

Trim fat from meat for fewer calories

Q. Besides flank steak, what are some other lean cuts of beef? Do veal and lamb contain fewer calories than beef or pork?

A. Flank, round, chuck-arm or round-bone, hind quarter and "Good" grades of wedge and double bone steaks are the best beef choices for low fat beef. Pork tenderloin is relatively low in fat with a count of 26 -- the same as the beef suggestions.

Lamb is no leaner than beef and higher in fat than pork tenderloin. Veal, on the other hand, is usually quite low in fat. Calves that are slaughtered before three months do not have time to acquire much fat. For example, veal arm steak and cutlets are as lean as light chicken meat.

Most people know that all visible fat should be trimmed off before eating. The reason is that a four-ounce serving of untrimmed meat has approximately twice the amount of fat and about 100 calories more than trimmed meats.

Q. How are meats graded? An why aren't all meats graded?

A. Grading is optional. The U.S. Department of Agriculture provides the service for a fee. In practice, meats are only requested to be graded if there is a commercial advantage in doing so.

Most retailers and processors or distributors will request meat be graded if it's "prime" (best) or "choice" (second best grade). "Good" or "standard" grades are not marked.

Pork is never graded because the pork industry has never requested a grading system be established by the USDA.

Meat grades are based on color, firmness, texture and marbling -- all characteristics usually associated with good taste. However, there are two sides to this. The highest grade meat has the most marbling (fat), which also means it has the most fat that cannot be trimmed away.

Q. What is the most healthy way to cook meat?

A. Broiled meats, as expected, have the least fat. Broiled or braised meats (cooked on a rack over water) meats are only a gram or two higher than broiled if the fat is allowed to drip off during cooking. Frying does add fat, but because some meats do not absorb as much additional fat, the difference may be small.



Terry Gibb

Try to keep the temperature of the meat from getting too hot during cooking. Charring or overheating meats (and chicken or fish) can create mutagens that may cause cancer.

Broiling and grilling have been the prime suspect in causing mutagens. However, roasting for too long and frying over a hot surface can cause the same amount of damage.

While more studies are being done to determine which cooking methods are a safety threat and whether the amount we get from meat poses a serious threat, to minimize the problems, avoid high temperatures and long cooking times.

Braising and stewing are not a mutagen threat, because the meat only reaches the temperature of boiling water. This is also true of microwaving, which cooks by heating the water found in foods. Microwave meats on a paper plate that will not return heat to the meat's surface.

The Consumer Mailbag answers your questions. Address mail to The Consumer Mailbag, Concern Detroit, 1025 Shelby, Detroit, Mich. 48226.



AUTUMN'S COMING!

There's only a few weeks left before school starts, and Tel-Twelve Mall has an exciting line-up of back-to-school events planned:

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Saturday, Aug. 16 FREE!
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Powers Modeling School students pose throughout the mall. An exciting display of concentration and self-discipline.

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PTA urges parental interest

Many parents want to be involved in their children's education, but they often don't know what to do or how to get started. To solve the problem, the National PTA has developed suggestions for parents as they prepare themselves and their children for the coming school year.

"One study after another has verified that the most successful students are those whose parents become actively involved in the educational and decision-making process," said Ann Kahn, president of the 5.8-million-member national PTA. "There is no doubt that parent involvement represents a powerful way of making schools more effective, and of dramatically enriching children's academic experience."

Among the suggestions the PTA makes to parents is that they establish homework routines early and distinguish between showing an interest in a child's homework and actually doing it for him or her. Some ways parents can establish a homework routine for their child are to:

- Set a regular time and place for studying. In the primary grades, take 10 minutes daily to read and talk to your child before doing homework. In the upper elementary grades, set aside a half hour for studying and reviewing.
- If the homework includes directions, read them or have your child read them aloud. Make sure your child is following the directions. If not, demonstrate an example, try one together, then have the child try one alone.
- When your child is finished, check the work and circle errors to be corrected. Sign the homework. This will help foster the home-school connection.
- If you don't understand an assignment your child has received, ask the teacher for clarification. Write notes to teachers from time to time indicating what you've observed about your child's homework progress.

"Parent Involvement: What Your PTA Can Do" offers specific suggestions to parents about how to get involved in their children's education. The guide is available for 50 cents from the Publications Department at National PTA, 700 N. Rush, Chicago, Ill. 60611.

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