



Introduction to Meat Judging

Learn how to describe and define meat judging, develop analytical, decision making and communication skills through identifying skeletal ID and wholesale meat ID cuts.

Background

Every day provides opportunities to engage in decision making. Will you have toast or cereal for breakfast? Do you wear the brown shoes or the black shoes? Should you sign up for the soccer team or the school choir? We make many decisions every day.

Often decisions are based on comparisons among several options or objects. For example, suppose you need to purchase a new shirt for the up-coming school dance. You first go to the store and compare a selection of shirts as to color, style, cost, quality, and fit. Then, you rank the shirts from the most desirable to the least desirable based on this set of criteria. Ranking the shirts allows you to select the shirt that best meets your needs.

The same types of judgments are made when shopping for and comparing cuts of meat. At the grocery store, you first identify the cut of meat that satisfies the needs of your meal. Then you look over and rank the many available packages of that particular meat cut. This process allows you to select the meat cut that best meets your needs. This is also the process that occurs during a meat judging competition.

Activity I Instructions (15 Minutes)

The muscle and skeleton structure of cattle, swine, and sheep are similar, and their carcasses can be separated into seven parts that have similar muscle and bone arrangements. Each of the seven basic cuts contains certain bones, which will help in identification. These cuts are:

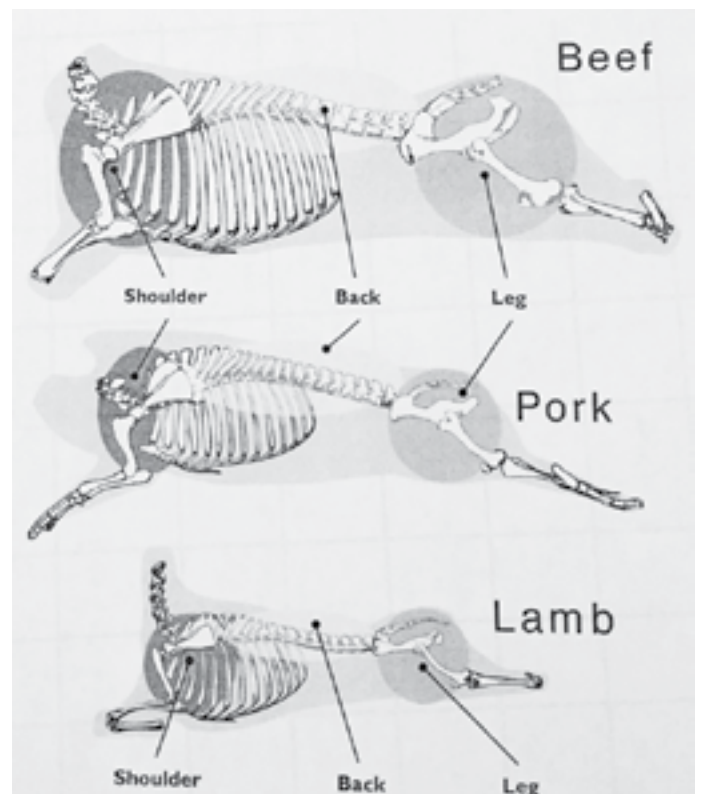
Arm Cuts **Blade Cuts**
Rib Cuts **Loin Cuts**
Sirloin Cuts **Leg Cuts**
Breast Cuts

The muscles that surround the skeleton are divided into three basic groups:

Back: These are the muscles in the back area that are relatively tender and can be cooked using dry heat methods.

Shoulder: These are the muscles in the shoulder area that are less tender and are normally cooked using moist heat methods.

Leg: These are the muscles in the leg area that vary in tenderness, so cooking methods vary depending on the cut.



Time

45 minutes total

Activity I Materials

- Pencil
- Pictures of skeletal structure of swine, beef and lamb
- Diagram of USDA wholesale and retail cuts of beef, lamb and pork

Space Required

Room with table space for each youth.



Before the Meeting

Set up the classroom to your liking, make sure you have adequate color copies of beef, lamb and pork wholesale and retail cuts of meat, beef, lamb and pork copies of skeletal structure. Make sure all youth have pencils to write with.

1. Identify the location of the seven basic cuts on each of the carcasses. You will improve your ability to judge meat cuts by familiarizing yourself with the skeleton and muscle structures of the meat production animals.

Reflect and Apply Questions (5-7 minutes)

1. Taking notes is a helpful way to organize observations and thoughts. How would taking notes help you when you are judging meat?
2. How does knowing about the skeletal structure of an animal help you in identifying its different retail cuts of meat?

Background for Activity #2:

Meat judging and meat identification are two different activities in a meat judging competition. Meat identification is just that- naming the cut, describing where it comes from (what animal and what part of the carcass), and perhaps how it should be cooked. Meat judging is the ranking of a group of similar cuts from the best to the worst based on whatever standards are used to evaluate the cut. Judging meat requires you to have a proficient knowledge of wholesale and retail meat cuts. You have already started learning about these cuts, it takes lots of practice and experience to become an expert and you are on your way.

Activity 2 Instructions 15-20 minutes:

1. Retail cut identification is the first step in meat judging. Match the name of the retail cut of beef with the picture of the retail cut.
2. When you have done part 1, print as many retail meat cuts as you can from the internet and make meat identification flashcards.

Reflect and Apply Questions (5 minutes)

1. What are some of the similarities between meat cuts from beef, pork, and lamb? What are some of the differences?
2. How does knowing the wholesale cuts of a carcass help you in identifying the retail cuts?

Retail cut identification is the first step in meat judging. Match the name of the retail cut of beef with the picture of the retail cut.

Sirloin Steak



Round Tip Roast



Brisket



T-Bone Steak



Tenderloin Steaks



Ground Beef



Related References

Learning Through Judging, VCE Publication 388-120

Meat Evaluation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, College of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service Publication 4-H 648L

Meat Evaluation Handbook, available from the American Meat Science Association, <http://www.meatscience.org/default.htm>

The Guide to Identifying Meat Cuts, available from the National Pork Board, <http://www.porkboard.org/PortStore/default.asp>

Texas A & M University meats extension, <http://aggiemeat.tamu.edu/index.html>

University of Nebraska Meats Science, <http://animalscience.unl.edu/meats/meats.htm>



Learning About Lamb

Learn how to organize and classify wholesale cuts of lamb and identify some retail cuts of lamb that derive from each of the wholesale cuts of lamb.



Reflect and Apply Questions

- 1. Fresh lamb is primarily available in the spring and early summer months of the year. How do you think this affects the amount of fresh lamb that is eaten by Americans every year?**
need to answer
- 2. How did knowing the different wholesale cuts of beef and pork help you learn the different cuts of lamb? How are they the same? How are they different?**
need to answer
- 3. How might the seasonal availability of different meats coincide with cultural traditions associated with different American secular and religious holidays such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, Kwanzaa, Passover and Easter?**
need to answer



REFLECT AND APPLY
ANSWER SHEET



UNIVERSITY
OF WYOMING



uwyo.edu/uwe