

Cold Cuts Of Meat

Eating cold cuts is convenient. No cutting or cooking. Cold cuts are thin slices of cooked, ready-to-eat sliced meat that are served cold. Cold-cut meats are also known as deli meats, lunch meats, sandwich meats, or sliced meats.

The majority of cold cuts are classified as processed meats. In order to be considered processed, the meat is preserved by curing, salting, smoking, or by adding chemical preservatives.

Three Types of Cold Cut Meats

One type of cold cut meats is whole cuts of meats, cooked and then sliced. They are a section of meat that has been cooked, possibly flavored with salt, spices, or sugars that is then sliced. Sliced turkey breast, roast chicken, and lean roast beef are great options.

If the meat is sectioned and then formed, the product is labeled as restructured meat products. Examples are multi-part cooked hams or turkey breasts, which are made from pieces or chunks of meat combined together to form one piece of meat. Choose these cold cuts in moderation.

Processed meats are considered sausages and are also known as cold cuts. Any type of meat that is formed into a symmetrical shape after being chopped and seasoned is considered as manufactured sausage. Examples of cold cuts created using sausage manufacturing include salami, hot dogs, bologna, sausage, and pastrami.

Cold cuts can be purchased sliced and pre-packaged in vacuum-sealed packages or you can buy them sliced to order at a deli counter. Deli ham, turkey, and roast beef are the most commonly eaten cold cuts in the U.S.

Cold cuts are high in protein, iron, zinc, and vitamin B12, but they are also high in saturated fat and sodium. It is important to be aware of those factors if you have high blood pressure or heart disease.

Under USDA standards, cold cuts that are labeled “organic” cannot contain synthetic preservatives. Substitutions such as beet and celery powder are commonly used.

The dietary recommendation from The American Heart Association is for adults to consume less than 2,300 mg of sodium per day, but most people eat much more. Adults average more than 3,400 mg/day.

Cold cuts only last 3 to 5 days once opened, even with natural and chemical preservatives added. Cold cuts purchased freshly sliced from a deli need to be consumed within 1 to 3 days if stored properly. To store properly, place cold cuts in an airtight container or plastic bag and store them in the coldest part of the refrigerator or freeze them. It is important to stick to food safety guidelines. Listeria is a common concern with cold cuts. Listeria can grow at refrigerator temperatures where other bacteria cannot grow. Listeria is found in ready-to-eat, refrigerated foods such as hot dogs, deli meats, unpasteurized milk, dairy products, and raw and undercooked meat, poultry, and seafood.

When to Immediately Discard Deli Meats

- Feels sticky or slimy to the touch
- Sour or rancid smell
- Discolored patches on the meat surface
- Gray or brown discolorations along the edges of salami or bologna
- Presence of mold

When in doubt, remember to throw it out!

Think about your overall diet: Do you enjoy a few slices of bacon on the weekends at brunch? Then perhaps you could live without the daily deli meats at lunch. Think about your diet as a whole. Are you consuming other foods high in sodium (e.g., bread, cheese, pizza)? How frequently? Make swaps accordingly to decrease your consumption of cold cuts.

Eat them occasionally and refrigerate them properly if you enjoy cold cuts. Cold cuts are synonymous with sandwiches!

(Sources: www.dietaryguidelines.gov; eatingwell.com; health.clevelandclinic.org; nationaldaycalendar.com; tasteofhome.com)