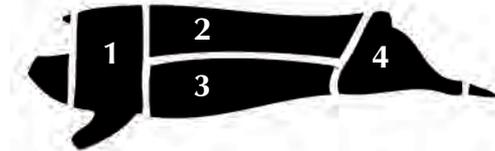


Pork Cuts by Primal

A pork carcass is first divided into four large sections, known as primals. These are then cut into individual cuts and roasts, depending on customer preference. The following pages explain which cuts are available from the following four primals.

1. Shoulder
2. Loin
3. Side (a.k.a. Belly)
4. Leg (a.k.a. Ham)



NOTE: Other less common pork cuts may be available in addition to those listed on the following pages. Talk with the farmer/rancher or butcher about processing and packaging options, such as the number of chops you want per package.



Arm picnic roast



Shoulder/blade steak



Shoulder roast



Smoked picnic roast



Hock

Shoulder

Pork shoulder accounts for about 25 percent of the carcass weight and is typically subdivided into two sections: the top portion known as the Boston butt, and the bottom portion known as the picnic. These sections contain significant connective tissue (because the animal uses its shoulders extensively) but are flavorful. The shoulder/blade steak is a flavorful bone-in, marbled steak that is good for marinating, grilling, or braising. The Boston butt roast or shoulder roast is a well-marbled roast from the top of the shoulder, and is available boneless or bone-in. Picnic arm roast or shoulder roast is a rich roast that cooks well with moist cooking methods and is available boneless or bone-in. Cottage bacon is shorter, rounder, meatier pieces that are cured or smoked like bacon from the belly. The foreshank/hock is often simmered in soups, stews, and braised dishes to add flavor and richness.



Whole loin



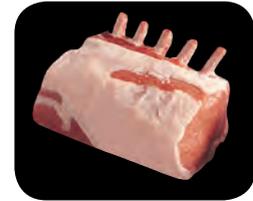
Ribs



Pork chops



Tenderloin



Frenched pork loin roast

Loin



The loin primal, accounting for about 22 percent of the carcass weight, contains the rib, the loin, and the sirloin section. The whole loin can be cut boneless or bone-in. Pork chops that are cut 1 1/2" thick are often called *Iowa chops*; regular pork chops can be cut bone-in or boneless. The tenderloin is the most tender cut and can be whole or sliced as medallions. Baby back ribs are trimmed from the blade and center sections of the loin when making boneless chops or deboning the whole loin. These are good cooked dry and rubbed with herbs/spices or cooked wet in sauce. Country-style ribs, meatier than baby back or spare ribs, are cut from the rib end of the loin and are best slow-cooked or barbecued. The crown roast is a showy entrée created when the pork rib roast/rack of pork is tied into a circle with the ribs exposed and pointing up. Paper caps often adorn the rib tips when the roast is presented.



Spare ribs



Bacon

Side or Belly



Containing both the spare rib and the belly, the side makes up about 23 percent of the carcass. The meat is streaked with fat and is typically cured and smoked to produce bacon. Fresh, uncured pork belly can be braised or roasted. A whole pork belly is usually 12 to 14 lbs. Spare ribs are trimmed from the inside of the belly and are best baked or barbecued. "Pancetta" is belly meat that has been cured in brine and rubbed with herbs but not smoked.



Bone-in ham, fresh



Boneless ham, fresh

Leg or Ham



The hind leg accounts for approximately 30 percent of the carcass weight and contains large muscles with relatively little connective tissue. Hams are often cured and smoked, but fresh hams also produce tasty, meaty roasts. Half or whole fresh ham roasts are uncured and can be either boneless or bone-in. Sometimes the skin may be left on. Half or whole cured ham is the traditional cured, smoked “ham,” either boneless or bone-in, and typically fully cooked. Ham hocks are often simmered in soups, stews, and braised dishes to add flavor and richness.



Ground

Trimmed meat and fat, originating mainly in the shoulder and leg, may be ground for “fresh ground pork” or seasoned for sausage. Many processors require a minimum quantity of ground/trim for each batch of sausage—often at least 10 pounds. Ask to try samples of your butcher’s signature sausages, often including breakfast sausage, Italian sausage, and bratwurst.

Lard

Prized for baking, lard is a key ingredient in prize-winning pie crusts every year at the Iowa State Fair. Some butchers will be able to prepare lard from your hog. To render your own at home, place ground or diced fat into a baking pan in the oven at 200°F for about six to eight hours. Periodically pour off the lard into a storage container as it renders out, cooling it in the refrigerator. Homemade lard should be stored under refrigeration. Lard freezes well for long-term storage.

Variety Meats

Pork liver, tongue, heart, spleen, feet / knuckles, neck bones, jowls, and tail are typically available upon request. Many of these are considered delicacies when properly prepared. No idea what to do with them? Non-organ variety meat is generally best prepared with moist-heat and is often used in soup, stew, or braised dishes. Organs, such as heart and liver, are good sliced and fried. Celebrated British chef Fergus Henderson has written an entire cookbook dedicated to these tasty bits, *The Whole Beast: Nose to Tail Eating*.

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