

## Beef Selection for Consumers

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Having some basic knowledge of beef cutting terminology can assist in selecting beef cuts that will perform the way you want them to in your recipes. It is helpful to know that beef carcasses are divided in half from neck to tail. Each half is often referred to as a side of beef. Typically, a side weighs from 250 to 400 pounds, depending on the size of the animal it was derived from. Each side is further divided into what is commonly called primal or wholesale cuts. There are nine wholesale cuts on a beef carcass but some have very similar characteristics and will be combined into groups for this discussion.

The Chuck is the wholesale cut that is basically the shoulder area. The Chuck is generally considered to be moderately tender, depending on the individual retail cut. Most all retailers include the name Chuck in their retail cut name found in meat cases. Examples include Chuck Shoulder Pot Roast, Chuck 7-Bone Roast, Chuck Shoulder Steak, and Chuck Blade Steak. Two of the more tender retail cuts from this area are Chuck Eye Steak and Chuck Blade Steak.

The wholesale cut known as the Rib joins the Chuck and includes most of the ribs. The Rib area generally produces retail cuts that are slightly more tender than the Chuck. Examples of retail cuts from this area are the Rib Roast, Rib Steak, and Back Ribs. The Rib eye Steak and Rib eye Roast are the most tender cuts from the Rib wholesale cut.

The Short Loin and Sirloin are two wholesale cuts that join each other between the Rib and the Round. The Short Loin produces the most tender cuts of beef. The Sirloin is normally slightly less tender. Retail cuts include Sirloin Steak, Tri-Tip Roast, Tenderloin Roast and the very tender T - bone steak, Porterhouse Steak, Top Loin or Strip steak and the most tender cut of all beef, Tenderloin Steak commonly called Filet Mignon. The adjoining Round is the hind quarter and produces Round Steaks and Roasts with a variety of retail names, most of which contain the name Round. The round is moderately tender with the Eye Round Steak being the most tender from this wholesale cut.

The remaining wholesale cuts of Shank, Brisket, Plate and Flank are less tender cuts that lend well to pot roasting, stewing or other moist cooking techniques to enhance tenderness. Many processed beef products like ground and cubed beef come from these cuts.

By keeping in mind that different cuts of beef have different tenderness characteristics, consumers can choose specific cuts of beef that will produce quality eating experiences. While Brisket, Chuck Roasts and Bottom Round Roast work great for pot roasting and cubed or thin sliced Shank or Plate are great for Fajitas, they are not suitable for grilling or broiling. These and other dry heat cooking methods are only suitable for tender cuts like Rib eye Steak from the Chuck, the Short Loin and Sirloin steaks, and possibly Eye Round Steak.

