

How To S-S-S-S-Stretch Your Pork Dollar

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Introduction

Three key words may be used to describe why pork offers something beneficial for the consumer. These key words are value, versatility and acceptability. As we discuss fabrication of various pork cuts, the value, versatility and acceptability of pork will be demonstrated.

A Hog Is Not All Chops

Even though pork is a value when compared to other food rich in protein and vitamins, it seems appropriate to discuss the difference in cost between a live hog and various pork cuts for the benefit of producers and consumers. It should be recognized that a hog is not all chops. This statement is verified by the following illustrations:

Typical live weight	250 lbs.
Carcass weight	180 lbs. (72% of live weight)
Saleable retail cuts	145 lbs. (58% of live weight)
Fat, bones and skin	35 lbs.

Saleable retail cuts would be approximately:

Ham	44 lbs
Loin chops	36 lbs.
Cured or fresh picnic roasts	12 lbs.
Boston butt roasts or slices	13 lbs.
Bacon	28 lbs.
Spareribs	7 lbs.
Feet, tail and neckbones	11 lbs.
Sausage	12 lbs.

So, there are only about 36 pounds of pork chops for every 250 pounds of live weight or 180 pounds carcass weight and 127 pounds of other pork cuts to be sold. That is why a meat retailer needs to price pork so that all cuts sell. Since pork chops are in great demand and are relatively easy to prepare, especially in small portions, it is necessary to sell chops at a higher price per pound. To stay in business, the retailer must charge enough for each

individual package of pork to cover the price paid to the producer, the cost of processing, transportation, refrigeration, labor, business overhead and other merchandising costs. It is necessary to include these costs in the retail price of pork.

Pork Is A Bargain

Because of its nutritive value, pork is a bargain. Today's pork has outstanding nutritive value . . . built-in nutrients that contribute so much to human health and well-being. On the basis of Recommended Daily Allowances, a serving of 3 1/2 ounces of cooked lean pork supplies over half of the protein, 74-103% of the thiamin, 18-37% of vitamins B6, B12, niacin, riboflavin and phosphorous, and 19-35% of the iron that an adult needs daily. Yet, fewer fat calories and more high-quality protein calories are found in lean pork. Six pork cuts - sirloin roast, loin chops, fresh picnic shoulder, fresh leg (ham) center slice, cured and smoked ham, and tenderloin — contain fewer than 250 calories per 3 1/2 ounce serving and constitute a real weight watcher's delight.

When food budgets tighten, saving money at the supermarket is especially important. These ideas are designed to help save more money when buying pork. It is important to know how to purchase wholesale pork cuts and cut them up at home, instead of buying the customary individually wrapped retail cuts. By purchasing wholesale cuts like the whole or half ham, Boston butt or whole pork loin, one can save food dollars. (The remaining wholesale cuts — arm picnic shoulder and side — are used primarily for processed pork products, spareribs and bacon.)

Figure 1 illustrates how pork wholesale cuts are separated from the carcass. After learning how various wholesale cuts are converted to retail cuts, one can tell the retailer how to have these retail cuts fabricated and can do some of the cutting. Even with an additional cost per pound

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added for the retailer's cutting, one can still obtain a real meat bargain. Figure 2 reflects various retail cuts that may be obtained from wholesale cuts of a pork carcass. The following cutting techniques illustrate how to obtain more from the pork dollar and that pork is truly a versatile muscle food.

Ham Cuts

Ham is one of America's most popular meats. Smoked ham comes in many shapes and forms. One can enjoy favorite ham cuts by purchasing a whole or half ham and cutting it into roasts, steaks, cubes and strips for unlimited menu items.

There are two saw cuts that should be made. A whole ham should be cut in half. Then, if a center slice is desired, cut it from the shank half. The purchase is already a bargain because the whole ham is now a butt half, center slice and shank portion. The butt half can be transformed into three different cuts: 1) a boneless ham roast for baking; 2) ham slices; and 3) the aitch bone section for cubing or grinding. Cubes are ideal for kabobs, casseroles or soups, while ground ham is ideal for meat loaves and spreads. Ham that will not be used within a week should be wrapped and frozen for not more than 10 months. (Note—similar cutting methods can be used for fresh pork legs and butt halves).

Loin Cuts

If pork roasts and chops are desired, then a whole bone-in or boneless pork loin is a good buy. It's a wholesale cut from which many retail pork cuts are made: 1) blade, center, sirloin and top loin roasts; 2) blade, rib, loin, sirloin, top loin and butterfly chops; and 3) back ribs. A quick lesson in the terminology used by the retailer is helpful to become aware of what is involved in buying whole loins.

The pork loin is the wholesale cut located between the leg (ham) and shoulder, and when bone-in weighs approximately 14 to 18 pounds. The section of the loin between the blade end and sirloin end is commonly termed the center, thus the names "center chops" and "center roasts." Knowing this much about pork loin terminology will simplify discussions with the retailer and make purchasing loins a simple task. Retail pork loins are usually trimmed of excess fat so the weight of the cuts purchased should almost equal the weight of the whole loin. (To compare, ask for both the weight of the whole loin and the combined weight of the retail cuts.)

Once the whole loin has been selected, ask the retailer to cut a blade roast and sirloin roast. Specify the weight of these two roasts. To aid in carving the roasts when cooked, the backbone should be loosened on the blade and sirloin roast. Carving is further simplified if the

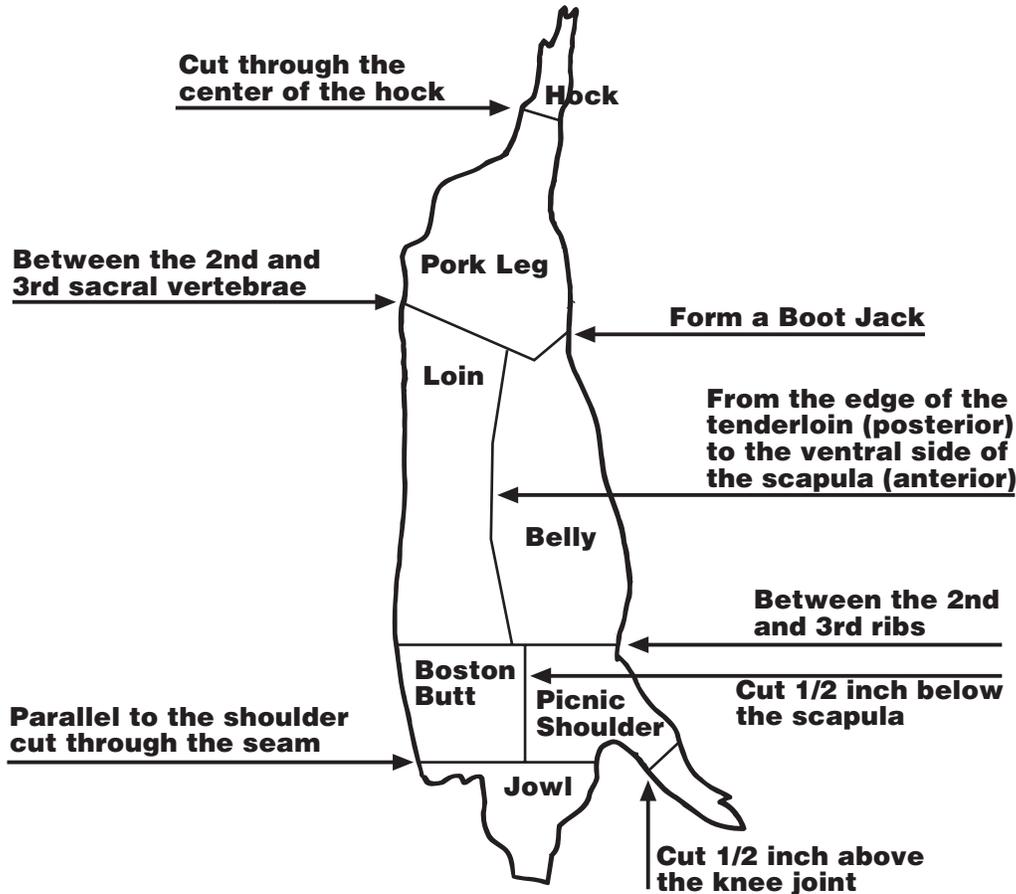


Figure 1. Pork wholesale cuts are separated from the carcass as noted by this illustration

cooking in liquid. With the fat side down, first begin loosening the blade across the top, flat surface of the bone. Next loosen the meat away from the remaining portion of the bone. While forcing the blade face (the side of the cut originally containing the bone), cut three to four steaks from the top of the meat downward. The steaks can be easily prepared by broiling or braising.

The remaining Boston butt portion can be cooked as a boneless roast or can be cut into cubes for kabobs. Any leftover pork pieces can be used for a variety of braised pork entrees like chop suey, barbecued pork or a pork pie. If cuts are not consumed within two days, immediately wrap and freeze those to be kept longer.

Picnic Cuts

The picnic which may usually weigh 5 to 8 lbs is frequently cured and sold as whole or sliced cured picnic. If a picnic is purchased without being cured it may be as a short shank picnic or a rolled and tied, boneless picnic. Arm steaks may be cut from the picnic.

Packaging

To properly wrap retail cuts, choose a moisture-vapor-proof freezer wrap to seal out air and lock in moisture. Pliable wraps like aluminum foil, freezer paper, and plastic wrap are good choices for bulky, irregular-shaped pork cuts since they can be molded to the shape of the cut. The following wrapping technique is recommended:

1. Place the pork cut in the center of the wrapping material. When several cuts are packaged together, place a double thickness of freezer wrap between them for easier separation.
2. Bring edges of the wrap together over pork. Fold over at least twice, pressing wrap closely to pork to force out air.
3. Smooth ends of the wrap, creasing edges to form triangles. Double-fold ends toward the package to seal out air.

4. Fold ends under the package as shown and seal with a continuous strip of freezer tape. Label with name of cut, number of servings and date of freezing.

Pork sets the pace for a wide selection of delectable dining and has an impressive nutritive value for the homemaker when planning family menus. Today's pork is superior due to scientific breeding and feeding by the producer and closer trimming by meat packers and retailers. This means more lean pork per pound with more body-building proteins and less fat.

The protein of a 3 1/2-ounce serving of cooked pork (lean and marbled) contains all of the essential amino acids necessary to build, maintain and repair the body tissues and to increase their resistance to infection and disease. The mineral iron, together with high quality protein, is vital in the formation and maintenance of red blood and in the prevention of anemia. Pork liver supplies about three times as much iron (29 mg/100 g cooked) in available form as any other food source. Pork is a major dietary source of the B vitamins, especially thiamin, riboflavin and niacin, essential to food utilization, appetite, skin and oral health.

As protein is not stored in the body, protein foods should be included in every meal each day. Pork is one of the most completely digestible and utilized foods. Every cut is tender so it can be included in the diets of everyone. Strained pork products for infants provide essential nutrients early in life.

Summary

Therefore, pork offers the consumer 1) value, 2) versatility and 3) acceptability. One can S-S-S-S-Stretch the food dollar by purchasing pork.