CUSTOM MEAT GUIDE · STEP 2: PLANNING YOUR CUTS

How to Fill Out a Beef Cut Sheet

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THE SHORT ANSWER

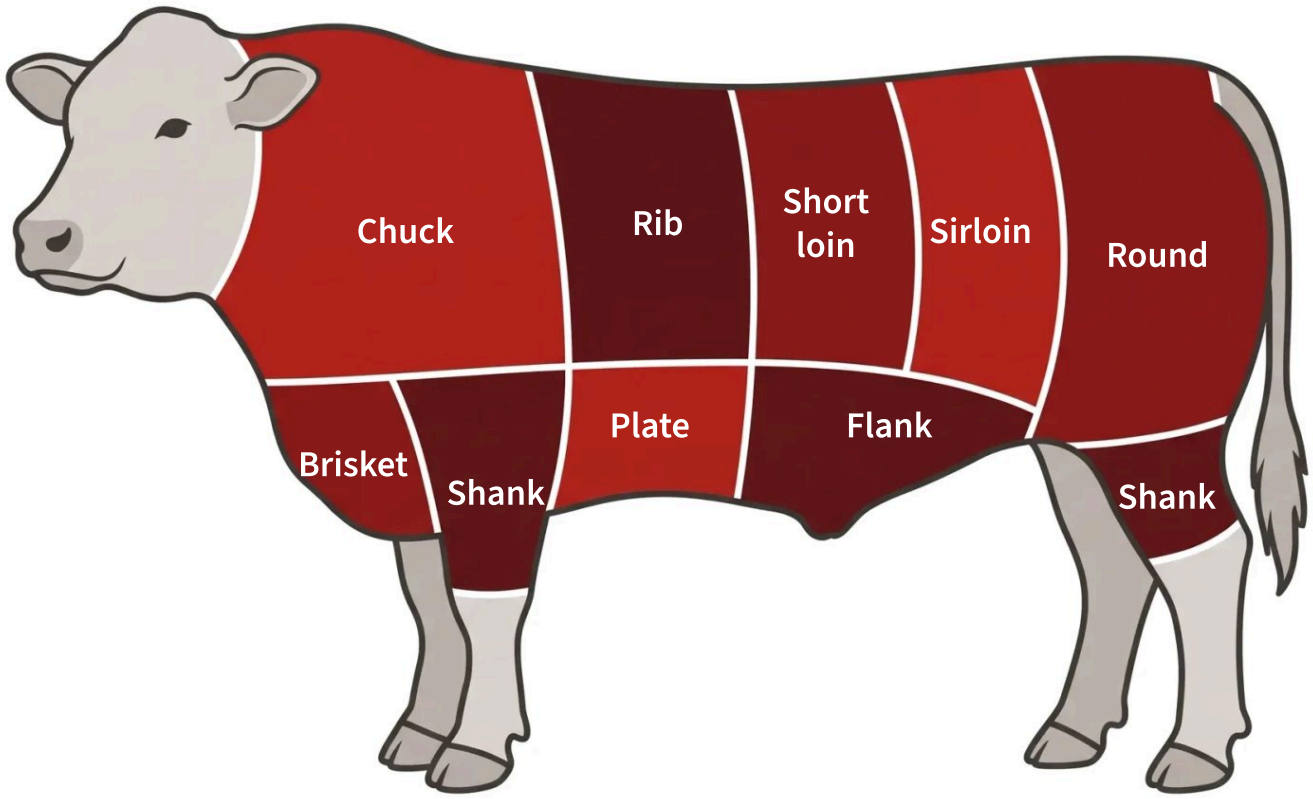
A cut sheet tells the butcher how to cut each section of the beef. Most choices are **trade-offs**: the same meat becomes T-bones or strip steaks and filets, ribeyes or a prime rib roast, roasts or ground beef. Decide how your household cooks, pick a steak thickness and package size, and ask for organs or soup bones up front. If we don't hear from you, it's cut as a standard cut, and quarter beef is always standard cut.

Start With How You Cook

Before thinking about cuts, think about your kitchen. Grill a lot? Lean toward steaks. Use a slow cooker, smoker, or Dutch oven? Keep more roasts, the brisket, and short ribs. Mostly burgers, tacos, and spaghetti? Send more to ground beef. Then think about household size: how many steaks you cook at once, and how big a roast you'll finish.

Section by Section

A side of beef is first divided into large sections called primals. Here are the usual choices for each:



The primal sections of a beef side, where each choice below comes from.

Rib

Ribeye steaks (bone-in or boneless), or a standing rib roast (prime rib).

Same meat either way: steaks or a holiday roast.

Short loin

T-bone and porterhouse steaks, or boneless New York strip steaks plus tenderloin (filet).

You can't get both from the same side. Strips and filets are the boneless versions of T-bones and porterhouses.

Sirloin

Sirloin steaks, bone-in or boneless, and a tri-tip roast.

Bone-in sirloin steaks are big; boneless gives smaller portions.

Chuck

Pot roasts, chuck steaks, stew meat, or ground beef.

The chuck is where most roasts come from, and a big source of ground beef.

Round

Roasts, round steaks, cube steaks (tenderized), or ground beef.

Lean and best for slow cooking, braising, or grinding.

Brisket

Whole, split into the flat and the point, or ground.

Each half of the beef has one brisket.

Plate

Short ribs, or ground beef.

Flank and skirt

Flank steak and skirt steaks, or ground.

Each half has one flank and two skirts.

Shank

Soup bones, or cross-cut shank slices for braising (osso buco).

The two choices that surprise people most are the rib and the short loin. Prime rib and ribeye steaks come from the same section, so a holiday roast means fewer ribeyes. And because strip steaks and filets are the boneless parts of a T-bone, choosing them means no T-bones from that side.

Thickness and Packaging

- **Steak thickness:** university cut sheets commonly default to 3/4 or 1 inch. Thicker steaks are harder to overcook on the grill.
- **Steaks per package:** 2 or 4 are common, matched to how many people you feed.
- **Roast size:** about 2 to 4 pounds is typical.
- **Ground beef:** usually 1-pound packages. If you want it leaner, expect fewer pounds, since more fat is trimmed out.

Organs, Bones, and Fat

The heart, liver, tongue, kidneys, and oxtail are optional, and so is suet (beef fat). Organs come out on slaughter day, so tell us before then if you want any of them. Soup bones come from the shank, so list them with the rest of your cuts.

How Your Choices Change the Mix

Boneless cuts send more trimmings to the ground beef. In Kansas State's cutting tests, a carcass cut boneless came out about 29% ground beef and stew meat by weight, versus about 21% when cut bone-in. If you'd rather have fewer pounds of ground, keep more cuts bone-in and choose roasts from the chuck and round.

For a sense of scale, the University of Minnesota says a quarter from a 1,300 lb animal gives about 142 pounds of meat, roughly 7 ribeye steaks, 6 T-bones, 3 sirloin steaks, 3 sirloin tip steaks, 3 round steaks, 6 roasts, and 35 to 60 pounds of ground beef.

Standard Cut and Quarters

If we don't hear back from you with cutting instructions, we process your beef as a standard cut, a typical mix of steaks, roasts, and ground beef. All quarter beef orders are standard cut only, with no exceptions. To choose your own cuts, buy a half or a whole.

Ready to Call?

Jot down your answers to the choices above, and call us at (509) 900-7145. We'll walk you through the rest. Want smoked or seasoned extras too? See smoking and curing.

Questions? Call Howard & Mia.

(509) 900-7145

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Read it online, with calculators:
handmcustommeat.com/guide/beef-cut-sheet/

Sources

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Figures are typical ranges from these sources; every animal is different. Prices are subject to change.