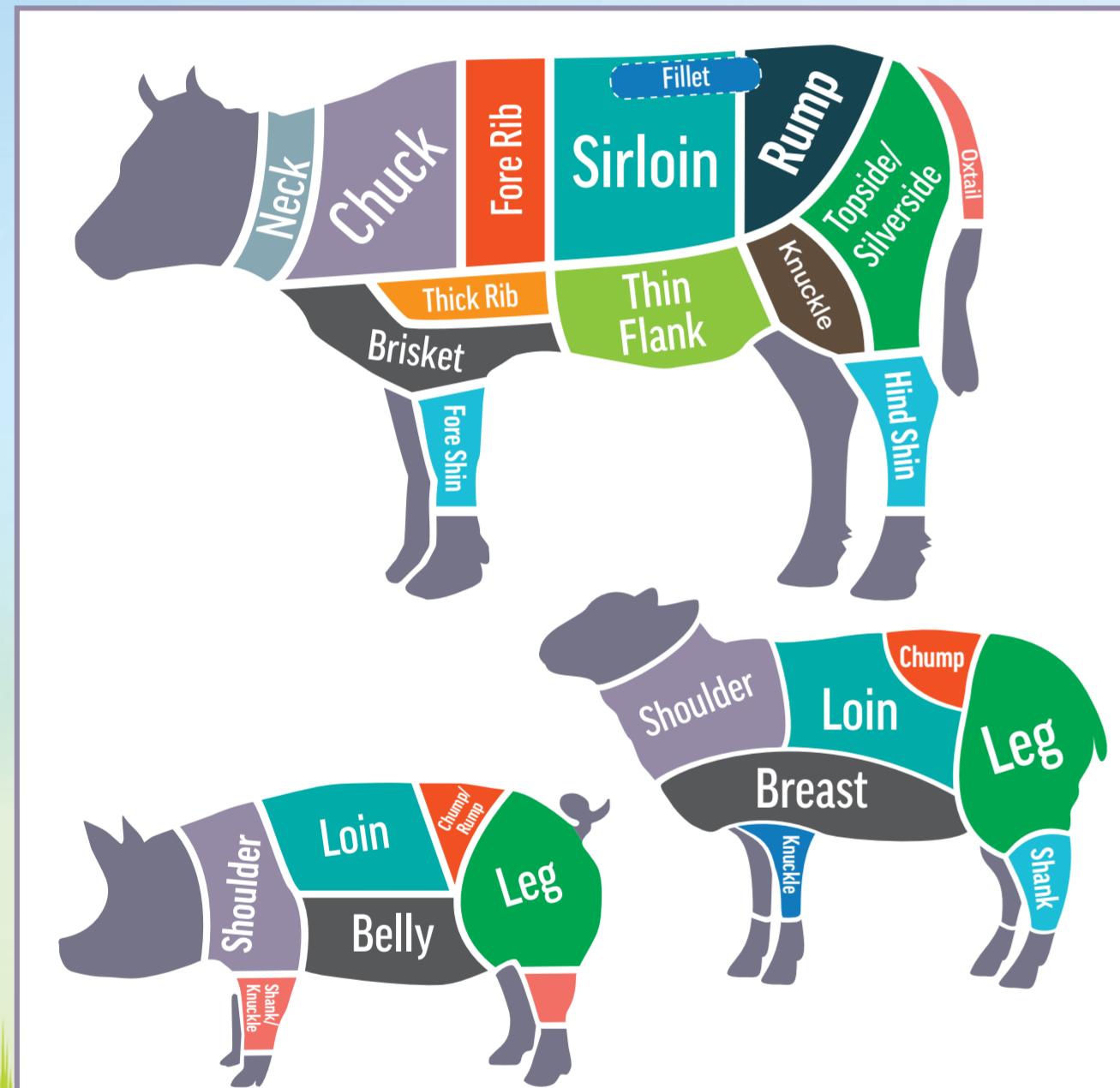


Know your red meat

Red meat is an important food commodity and is used extensively in a wide range of dishes. It is important to understand the source, characteristics and seasonality of red meat when following and creating recipes.

Source



Type

Red meat from England, Northern Ireland and Wales is produced to high standards. The most popular red meat includes beef, lamb and pork. Farmers' top priority is the health and welfare of the animals they rear. They also play an important part in supporting the environment.

Quality Assurance

Food assurance schemes certify the production of red meat and meat products to comprehensive standards throughout the food chain, including animal welfare, safety and traceability.

Red Tractor, Protected Geographical Indication and Farm Quality Assurance are schemes which cover red meat produced in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.



Characteristics

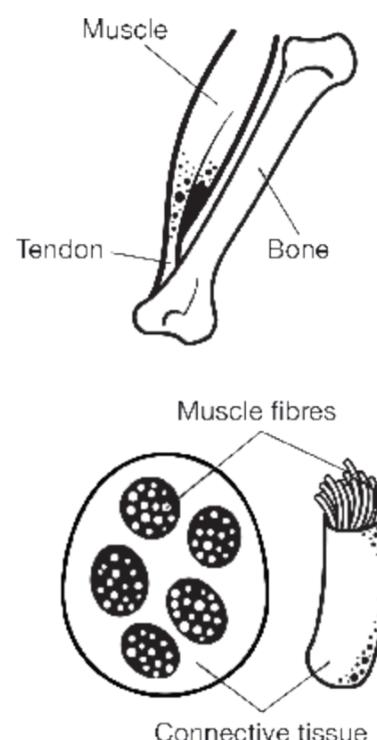
Composition

Red meat consists of muscle tissue or fibres, connective tissue and fatty (adipose) tissue. Lean meat is the muscle tissue of animals.

Muscle cells comprise water, proteins, minerals, vitamins, the red protein called myoglobin (similar to the blood pigment haemoglobin) and fat.

Meat muscle is made up of bundles of muscle fibres held together by creamy white connective tissue. Tendons join the muscle (made up of bundles of muscle fibres, surrounded by connective tissue) to the bones of animals.

The colour of meat is largely due to the red protein called myoglobin and some haemoglobin (blood) left in the muscle. Colour differences can be due to age and exercise, but are mainly due to the metabolism of the species and the function of the particular muscle. Meat from muscles which have been used a lot and are from older animals is usually a darker colour.



Cooking Method

The method of cooking selected for a cut of meat will depend on the type of muscle fibre it consists of and the amount of connective tissue it contains.

Cuts of meat which are from muscle areas which do a lot of work, e.g. neck and shin, will need longer, slower cooking methods with moisture to make it tender, such as a stew or casserole. Cuts of meat which are from muscle areas not so heavily used by the animal can be cooked much more quickly, e.g. grilling, stir-frying.



Seasonality



Meat

British beef, lamb and pork are available all year round. Beef is popular throughout the year. Lamb is seasonal with its flavour developing from spring through to autumn. Pork sales tend to increase in the summer, due to barbecues.

Fruit and Vegetables

Foods are usually harvested when they are at their peak and, typically, have the most flavour and nutrients, so eating seasonal fruit and vegetables tends to be tastier, healthier and better for the environment. Eating seasonally can also help you to include a wide variety of fruit and vegetables in your diet. Try pairing meat with seasonal fruit and vegetables as in the examples above.