

Beef At Its Best

During May, Beef Month is celebrated across the country. With a moniker like “The Cowboy State,” it is no secret that Agriculture plays a proud and prominent role in Wyoming.

The following tips will provide nutritional benefits, storing beef, cleanliness, safe handling guidance, and cooking instructions.

Nutritional Benefits

Not only is beef incredibly flavorful with delicious versatility, but it also has many nutritional benefits. One 3-ounce serving of beef provides more than 10 essential nutrients like iron, zinc, protein, and vitamins B12 and B6. On average, one serving of beef contains around 150 to 170 calories.

Storing Beef

When shopping, picking up your beef just before checking out is important. It is also necessary to store your meat in a cooler if your drive home will take longer than 30 minutes.

After purchasing beef, it is important to immediately refrigerate or freeze it. When refrigerating, place the beef on a plate or tray to catch any juices, then place it on the lowest shelf.

Ground beef is more perishable than roasts or steaks. Plan to use refrigerated ground beef within 1 to 2 days of purchase.

When freezing beef, it can be stored in the original packaging for up to two weeks. If you want extended storage, wrap the meat in heavy-duty foil or place it in plastic freezer bags, removing as much air as possible.

For best quality, defrost beef in the refrigerator, never at room temperature.

Refrigerate any beef leftovers within 2 hours after cooking.

Keep It Clean

When cooking, it is important to take steps to prevent foodborne illnesses and cross-contamination, so follow these easy steps:

Wash hands in hot, soapy water before AND after handling raw meat and other fresh foods.

When handling raw meat, keep the meat and juices away from other foods during preparation and in the refrigerator.

Wash all cutting surfaces, utensils, and counters with hot, soapy water after being in contact with raw meat.

Keep all cutting boards separate from other food preparation areas and serving platters.

Handle It Right

- Use a gentle touch with ground beef and handle it as little as possible. After cooking, over-mixing will result in burgers, meatballs, or meatloaves with a firm, compact texture.
- Marinades and rubs not only add excitement and flavor to many cuts of beef but with the right ingredients, marinades can also be used to make some cuts more tender.
- When cooking steaks and roasts, pat dry with paper towels for better browning.
- For easier slicing for stir-frying, freeze steaks for about 30 minutes before cutting.
- Use medium heat with most dry-heat cooking methods and medium-high heat for stir-frying. Low heat is ideal for moist-heat cooking methods.
- When turning steaks and roasts, use tongs. Avoid using a fork, which will pierce the beef and result in a loss of flavorful juices.
- Turn ground beef patties with a spatula. Do not press down on the patty; flavorful juices will be lost, resulting in a dry burger.
- Salt beef after cooking or browning. Salting beef before cooking draws out moisture and restricts the flavor that browning imparts.
- The USDA recommends that steaks and roasts be cooked to 145°F (medium). To ensure food safety, ground beef should be cooked to a minimum of 160°F (well done). Check with a thermometer, as color alone is not a foolproof indicator of doneness.

In celebration of National Beef Month, it is the perfect time to gather with friends and family and enjoy some delicious beef dishes.

(Sources: www.ars.usda.gov; www.beefitswhatsfordinner.com; www.dietaryguidelines.gov)