all beef, grass-finished products go through a rigorous inspection process and are 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.</p>

For more info, visit www.BeefFromPastureToPlate.org
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