

The leaner side of **red meat**

Beef and pork are trimmer today than they were a decade ago. Many lean cuts rival chicken in the race for less fat.

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Going cold turkey on red meat? “No need to skip it,” says Liz Glynn, M.S., R.D., CDE, of the Inova Diabetes Center in Fairfax, Virginia. Glynn adds two caveats: “Choose lean and eat petite.” Recent results show many cuts of red meat come close to or even beat the nutrition profile of a skinless chicken breast—the queen of lean. So if you’ve been bypassing red meat, learn today’s nutrition facts, then enjoy red meat again. For some delicious lean beef and pork recipes to show you how, turn to our story, “Make Room for Meat,” on page 78. *Continued on page 36*

photographer: MARTY BALDWIN

Know Your Cuts

The fat content of red meats ranges from lean to high-fat cuts and processed products. For example, when you're shopping for pork, you can choose from lean tenderloin to high-fat country-style ribs and processed products such as sausage and bacon. The key is to choose from the lean end of the spectrum.

Lighter on the Hoof

Leaner and healthier is how pigs and cattle are now bred for market. "Less fat on the animal means less fat and fewer calories on consumers' plates," says Ceci Snyder, M.S., R.D., spokesperson for the National Pork Board. The beef folks echo that message.

Another reason for meat that's lower in fat? "Meat is now trimmed of more fat, down to 1/8 inch of fat," says Mary K. Young, M.S., R.D., vice president of nutrition for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association. "In the 1990s, only seven cuts of beef qualified to use the labeling term 'lean.' Today, 29 cuts fit that classification." (See "What Does Lean Mean?," below.)

10 ways to choose lean and eat petite

1. **Think of meat as a side dish**—taking up a fourth of your plate.
2. **Purchase only the amount you need for one meal**, or two if you plan for leftovers.
3. **For a sandwich, use 2 to 3 ounces of meat.** For height, stuff the sandwich with lettuce, tomato slices, or cucumber slices.
4. **Trim the visible fat** from meat before cooking.
5. **When cooking ground meat**, drain the fat as well as you can before adding the remaining ingredients.
6. **Prepare dishes that s-t-r-e-t-c-h the red meat:** a Chinese stir-fry, an Italian meat sauce, or Mexican burritos or fajitas.
7. **In the fast-food lane**, opt for the junior, single, or regular burger—not the double or triple.
8. **At the sandwich counter**, order a half sandwich or small sub. Load up on vegetables, mustard, and vinegar. Skimp on the mayonnaise and oil.
9. **At a steakhouse**, split a lean cut of meat. To fill your plate, order steamed or grilled vegetables, garden salad, and/or split a baked potato.
10. **Order complementary dishes**—one with no meat, the other with the meat at center stage. Then split them down the middle and share.



Rich in Nutrients

Red meats are good sources of iron, zinc, magnesium, phosphorus, and vitamins E, B6, B12, thiamin, riboflavin, and niacin. Leaner cuts of pork contain more B vitamins than fattier cuts. Red meats also provide high-quality protein with all nine essential amino acids.

Fat Facts

If you've been steering clear of red meat because you believe poultry and seafood are better for your heart, look at the nutrition numbers (see "Making the Cut," page 38). Due to the fervor about trans fat—a saturated fat—it's worth noting that trans fat, naturally present in some red meat, doesn't increase heart disease risk as much as its manufactured cousin, partially hydrogenated fat. Americans consume 20 percent of their trans fat intake from meats and dairy foods but 80 percent from manufactured foods.

"We're learning stearic acid (a type of fat in beef) doesn't raise LDL (bad) cholesterol, but does raise HDL (good) cholesterol," Young says. So beef may raise bad cholesterol less than previously believed.

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what does lean mean?

When you're shopping for meat, it helps to understand these terms when you see them on labels.

	FAT (G)	SATURATED FAT (G)	CHOLESTEROL (MG)
Lean	less than 10	less than 4.5	95
Extra lean	less than 5	less than 2	95

Amounts Count

The U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, supported by the American Diabetes Association (ADA), recommends allocating 10 to 35 percent of your calories to protein. The ADA doesn't support high-protein, low-carbohydrate weight-loss diets (more than 20 percent of your calories from meat and other protein sources). Studies show that Americans typically get about 15 percent of their calories from protein.

The dietary guidelines recommend that if you're consuming 2,000 calories a day, you should eat about 5.5 ounces of meat (or the protein equivalent of dry beans, nuts, or eggs). For 1,400 calories a day, this drops to 4 ounces of meat. At 2,600 calories, the daily allowance jumps to 6.5 ounces of meat (see "10 Ways to Choose Lean and Eat Petite," page 36). It may help to think of a 3-ounce serving of meat as about the same size as a deck of cards or the palm of a woman's hand.

"The amount of red meat you eat depends on how much you enjoy it and your health status," Glynn says. "If you're anemic, you need the well-absorbed iron of red meat. If your cholesterol is sky high, keep meat to a minimum."

More Protein?

Research is delving into whether more protein could help weight loss and maintenance and heart health. Pork and beef advocates tout studies that recommend a greater protein intake. "Several studies have shown people can shed more fat and hold on to more lean muscle by eating more protein," says Young, who concedes the verdict is still out.

(making the cut)


Whether you're standing at the meat counter or holding a menu, use the numbers below to choose the leanest cuts. Compare these to the numbers for chicken breast and salmon listed at the bottom.

FOOD	CALORIES (G)	FAT (G)	SATURATED FAT (G)	CHOLESTEROL (MG)
BEEF meat cut*				
Roast beef, sliced	135	5	2	45
Ground beef (95% lean)	140	5	2	62
Eye round	144	5	1	53
Top sirloin	166	6	2	47
LAMB meat cut*				
Loin, roast	163	7	3	69
Leg, roast	191	11	4	76
Loin chop	200	12	6	72
PORK meat cut*				
Tenderloin	120	3	1	62
Top loin, chop	147	5	2	61
Center loin, chop	153	6	2	72
Center rib, chop	158	7	2	56
VEAL meat cut*				
Cutlet, from leg	136	4	2	88
Rib	150	6	1	98
Shank	150	4	1	107
CHICKEN & FISH				
Salmon*	152	7	1	57
Chicken breast*	156	3	1	80

*Note: All are 3-ounce cooked portions, trimmed of visible fat, boneless, and prepared without added fat. Information was obtained from several sources, including the USDA Nutrient Database (www.usda.gov/nutrientdata) and industry and nutrient resources.

Some bottom-line advice comes from a higher-protein advocate. Donald Layman, professor in the department of food science and human nutrition at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, says: "Make carbs count nutritionally by choosing whole grains, fruits, and vegetables, and eat more high-quality lean and low-fat protein. Spread your servings of protein throughout the day to control your appetite."

Full Flavor, Low Fat

Once you choose a lean cut of red meat, keep it low in fat. Use methods that drip or drain off the fat, such as barbecuing, grilling, broiling, or braising. Then flavor with low-fat and low-carb seasonings. Enjoy every lean bite of the juicy, tender meat. 

Hope Warshaw, a diabetes educator and dietitian, wrote Diabetes Meal Planning Made Easy and serves on our advisory board.