

Pork Choices



Making the right food choices for you and your family are important, but what happens when food labeling causes more confusion than clarity? Below is a description of pork choices you might find at your local grocer and what they mean.

All pork is safe. Ensuring food safety involves everyone in the food chain. Today's farming operations employ a variety of technologies and techniques to minimize food safety threats. All pork is rigorously inspected and follows strict government guidelines to ensure the highest level of safety.

All pork is grown with pride. Family-owned and family-run farms are still prominent in today's farming landscape. Today's farming combines the best of traditional farming practices with the benefits of modern advancements.



All pork is nutrient-packed. A 3-oz. portion of pork tenderloin, for example, is an "excellent" source of protein, thiamin, vitamin B6, phosphorus and niacin, and a "good" source of potassium, riboflavin and zinc, yet contributes only 6% of calories to a 2,000-calorie diet. Fresh pork is naturally low in sodium.

All pork is regulated to ensure quality. Added hormones are not allowed in raising hogs. Therefore, the claim "no hormones added" cannot be used on the labels of pork unless it is followed by a statement that says "Federal regulations prohibit the use of hormones."

MAKING SENSE OF THE LABELS

All Natural or Minimally Processed

A product containing no artificial ingredient or added color and only minimally processed. Minimal processing means that the product was processed in a manner that does not fundamentally alter the product. The label must include a statement explaining the meaning of the term natural (such as "no artificial ingredients; minimally processed").

Locally Grown

This term has no USDA guidelines. What defines "local" may vary from one person to another. For some it may represent a drive to a farmer's market, for others it may be a broader geographic region. Reasons why people support locally grown products (i.e. keep money in the community, know where food comes from, support agriculture) may influence their definition.

No Antibiotics Added/Raised Without Antibiotics

The terms "no antibiotics added" may be used on labels for meat or poultry products if sufficient documentation is provided by the producer to the Agency demonstrating that the animals were raised without antibiotics.

Naturally Raised

This term has no USDA standard for pork products, and definitions may vary from one naturally raised pork product to another. Attributes that may contribute to a hog being "naturally raised" might include raised without antibiotics, growth promotants or animal by-products in the feed, use of deep straw bedding, raised outdoors, etc. These will likely be stated on packaging or in marketing materials.

No Nitrites/Nitrates Added

Cured meats by definition must include sodium nitrite. Some uncured products are available that use ingredients like beet or celery juice or natural sea salt to deliver a color and flavor similar to traditional cured meats. When the nitrate in celery, beets and sea salt, and other nitrate-containing vegetables, is exposed to certain types of bacteria in the product, nitrate is converted to nitrite, which results in product characteristics similar to traditionally cured meat products.

Free Range

Also referred to as "pasture raised, free roaming, and raised outdoors." The USDA standard to make this claim for pork is that hogs have had continuous access to pasture for at least 80% of their production cycle.



Certified Organic

The National Organic Program regulates all organic crops, livestock, and agricultural products certified to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) organic standards. In order to sell, label, or represent their products as organic, operations must follow all of the specifications set out by the USDA organic regulations. Pork raised for the certified organic program will be audited by certified organizations, raised on only certified organic land, fed only organic feed and have access to the outdoors. Labeling rules have been established by the USDA for products claiming to be organic and include four categories.

CATEGORIES OF ORGANIC

100% organic	Organic	Made with organic	Less than 70% organic
Products produced exclusively using organic methods as defined by the USDA. Can carry the USDA organic certification seal.	95% or greater of the ingredients (by weight, excluding water and salt) are organically produced with the remaining five percent of ingredients on the National List of Allowed Synthetic and Prohibited Non-Synthetic Substances. Can carry the USDA organic certification seal.	70-95% of the ingredients are organically produced and would be displayed on the principle display panel as “Made with organic [specific ingredient(s)].”	These products have the option to include “X% organic” on the information panel and only need to list organic ingredients on the ingredient statement.

Government Oversight

Checks and balances help ensure the integrity and security of the food supply at every step in the process. The U.S. food supply chain has earned a global reputation for the safety of its products, and governmental oversight is part of the reason for this success. Federal, state and local entities contribute to our nation’s food security safety net through regulation or inspection. The following entities have responsibility for various aspects of ensuring food safety.

- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- National Animal Identification System (NAIS)
- Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
- Center for Veterinary Medicine (CVM)
- National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System (NARMS)
- Food Animal Residue Avoidance Databank (FARAD)
- American Veterinary Medical Association
- Animal Health Institute
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)
- Institute of Food Technologists
- National Institute for Animal Agriculture
- World Health Organization (WHO)
- World Organization for Animal Health

A few of the many agencies ensuring food safety:



Hungry for more information? www.eatpork.org • www.porkandhealth.org

