

Eating Nose to Tail

What is offal?

Offal is the name given to the edible internal parts of animals produced for food, including heart, kidney, liver and tongue. More specialist products such as pork cheek, suet, tripe and trotters are also classed as offal. The name originates from the term 'off-fall', describing the parts of the animals that fall away from the carcase after slaughter and during butchery.

Offal is highly prized and used in ethnic dishes around the world.

Products traditionally made with offal



Black pudding is a type of blood pudding commonly eaten in Britain and Ireland. It is usually made from pork blood, combined with onion, herbs, spices and oatmeal or barley.



Steamed, baked and boiled puddings and pies are traditionally made with suet, including steak and kidney pudding, mince pies and Christmas pudding.



Brawn is a terrine made with the meat from a pig's head, trotters, herbs and spices.



Faggots are made with offcuts of pork and offal, such as liver, lungs and heart. They are then wrapped and cooked in caul fat (the membrane found around internal organs).



Haggis is a traditional Scottish recipe made with diced sheep's liver, lung, heart, oatmeal, onion, suet and seasoning. The ingredients are boiled in a sheep's stomach or natural casing.



Pâté can be smooth or coarse and is made with liver, pork or other meats. It is, traditionally, baked in the oven and served cold with bread or toast.

Delicious and nutritious

All offal is high in protein. Calves' liver, lambs' liver, lambs' kidney and ox kidney are rich sources of iron, while tripe is low in fat. Liver contains a high level of vitamin A and is, therefore, not recommended for pregnant women.

Eating offal, as well as other red meat, uses all of the animal which helps to reduce food wastage. Offal is also good value for money which is great for students and those working to a budget.

Animal

Offal

Beef



Liver

Normally taken from mature cattle and is the least expensive liver of all. Best braised or stewed.

Tripe

This comes from the stomach of cattle. It has a distinctive flavour, is easily digested and is low in fat.

Tongue

Sold fresh or cured (which enhances the flavour and improves the overall colour). Fresh ox tongue weighs, on average, 1.3-1.8kg. Enough to serve 4-6 adults.

Oxtail

Generally sold cut into individual portions at the natural joint. It requires long, slow, moist cooking.

Calves' liver

Comes from a young animal and is, therefore, more tender and, potentially, more flavoursome than beef liver. Look for liver from high welfare British rosé veal.

Ox kidney

Particularly economical with a strong flavour. Requires long slow cooking to tenderise.

Lamb



Heart

Suitable for a single portion and ideal stuffed, then braised in the oven and sliced.

Sweetbreads

These are the thymus and parathymus glands situated in the neck and above the heart of young lambs. They have a delicate flavour with a smooth, velvety texture.

Suet

This is the hard, white crumbly fat located around the kidneys and loins of an ox or sheep.

Kidney

The mildest flavour of all the kidneys with a good texture and best served grilled or pan-fried.

Liver

By far the most popular of all livers and, when cooked properly, it can be tender and very tasty.

Pork



Cheeks

These are from the pig's head and are wonderfully tender when braised or stewed.

Trotters

Often used to make gravies, trotters can also be served as a dish on their own. Slow cooking; braising, stewing or roasting is recommended for tender, melting meat.

Kidney

The best kidneys are from a young animal and should be very fresh. Most recipes recommend soaking overnight in milk, buttermilk or water before cooking.

Liver

The strongest tasting of all the livers, with a coarse texture. Should be cooked quickly, at a high heat.

Recipes



Pressed ox tongue salad with horseradish and honey dressing



Braised oxtail with star anise



Individual steak and kidney pies



Stuffed braised lamb's heart



Devilled lamb's kidneys on toast



Pan-fried liver with onion and bacon



Elderflower wine braised pork cheek with root vegetables



Kidney and hock pie



Crumbed pork liver